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Frictions in the Machine: Teacher Practical Knowledge in a Prison Setting

by

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Abstract

This qualitative case study examines the practical knowledge of teachers working in the Federal prisons in western Canada. The study is significant because so little research has been done on the topic.

The work also honours the voices of prison teachers by sharing with the reader their conversations collected through semi-structured interviews. It proceeds by examining the problematic situations or frictions in the machinery of a school within a prison and how teachers call upon their knowledge of self, milieu, the learner and the subject matter as they discuss these situations. This is an examination of the practical knowledge that is “on call” when problem situations arise.

As teachers encounter the novel problems presented by the prison milieu and their students, who are prisoners, they must find ways to define the physical and social spaces of the prison as a place where schooling happens. This is not easy in a setting that is designed for different purposes and offers competing definitions of the situation. Teachers seem forever caught in ceaseless tensions regarding the meaning of education in prison. These tensions are an expression of the encompassing nature of the prison as a total institution. Caught between the overlapping worlds of the school, the prison and the community, they negotiate the meanings for their work in the borderland between these worlds.
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It is the *situation* that has these traits. We are doubtful because the situation is inherently doubtful. Personal states of doubt that are not evoked by and are not relative to some existential situation are pathological: when they are extreme they constitute the mania of doubting. Consequently, situations that are disturbed and troubled, confused or obscure, cannot be straightened out, cleared up and put in order, by manipulation of our personal states of mind.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Most of us working in the field recognize that our training did not prepare us for the realities of prison teaching. . . . Learning to teach in this way is dangerous and frustrating. It too often leads to feelings of isolation and eventually, rejection (Eggleston, 1991, p. 16).

Introduction

In this chapter I outline my own interest in the field of prison education by beginning with my own story. I then suggest that the significance of this study rests on the warranted assumption that very little has been written about the practical knowledge of prison teachers. I argue that the theoretical setting for the widespread interest in the practical knowledge of teachers is derived from broader epistemological debates that have characterized late twentieth century, western societies. I share with the reader a brief description of the Canadian prison system, which is the setting for the teacher knowledge and experience I investigate in this project.

My Story

As I stood outside the grey walls of the prison, I asked myself what I was doing here. Only a month ago, standing by my mailbox in the graduate office at McGill, I had overheard the secretary of the graduate faculty taking a request from someone over the phone for a sociology teacher. Broke, and just finishing my Master's degree, I did not know what I would do next, so this seemed to me to be a good piece of luck. After a brief 15 minute interview, I was told I had the job. Only then did I realize that it would be inside a federal prison.

Now here I was, standing at the gate. I had never taught before and certainly never been inside a prison. I was terrified. As the first heavy steel door slammed behind me, I
realized that I could not leave unless the guard behind the bulletproof glass sitting in the
control room made it happen. "Mettes tes choses sur la table" the guard said, for even though
this was a federal prison, the language of prison operations and security was French.
Trembling inside, I complied, and the guard proceeded to thumb through my papers and my
books—scattering them on the table. "C’est bien—Allez!” But, I replied, in French, “I don’t
know where I’m going!” With a scowl, he scanned the phone list on his side of the table.
Aside from the table and the phone, it was the only other thing in the room.

He went through a number of extensions, having quiet conversations with each party,
until finally, after what seemed like a very long time in the silence of that small room, he
reached someone in the school. The teacher who came to meet me also seemed put off by
my lack of knowledge about the institution. (Over the eight years of part-time work at this
prison, his attitude toward me never changed, though I cannot be sure why.) Not interested
in conversation, he walked silently ahead, down endless corridors, each one marked by steel
doors slamming. As we made our way deeper and deeper into the prison, I could feel the
sweat on my palms. So confused now by my prison experience, I was sure that I would
forget my first lesson. "You’ll teach here," he said in French, pointing to a small and narrow
room, lit by a single flourescent light overhead and the light streaming through a tiny barred
window at the back of the classroom.

There were 12 dirty, beat-up desks in the room, all neatly placed in rows. The dingy
green cinder-block walls were bare except for stains and dirt. The room smelled of male
bodies and smoke. Without any comment, my escort turned and left. I started unpacking my
briefcase, laying out my papers, and in a moment of anxious desperation, wrote the first three
points I wanted to discuss on the board so I would not forget them.

The inmates filed in, rolled cigarettes in one hand, and coffee in plastic jars that once
held peanut butter or mayonnaise in the other. They settled quietly, almost sullenly into their
desks, many of them avoiding my eyes. My God, I thought to myself, there is no turning back
now. I have to teach. The teacher who met me at the gate reappeared, looked in the
classroom, and counted the students. He checked his attendance list again, even though he
had just counted the students moments ago as they passed through the barrier that separated
the school from the rest of the institution. Wordless, he left again.
Apparently, it was the beginning of class, and so I started: “My name is Randall, and I’ll be teaching you a little bit about the Sociology of Quebec Society.” Immediately, a very young, fit student sitting at the very back of the room with his feet up on the desk shouted out: “What the fuck do you know about it!”—and everyone in the room laughed, some banging their fists on the desks.

That was more than 20 years ago. I could not have imagined then that the prison would become my professional home. Over the next twenty years I would spend time as a teacher, counsellor, Coordinator, senior administrator and theorist-practitioner in 27 prisons across Canada. Looking back, it would have been so helpful to know what I was getting into. After twelve years of teaching and counselling in prison schools, I was shocked to discover David Werner’s (1990) book: Correctional Education: Theory and Practice. Only then did I realize that there was a professional community of correctional educators out there, somewhere. Still, the profound sense of marginality never left me; nor can I forget the terror I felt as I passed through the prison gates for the first time.

Significance of the Study

This dissertation grows out of my early, somewhat bewildering experiences as a prison teacher and the recognition that very little is known about the practical knowledge of teachers in prison—who they are, what they do, how they feel about their work and what they know about it—in effect, their professional world. In the following qualitative case study I examine the practical knowledge teachers hold and use as a result of working in the Federal prisons of the Correctional Service of Canada in the Prairie Region—Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba.

Teacher practical knowledge is an expansive concept that refers to the teachers’ knowledge of

... students’ learning styles, interests, needs, strengths and difficulties, and a repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management skills. The teacher knows the social structure of the school and what it requires, of
teacher and student, for survival and success; she knows the community of which the school is a part, and has a sense of what it will and will not accept. This experiential knowledge is informed by the teacher’s theoretical knowledge of subject matter, and of areas such as child development, learning and social theory. All of these kinds of knowledge, as integrated by the individual teacher in terms of personal values and beliefs and as oriented to her practical situation, will be referred to here as ‘practical knowledge’ (Elbaz, 1983, p. 5).

An extensive library search on the topic of the prison teacher’s practical knowledge uncovered only a few insider accounts (Brand, 1999; Fox, 1994; Mullen, 1997; Wright, 1998) on the subject of the teachers’ professional world in prison. As recently as 1997, Mullen confirmed there were no experiential and narrative approaches to the study of the professional lives of prison teachers. With a few exceptions then, the study of the prison teacher’s practical knowledge has been overlooked in the prison literature and in the educational literature as a whole. There are good reasons why this is the case. Within the prison, the prison teacher is often marginalised because the security of the institution comes first (Duguid, 1994; Eggleston & Gehring, 1986; Werner, 1990; Fox, 1994; Wright, 1997). Furthermore, prison officials are naturally more concerned with the impact of literacy programs on the student and the effectiveness of the program in reducing recidivism, that the knowledge and professional lives of the teachers delivering the program.

This study is significant because it contributes to our knowledge base of teaching practices in general. Specifically, it addresses the professional amnesia (Shulman, 1987) in regard to prison teaching practices, where the practical knowledge that prison teachers gain must be created anew, each time an inexperienced teacher passes through the prison gates. This study therefore has implications for the professional development of teachers who work in prisons. As Eggleston (1993) noted, learning to teach on the job is dangerous and frustrating and it can often lead to situations where the teacher is isolated and feels rejected. Perhaps by providing meaningful knowledge of a field that, as a whole, has “struggled to maintain an identity, sometimes for its very existence” (p. 247), this project will help those who, for one reason or another, decide to teach in prison.
Background to the Study

Epistemological Ruptures in the Social Sciences and the Interest in the Practical

Over the past three decades it is fair to say that research in education—particularly the research into the professional knowledge of teachers—has been swept up in the knowledge debates and epistemological ruptures (Popkewitz, 1997) that have perplexed nearly every discipline. These profound and widespread interrogations of the socially constituted and suspicious nature of knowledge have challenged the knowledge claims grounded in methods imported from the natural sciences into educational theory and practice. These methods, designed to ensure the neutral representation of pristine objects of analysis through the efforts of the detached researcher, have been chastised because they have smoothed over the messiness of experience with distant, theory-driven concepts. Researchers in education, aware of the vast chasm between theory and practice, have made a conscious effort to reclaim the experiences and knowledges found in practice.

The teacher practical knowledge movement is located theoretically, in the distinctions between the knowledge and human interests associated with the natural and the cultural sciences (Habermas, 1971). Qualitative inquiries into the practical knowledge of teachers favours the methods, interests and modes of representation of the cultural sciences which adopt an interpretive approach so as to better understand the feelings and thoughts of others and how they make sense of their world. This interpretive act engages researchers in conversations with the researched and privileges their knowledge of their worlds. This epistemological stance dovetails with an ontological position that posits a reality that is socially and historically constituted rather than given. This position has methodological implications as well: because the world of both researcher and researched is socially constituted, there is no escape for researchers to the laboratory conditions where the canons of natural science objectivity and value-free inquiry can be enacted.

In the classroom, problems arise as a result of the unreflective nature of inquiry into this domain of the social world using the methods and principles of the natural scientific paradigm. The interests of the natural sciences in the prediction, control and mastery of the
Critical pedagogues such as Giroux (1997), and the Curriculum Re-conceptualists (see Pinar, 1999 for an overview), rally against the natural science paradigm because it supports positivist school cultures where the teacher is positioned as an expert, where knowledge is understood as an ahistorical fact within a reality that is given rather than socially constituted and, where the student is considered as empty vessel/object for knowledge to be gained through schooling.

Political and social problems surface when the natural science paradigm is closely identified with rational behaviour and thought to the exclusion of aesthetic concerns or moral questions about the good life, justice or equality. Typically these questions are translated into technical problems which can easily be solved by recourse to administrative and natural scientific applications of knowledge, so that knowledge becomes narrowly defined as technique. This lack of reflection on social and political issues, interests, and purposes, combined with knowledge defined as technique capable of solving all problems, accounts for the ideological quality of the natural scientific approach when applied to the social realm (Habermas, 1970).

**Prison Education in Canada: A Brief Look**

Until recently (May 2000), the Correctional Service of Canada offered literacy programs to a grade ten level in four core subject areas: English, science, mathematics and social science. Though not quite yet an operational reality, the current policy recommends grade 12 as the standard for literacy.

Every three years the Federal Government publishes a Request for Proposal (RFP) which invites contractors to submit a proposal to provide educational services in the prisons. Numerous private and publically-funded agencies compete for this opportunity. The Education Company (TEC), a highly successful education-for-profit agency, currently holds the contract to provide this service in the Prairie Region (Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta), as well as in many other institutions across Canada. As the Senior Vice-President of The Education Company, I have managed the educational services in the Prairie Region of the Correctional Service for the past nine years.
Few people outside the prison walls realize that many prisoners attend school every day, for which they are paid a small wage (approximately $5.00 per day). The literacy program is delivered 7.5 hours a day, 235 days a year. Classes are small, ranging from a handful of students in some, to a maximum of approximately 17 students in others. Many of the students are lower-level adult learners with approximately a grade nine education. Some inmates are enrolled in high school distance education courses, some study for the GED, and others, if they are lucky, find sponsorship for a limited number of distance education courses at a Canadian college or university. In the smaller prisons, such as the institutions for women, almost all the inmates go to school. In larger prisons for men, a third to one-half of the inmates attend school.

Despite the fact that the school is generally the largest “employer” of prisoners in the correctional system, and that teachers often spend more time with prisoners than anyone else in the prison, there is usually no mention of the role that education plays in the prison environment in most standard texts on the Canadian criminal justice system. Rarely if ever, are teachers invited to speak at the prestigious Canadian Criminal Justice conference that occurs annually in Canada.

Outside the prison walls, the teaching profession is generally unaware of the teaching practices and literature associated with prison education. In Canada, no professional development programs for prison teachers exist. The general public is often surprised to find there are teachers working behind bars. Moreover, it is suspicious of those who do, perhaps because they teach prisoners, so that I am often asked if The Education Company hires “real teachers.” Sometimes teachers contribute to the problem of their professional profile in the community saying little about where they teach because they experience animosity from a public that believes in prisons as places of punishment, not opportunity.

Setting for the Study: The Prison as Total Institution

The setting for the knowledge and practices of the teachers interviewed is the prison which is described by Goffman (1970) as an ideal-type of total institution—“a place of
residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life” (p. 3).

The overriding purpose of the total institution is to fashion different identities for its residents. The encompassing character of the total institution is accomplished by instituting barriers to social intercourse. Prisons (from French, prendre: to take), are institutions designed to take persons away from civil society; when this happens, Goffman noted, the prisoner experiences a civil death—mortification (from French, mort: death). Upon admission, the inmate experiences a “disruption of ‘world.’” Solzhenitsyn (1973) described his experience of arrest as “an instantaneous, shattering thrust, expulsion, somersault from one state into another” (p. 4). Elsewhere he wrote: “That’s what arrest is: it’s a blinding flash and a blow which shifts the present instantly into the past and the impossible into omnipotent actuality” (p. 4).

Cutting persons off from civil society is accomplished symbolically, by forcing them to wear uniforms and physically, through an oppressive architecture of power such as surveillance cameras, armed guards, bricked turrets, chain-link fences, massive stone walls, remote-controlled gates and always, the thin edge of razor wire. In Canada, prisons are located in geographically remote areas such as Grande Cache in Northern Alberta, or Maple Creek, in Southern Saskatchewan, so that symbolically and physically, prisoners know that they have left civil society behind when they go to jail.

Deemed to be criminals by the justice system, persons who go to prison in Canada are subjected to identity stripping (Goffman, 1970) processes that are typical of total institutions: they are inventoried for personal belongings, social connections and psychological attitudes; they are identified and categorized in terms of risk and incarcerated in a minimum, medium or maximum security prison to do their time. These mortifications of self are designed to facilitate the incorporation of the identity of the inmates into the administrative machinery of the institution. As Goffman noted, the prison homogenizes the activities and identities of its residents so as to facilitate “the handling of many human needs by the bureaucratic organization of whole blocks of people—whether or not this is a necessary or effective means of social organization in the circumstances—is the key fact of total
Institutions” (p. 6). In Canada, virtually everything that can be known about inmates is stored in the Offender Management System, an enormous data base which codes and compiles reports on inmates prepared by everyone, including teachers, working with them in the prison.

The civic death of prisoners and the legitimate use of force to take them away from civil society is sanctioned in Canada by the Conditional and Corrections Release Act (CCRA), passed in 1992. The CCRA creates legislative, physical and social borders that restrict inmates’ contact with others in civil society, narrowing their space-time trajectories and co-presences with others both inside and outside the prison. The restrictions on the prisoners’ movement are described at length in legal-bureaucratic terms such as inmate institutional absences, inmate transfers, conditions of release, escorted and non-escorted temporary absences, day parole, and parole under community supervision.

The prisoners’ contacts with civil society are constantly monitored. Contacts are defined as visits, communications in the course of a visit, meetings with legal counsel or Citizen Advisory Committee members, publications, audio material, films; computer programs, letters and telephone conversations. These privileges can be intercepted by staff members or a “mechanical device” such as a tape recorder or camera. They can be revoked on “reasonable grounds” if, in the opinion of the prison staff, they jeopardize the security or “good order” of the penitentiary. Inside the prison, prisoners lose the right to manage their own personal space, which can be contaminated (Goffman, 1959) any time, because the CCRA authorizes anyone, including those who provide “instruction or counselling services to the Service,” such as teachers, to search inmates “without individualized suspicion.”

The CCRA establishes the prison as a bureaucratic and hierarchical organization with the Warden as the “institutional head” responsible for the “care, custody and control of inmates in the penitentiary” as well as the “management, organization and security of the penitentiary.” The warden or her/his designate authorizes the use of force against offenders, signs inmate transfer forms, and is ultimately responsible for the enforcement of the legal, social and physical parameters of prisoners’ lives. Ultimately, the warden is the gatekeeper between the inside world of the prison and the outside world.
Historically, the social and physical borders of North American prisons have not always been so discriminating. During his early nineteenth century tour of American prisons, Charles Dickens was surprised to find an innocent boy jailed in Philadelphia Prison. The boy had witnessed the murder of his mother by his father and was being held as a material witness to the crime (Dickens, 1868). Kingston Penitentiary, one of the oldest prisons in Canada, once held contracts with manufacturers who set up their businesses inside the massive grey limestone walls that still surround the prison (Hennessy, 1999). During this same period, prisons in Canada housed women, men, boys, the elderly, sick and the mentally ill under one roof until the Victorian era, when the concern for the classification of offenders became largely an issue of morality and productivity. Members of the public expressed misgivings about the “incarceration of men and women together” because this procedure simply “turned the prison into a training ground for ‘vice and crime’” (Carrigan, 1991, p. 457). The prison reformist Elizabeth Fry, for example, called for the complete separation of the sexes in order to ensure the better classification of criminals in prisons, and to “ensure that they were properly employed in prison as well as provided adequate religious and secular instruction” (p. 450).

Until the Second World War, the enactment of justice in Canada was quite arbitrary. The rituals of crime and punishment hardly deserved to be described as a “system.” Laws were not uniform across the country, so sentences were set differently, depending on the province. Sentence terms for repeat crimes, committed by the same defendants, and handed down by the same judge varied enormously from case to case. Magistrates exercised autocratic, often abusive authority based on whim and conjecture (Carrigan, 1991). The capriciousness of the justice system was so obvious that Sir John A. MacDonald felt compelled in 1871 to write a letter to the Warden of Kingston Penitentiary in which he argued that the certainty “of punishment and more especially, certainty that the sentence will be carried out is of more consequence in the prevention of the crime than the severity of the sentence” (Quoted in Edmison, 1965, p. 299).

Modernization is characterized by the process of social differentiation manifested in the division of labour, contract versus status relations between persons, and by bureaucratic organizations based on legal-rational forms of authority (Habermas, 1970). Canadian prisons
assumed their modern form shortly after the Second World War, becoming the less ambiguous, bureaucratic places of separation and difference we know today. During the early postwar period, the correctional system saw the development of a professionally-trained correctional staff and the enactment of standardized national laws governing prison operations. The recommendations of the Archambault Commission in 1938 were implemented and the justice system adopted a standardized system of inmate classification and segregation policy that is still in effect. Despite the efforts to find a carcerai place for everyone, women offenders, because of their small numbers, continued to be a “correctional afterthought” (Ross and Fabiano, 1985a) until the Task Force Report on Federally Sentenced Women, commonly referred to as Creating Choices, was published in 1990.

In this chapter, I have identified some of the personal and professional reasons for this study. In the next chapter, I review some of the pertinent literature on teacher practical knowledge as well as some of the literature on prison literacy programming in Canada and the United States, in order to situate the study for the reader unfamiliar with this field. The literature review raises questions regarding the role of the prison teacher in the power/knowledge complex of the prison. While some attempt is made to address the points made by key authors writing about education in prison, the critical intent of my study is relatively subdued. I would like to share with the reader what teachers have to say about their practice. As so little is known about the topic, I propose a qualitative case study approach in Chapter Three. The qualitative case study privileges the interpretations of teachers and honours their voices. In Chapter Four, the data chapter, I share with the reader extensive passages and interpretations of transcripts from semi-structured interviews as well as physical evidence that speaks to the teachers’ practical knowledge and experience. In Chapter Five, I discuss the salient topics raised in the previous chapter and present recommendations for a professional development program for prison educators and comment on the implications for the study for further research.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Practical Knowledge

Introduction

In the previous chapter I provided an overview of the significance, background, setting for this study. In this chapter I explore the theoretical background to the study, beginning with the literature that speaks to the problems of sustaining the life-world orientations of social actors and teachers in the face of a highly rationalized and bureaucratic society and school system. I also examine the literature pertaining to teachers’ practical knowledge, which I organize as responses to questions regarding the representation, legitimation, investigation and validation of this form of knowledge. There is a clear and obvious link between the concerns for the recovery of the life-world and explorations of teacher practical knowledge. Finally, I look at the literature on education in prison from the perspectives of the commonplaces of knowledge–milieu, learner, subject matter, teacher—which are identified by Schwab and Elbaz in their studies into teacher practical knowledge.

The Practical and the Recovery of the Life-World

There is a marvellous comment by Walter Benjamin on a Klee painting that seems to evoke the sentiments of the contemporary teacher knowledge debates and sets the tone for my discussion:

A Klee painting named Angelus Novus shows an Angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has caught in his wings with such violence that the
angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. That storm is what we call Progress (Benjamin, 1968, p. 257-8).

The study of teachers' practical knowledge is located theoretically, within an often unacknowledged desire to make whole what has been smashed by modernity or intrusions into the life-worlds of social actors by rationality complexes associated with bureaucracies, empirical science and capitalist systems of production. Kondrat's (1992) article on the practical knowledge of social workers is testimony to the pervasive interest in practitioner knowledge across the disciplines and to the concern for the preservation of forms of interaction associated with the life-world. Like other theorists of practical knowledge, she acknowledges Clandinin and Polanyi for their contributions to personal practical knowledge, tacit knowledge, and the place of reflection in the professional practice of social workers. Habermas's (1971) theory of knowledge interests and his distinction between practical, technical and theoretic forms of reasoning, being, and acting in the world provides the philosophical support for Kondrat's project. Like Habermas, Kondrat is concerned with the impact of instrumental and technical forms of rationality on social interaction. Her work is an instance of a more general anxiety, in late modernity, about a society fragmented into distinct value spheres, rationality complexes and affective orientations, and the exclusion of different, holistic and integrative ways of knowing the world.

Gellner (1974) believes that the general interest in “everyday life” is the result of the fragmentation and differentiation brought about by modernity. This situation has resulted in a counter-movement to restore the ordinary, taken-for-granted qualities of everyday life: “In the days when the Lebenswelt was simply the world, die Welt, no one felt much need to demonstrate its existence and importance. It would indeed have been an odd enterprise, and one difficult to explain” (p. 195). There was a time, he adds, when the Lebenswelt, or lifeworld “was not felt so precarious as to require proof” (p. 195).

According to Habermas (1987), the life-world, that “reservoir of taken-for-granted, of unshaken convictions that participants draw upon in cooperative processes of interpretation” (p. 124) is under siege by the system—his neo-Marxian term for the forces of
production that depend on knowledge grounded in natural scientific and administrative techniques biassed toward the control of the social and physical environment. This process accounts for the authority of the hermeneutic imagination in the social sciences. According to Smith (1991), hermeneutics is ubiquitous "because of the erosion of the life-world; its ubiquity is an expression of our need (in a social and instrumental sense) to better understand the confusing world in which we live" (p. 188).

In the dialectic of system and life-world, educational practices have also been disrupted–colonized–by the rationalization process grounded in the logic of capital and techniques of administration (Habermas, 1987). The teachers' practical knowledge movement appears as a site of resistance to this process, opposing fragmented, reductionist, and efficiency-driven visions of schooling with inquiries into the concrete, lived experiences of teachers and others. Representing other theorists who proposed a return to the earthly ground of education, Aoki (1981) takes exception to the intrusion of positivist forms of reasoning based on the methods and interests of the natural sciences into the life-world of teaching. He opposed studies of education that adopt a hypothetical-deductive approach, behaviourist idioms, systems theory, structural-functionalist principles and the statistical methods of the empirical sciences that objectify teachers and fail to appreciate the essence and particularities of their practice.

Aoki's (1981) work, like that of others who proposed a return to the classroom, is deeply ontological, calling upon researchers to "turn back to origins–to the unwritten constitutions of everyday life, to the social context of people actually communicating" (p. 39). The desire for a unifying sense of the world creeps into his phenomenological theorizing of education, with notions such as dwelling, spirit, and essences, as his work looks "toward the source itself, the source which gives life or spirit to inspire our pedagogic life" (p. 40). He also challenged the privileged position afforded theory over practice. Aoki (1981) and van Manen (1982) returned to the intersubjective and phenomenological ground of knowledge and experience associated with the life-world so as to rescue and "reconstitute 'practice' from its mired status as 'applied theory' or 'instrumental action'" (Aoki, 1981, p. 40).

The importance of the life-world as a conceptual category in the study of the practical knowledge of teachers is evident in Craig's (1986) article: "Understanding the Life-world of
the First-Year Drama Teacher” in which the author works inductively and thematically to elicit the structure of a drama teacher’s knowledge by identifying elements that constitute her life-world. With a better understanding of their world, Craig hoped to develop a meaningful professional development program for future drama teachers.

Grumet (1987) also used the concept of the life-world to articulate her concerns regarding teacher knowledge and experience. Faced with the wreckage of modernity, Grumet’s work on personal knowledge suggested that researchers rescue education from technical forms of reasoning by providing life-world accounts of every day, common “communicative situations and interpretative politics within which the stories that constitute our history, companionship and identities are told” (p. 319). She attacked the positivist methods and cultures that disrespected as well as fragmented teachers’ lives and practices by reinstating and privileging the epistemological and experiential significance of the life-world.

In their attempts to make whole what had been smashed, researchers have turned to ethnographic methods to provide holistic accounts of educational practice (Wilson, 1977; Stake, 1978; Stacey, 1988; Wolcott, 1987; 1988, 1990). “Fieldwork” promised researchers engaged in these knowledge debates refuge from a cluttered and suspicious politics of knowledge associated with the academy. Offering a similar, if somewhat naive promise, there has been a phenomenological return to the primacy of experience (Eisner, 1988; van Manen, 1982; Connelly & Clandinin, 1993) accompanied by an aesthetic appreciation of a teacher’s practical knowledge and the teacher’s world (Eisner, 1988). Schwab’s seminal investigations into the practical framed many of these discussions.

Schwab’s Contribution to the Study of Teacher Practical Knowledge

Joseph Schwab’s (1954; 1969; 1971; 1973; 1983) work has been foundational to the study of teacher practical knowledge. Rather than propose theory-driven and deductively-constructed representations of schooling, knowledge and experience, Schwab’s work on curricular reform and the practical opened up the teachers’ world and the myriad phenomena in it for further study.

Schwab’s (1969) interest in the practical was initially a pragmatic response to the legitimation crises of his time that were having a profound effect on the educational system.
Legitimation crises appear when the authority of traditional institutions in society is called into question (Habermas, 1970). Schwab reproached academics for their over-reliance on theory that only offered “idealized representations of real things” (p. 12). Researchers, he claimed, simply did not know what was going on in the classrooms and so he proposed that they study the curriculum “in action,” in a manner which “treats real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer and different from their theoretical representations” (p. 12). His work was highly influential in altering the superordinate relation of theory (located in the academy) to practice (located in the classroom). He suggested to theorists that the novel problems of the American educational system at the time could not be solved by familiar solutions (p. 18), in other words, with more theory.

Schwab felt that researchers and administrators could not appreciate the complexities of schooling from where they sat in the university, despite their zeal to set the parameters for school operations, teacher practice and curriculum development. This flow of information ignored the practical knowledge of teachers that had to be considered before introducing changes in the school. He described practical knowledge as knowledge gained as a result of a “series of actions undertaken with respect to identified frictions and failures in the machine and inadequacies evidenced in felt shortcomings of its products” (Schwab, 1969, p. 17). Another author (Lyons, 1990) has noted that these situations of practical conflict “cannot easily be dealt with by the choice of one principle over another, but demand new kinds of integrations, where creative resolutions are sought” (p. 168). Since the situations are unique, “created out of the particularity of lives, situations and circumstances, action to be taken is not a given, determined by the application of a single principle. Rather, action is determined by questioning, searching, and deliberating” (p. 168).

Schwab (1969) concluded that it was necessary to examine the teacher’s equivalent to the knowledge found in practical or deliberative arts such as law or economics because this knowledge held the key to understanding the novel problems of the period affecting education. Only by tapping into the life-world orientations of the teacher could these problems be addressed: “It is this recourse to accumulated lore, to experience of actions and their consequences, to action and to reaction, at the level of the concrete case, which constitutes the heart of the practical” (p. 14).
For Schwab (1969), the "practical" did not refer to

... the cumbersome practicality of the mediocre administrator and the man
on the street, for whom the practical means the easily achieved, familiar goals
which can be reached by familiar means. I refer, rather to a complex
discipline, relatively unfamiliar to the academic and differing radically from the
disciplines of the theoretical. It is the discipline concerned with choice and
action, in contrast with the theoretic, which is concerned with knowledge. Its
methods lead to defensible decisions, where the methods of the theoretic lead
to warranted conclusions, and differ radically from the methods and
competences entailed in the theoretic (p. 1-2).

Schwab’s view of practical knowledge was also shaded by a classical, Aristotelian sense of
knowledge associated with making prudent decisions about the good and just life that effect
the community (Garver, 1984).

Schwab (1971) was also convinced that theoretical representations of educational
practice were too restricted by the research canons of their disciplines, and so in his second
article on the practical, Schwab recommended an interdisciplinary approach to the study of
the practical:

There are practical arts concerned with particulars of the practical omitted by
theory. There are eclectic arts concerned with the incompleteness of each
subject of the behavioural sciences. There are other, eclectic arts that select,
amend, adjust, and sometimes combine the incomplete views which constitute
the plurality of theories generated in each behavioural science (p. 503).

In his third article, Schwab (1973) argued that school reform had to respect the
commonplaces of teaching, which he identified as the learner, the teacher, the milieu and the
subject matter. These dimensions of educational practice were “of equal rank” (p. 508) and
each was a “vital factor in educational thought and practice,” so none could “be omitted” (p.
509) where educational reform was concerned. His examination of these four, inseparable
elements of teaching is taken up again in his fourth article on the practical.

to Do.” By this time, Schwab recognized the importance of teacher practical knowledge in
his study of the practical, citing Canadian scholars like Freema Elbaz (who had been influenced by his earlier work) to elaborate on its significance:

Teachers practice an art. Moments of choice of what to do, how to do it, with whom and at what pace, arise hundreds of times a school day, and arise differently every day and with every group of students. No command or instruction can be so formulated as to control that kind of artistic judgement and behaviour, with its demand for frequent, instant choices of ways to meet an ever varying situation. The personal practical knowing in back of this kind of teacher judgement is currently under study (by Elbaz, 1983) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education with early results which are extremely interesting. Therefore teachers must be involved in debate, deliberation, and decision about what and how to teach (Schwab, 1983, p. 23).

The theme of teachers as knowledgeable and active agents, appreciated for their decision-making and artistic abilities, was becoming more common in the literature at this time (Clark & Peterson, 1986), and so too, was the political agenda to appreciate the teachers' knowledge and experience. Schwab's (1983) appendix to the fourth article on the practical reads like a manifesto for the empowerment of teachers. Engaging teachers, as opposed to only subject specialists or administrators in curricular reform, was part of his strategy to "put the special knowledge and special mode of knowing of teachers into the greater service of schooling and to provide recognition of such contributions" (p. 265). Schwab (1983) argued that schools and the teaching profession generally had to "provide a basis for teacher's recognition of themselves as masters of a special lore and competence, and constituting, in short, a profession by providing them, via journals, meetings and visitations, with a sense of intellectual community . . . ." (p. 265).

Schwab's fourth article precipitated another series of articles on the subject of the practical (Fox, 1985; Reid, 1984; Schwartz, 1984; Shulman, 1984; Tyler, 1984; Wegener, 1986). Fox's (1985) article underscored the themes covered by Schwab over the past two decades, focussing as it did on the distinctions between theory and practice, the universal and the concrete, deductive and inductive methods of inquiry, and expressing the general concerns of practical philosophy regarding the good, prudence and deliberation in practical
matters. Practical knowledge, Fox reiterated, emerges from the problems teachers encounter in particular and concrete situations—from the frictions in the machine.

In the genealogy of the practical, many researchers have ignored an earlier article by Schwab (1954) titled: “Eros and Education: A Discussion of One Aspect of Discussion” even though it anticipates the direction Schwab was to take in his later articles on the practical. This article offered concrete examples of frictions in the machine that occur in the relationships between “real” teachers and students. Schwab presented the reader with his insightful knowledge into the negotiation of teacher-student relationships and he described how they are mediated by the curriculum, classroom design, and the administrative structure of the school. These elements of school life potentially can destroy student Eros which is “as much the energy source in the pursuit of truth as it is in the motion toward pleasure, friendship, fame or power” (p. 54). Engaging students in face-to-face interactions so that they are stimulated and puzzled by the curricular content, Schwab believed, tapped into this energy source.

For Schwab, the complex relational dynamics between teacher and student were an important dimension of teacher practical knowledge. Teachers he realized, inevitably become entangled in complex relationships with their students so that they must steer between the clashing rocks of liking and respect; the student and teacher’s desire for selfhood; the teachers’ sense of usefulness and how this sense is structured in the classroom relationship; the seductiveness of student arguments (as testing behaviour) and their effects on teacher-student relationships; the appropriateness of a student’s persistent interruptions; abuses of teacher authority and their effects on the classroom; the roles that teachers assume, as friends, parents, taskmasters, inquisitors, examiners and policemen, and how these roles hinder or facilitate relationships with students. Teachers must navigate their way through complex interpersonal dynamics by finding the relational midpoint:

Respect arises out of liking when the teacher successfully traverses the straight road between the extremes. . . . On one extreme he may be overanxious and overstate a wish to respond or like; in this case, respect will be lost. On the other extreme, he may be too cold, or perhaps too impatient or preoccupied, to not signal an invitation and response; in this case, some
liking may be lost, for, once rejected, good students are cautious about trying
again (Schwab, 1954, p. 56).

Somehow teachers must determine the “mean or balance” which cannot be “given both a
general and precise formulation. The extremes, however, can; and in terms of these, the
teacher may locate the mean himself” (p. 67). In other words, teachers must somehow
achieve the right distance, and how this is accomplished is an important practical task.

**Canadian Inquiries into Teacher Practical Knowledge**

Influenced by Schwab, Dewey and Schutz, Elbaz (1983) described teacher practical
knowledge as the integrated knowledge teachers have of students’ learning styles, needs and
interests, the teachers’ repertoire of instructional techniques and classroom management
skills, their knowledge of the social structure, the community, subject matter, and theory.
For Elbaz, teacher practical knowledge is a specific case of the general stock of knowledge
that social actors employ in the social construction and typifications of their life-worlds, and
it shares with this kind of knowledge a tacit, loosely structured, and inconsistent logical
structure in response to contradictions in the situation and the different problems and levels
of abstraction required to resolve those contradictions (Elbaz, 1983, pp. 75-76).

Briefly, Elbaz (1983) identified five content areas of teacher knowledge that
corresponded closely to Schwab’s theory of educational commonplaces. Teachers have a
practical knowledge of the curriculum, subject matter, instruction, milieu, and the self. A
teacher’s practical knowledge is structured by five “orientations” described as situational,
social, personal, experiential and theoretical. These orientations and content areas are
realized in practice by way of principles of practice, rules of practice and images. The five
content areas are largely self-explanatory. Elbaz reveals her phenomenological theorizing
when she defines orientation as the term “to indicate the way that practical knowledge is held
in active relation to the world of practice” (p. 101) – in social, personal, theoretical situations
and so on.

Rules of practice, principles of practice and images reflect the teachers’ “different
ways of mediating between thought and action” (Elbaz, 1983, p. 134). A rule of practice “is
simply what the term suggests—a brief, clearly formulated statement of what to do or how to
do it in a particular situation frequently encountered in practice” (p. 132). These rules of practice may be highly specific. In other words, these are statements regarding the ways teachers are to behave in common and frequently encountered teaching situations so that enacting the rule is a matter of recognizing the situation and remembering the appropriate rule. A principle of practice is a “more inclusive and less explicit formulation in which the teacher’s purposes, implied in the statement of a rule, are more clearly evident” (p. 133). A principle of practice is used to guide teachers’ actions and justify reasons for their actions.

The least explicit and most inclusive of the three concepts is the concept of the image: “On this level, the teacher’s feelings, values, needs and beliefs combine as she forms images of how teaching should be, and marshals experience, theoretical knowledge, school folklore, to give substance to these images” (p. 134). Unlike rules of practice and principles of practice, images do not push the teacher forward, but pull the teacher toward an ideal, engaging the cognitive, affective and practical content of the teacher’s knowledge for its realization.

Jean Clandinin (1986) takes up Elbaz’s theory of the image to describe at length its significance as a means of understanding teacher knowledge. Her work with Connelly on this and other topics is well-known for its enormous contribution to the discussion of personal practical knowledge that positioned teachers as epistemic agents who know themselves, their classroom, students, curricula and subject matter. Undoubtedly, these authors prepared an escape from the positivist prison-house of language and inquiry and the positivist cultures of teaching, permitting the researcher opportunities to return to the places where teachers dwell (Wright, 2001a).

Inspired by Elbaz’s earlier work on practical knowledge, Connelly & Clandinin (1987) described how their study of personal practical knowledge

... marks the boundaries of our inquiry into teaching. The term ‘knowledge’ points to our underlying epistemological interest and associates us with those interested in the problems of knowledge and knowing in the curriculum. The term ‘practical’ qualifies this epistemological interest by aligning us with writers such as Schon whose interest is in the epistemology of practical thinking. The term ‘personal’ qualifies our interest in the epistemology of
practice by pointing to our interest in how specific individuals know their classroom situation. Accordingly, the term 'personal practical knowledge' defines our interest in understanding teaching acts in terms of personalized concrete accounts of people knowing. Personal practical knowledge encompasses every dimension of understanding by which a person organizes and interprets experience in ways that make more or less sense to him or her... it is a knowledge embodied in and manifested through practices, routines, spatial orderings and aesthetic dimensions of experience...” (p. 138).

Connelly & Clandinin (1985) referred to practical knowledge as the knowledge “on call.” It is experiential, embodied, and reconstructed out of the narratives of a user’s life. For these authors, practical knowledge does not have an “identifiable conceptual status.” It is a kind of contingent knowledge that appears as “we do our damnedest” to work through situations. “We react this way now, another way later, drawing on experiential images, habits, and bits of experience, including those of conceptual origin” (p. 183). For these authors, investigating teacher practical knowledge is an act of “re-collection, a process of crystallization” of the “narrative unites of life experience” (p. 184) that appear when teachers describe their professional landscapes.

Mullen’s (1997) experiences in prison as a creative writing teacher and observer-participant in prisoner rehabilitation programs for one year reflects the literature and methods developed at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education under Connelly’s mentor ship. Autobiographical in approach, her account of her prison experience confuses readers who are told that, on the one hand, they will be provided with her “experiences of abandonment, loss and suffering as well as intellectual forms of constraint” (prelude, n.p), which is her reason for using the organizing metaphor of the “imprisoned self” to describe her study. Elsewhere though, she stated her narrative is about the educative situations of prisoners/students. She believed she shared a common story with prisoners in regard to the “literal confinement of lives; about imprisoned selves that struggle for articulation and voice; and about the phenomenon of imprisonment itself as linked to education” (prelude, n. p.). Though her study assists researchers interested in forms of narrative inquiry and qualitative methods, it lacks trustworthiness because of its unwarranted assumption of similar lives lived,
despite Mullen's claim that she has "written, lived and dreamed images of imprisonment and education" (prelude, n.p.), or that she believed there was a "possibility of connection between corrections and teacher education in my personal life" (prelude, n.p.). Her desire for metaphorical closeness to her research subjects—to go native—threatens to dematerialize the oppressive materiality of prison and its effects on prisoners who most likely, would disagree with her analogy between prison life and teacher training in the academy.

Fox's (1994) dissertation examined teachers' educational rituals of control in a prison setting and is important because it recognized the voices of prison teachers, citing interview segments that illustrated the forms of social control teachers use to manage their students and classrooms. Unfortunately, the study suffered somewhat because Fox seemed to lack the connoisseurship (Eisner, 1991) that comes from having spent some time teaching in prisons.

My article (Wright, 1998) drew upon some of the data collected as a pilot project for this dissertation. In this work I provided interpretations of the prison teachers' practical ways of knowing their craft, exploring topics such as teacher identity and boundary-work, the visceral experiences of teaching in prisons, teacher dilemmas, and instructional practices in the prison school. Some of these investigations anticipated the direction this dissertation has taken.

In the next section of this review, I summarize the research on the subject of teacher practical knowledge according to how researchers respond to the following interrelated research questions: What is teacher practical knowledge? Who can legitimately produce knowledge? What methods are appropriate for studying knowledge? How are we to convey or represent knowledge? And, how can we establish validity in studies of practical knowledge, (where terms such as validity and reliability are part of the debates)? These are not always distinct questions or topics of inquiry. Many researchers recognize that epistemological questions are closely tied to political and methodological questions. Debating just who legitimately can produce knowledge, for example, raises both epistemological and political questions. Furthermore, defining what is meant by knowledge promotes and reinforces certain research strategies that are useful in recovering and examining it so that epistemological concerns also pose methodological questions.
What is Teacher Practical Knowledge?

A number of authors have suggested definitions of teacher practical knowledge. Sternberg & Caruso (1985) for example, treat practical knowledge as procedural knowledge that is useful in everyday life; it is a knowledge of and for use that establishes a relationship between the knower and the environment. It is knowledge that is active; someone does something with practical knowledge. Feiman–Nemser and Floden (1986) used the term to refer to the “beliefs, insights, and habits that enable teachers to do their work in schools.” For them, a teacher’s practical knowledge “has the characteristics that philosophers have always attributed to practical knowledge—that it is time bound and situation specific, personally compelling and oriented toward action” (p. 512). Powell’s (1996) proposed that the study of practical knowledge highlight the “subjective, individualistic approach to curriculum making,” the “teachers’ voices in curriculum decision making,” and illuminate “the relationships of their prior experiences and their classroom teaching” (p. 149).

Influenced by Connelly & Clandinin’s research, Johnson (1989) sketched the experiential, aesthetic, and epistemological dimensions of personal practical knowledge. He paid attention to the ontological dimensions of a teacher’s practical knowledge—how teachers discover and experience their “mode of being in, or having, a world” (Johnson, 1989, p. 362). Disputing positivist models of inquiry, he argued that researchers should consider the “entire way” in which teachers “have a structured world that they make some sense of” insofar as “this understanding affects the way they structure classroom experience and interact with their students, students’ parents, colleagues, and administrators” (Johnson, 1989, p. 363 & p. 361).

Johnson’s transactional understanding of personal experience and practical knowledge that viewed teachers as reflective agents who shape and are shaped by the world is a common theme in the literature. This theme and variations of it appear in studies of teacher cognition (Kagan, 1993; Copeland, Birmingham, Demeulle, D’Emidio-Caston, & Natal, 1994), teacher thinking (Clark 1993; & Lambert, 1986), the dilemmas of knowing (Lyons, 1990), the role of knowledge in teacher education and reform (Diorio, 1982 & 1983; Shulman, 1987; Floden & Klinzing, 1990), and the relationship of teacher philosophy to classroom practice (Scott, Chovanec, & Young, 1994). Perhaps this should come as no surprise, given that Elbaz’s earlier work on practical knowledge was greatly influenced by a
discourse of experience that can be traced back to Dewey and the philosophical traditions of pragmatism, existentialism and phenomenology.

Grumet’s (1981 & 1987) research on teacher biography and the personal dimensions of practical knowledge was marked by her appreciation for Dewey’s efforts to break away from the Cartesian bifurcation of experience and his integration of idealist and materialist epistemologies. She believed he invested his “philosophical enquiry with the wholeness that he knew to be the pervasive quality of human experience. It is this very quality of wholeness that is the problem that concerns me here” (p. 121).

Many of the authors concerned with defining practical knowledge have been influenced by Dewey’s (1938/1963) discourse of experience and by his notion of the problematic situation. Challenging the correspondence theory of truth, Dewey believed that every “genuine experience has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had” (p. 39). It was the active sense of knowledge and experience that Elbaz drew upon when she described how practical knowledge is “oriented.” Dewey’s concept of the problematic situation exemplified his thinking regarding the relationship of knowledge to experience. In these situations, knowledge was not the product of an isolated and doubting spectator; it resulted from persons engaged in situations that necessitate enquiry because the situation was troubled, ambiguous, confusing or obscure. Connelly & Clandinin (1999) similarly believed that teachers developed their practical knowledge as a consequence of the problems they encounter in the countless interactions between teachers and students, colleagues, technologies, in the space and time of the classroom, and within the complex organization of the school and the community.

Contemporary research into the practical knowledge of teachers also draws upon Dewey’s holistic appreciation of knowledge. Dewey criticized the fragmentation and specialization of knowledge that created artificial distinctions between logical and emotional as well as artistic and technical ways of knowing (Dewey, 1926/1974, p. 141). Limiting the definition of knowledge in these ways of seeing narrowed, Dewey believed, our ability to appreciate and record the richness and complexity of experience. Protesting against narrow definitions of knowledge, Dewey concentrated on the integrative, aesthetic or heightened awareness of ordinary experience—the physiological and affective sensibilities which develop
as the whole person establishes "a new relation with the surroundings" and the "conditions of life" (p. 143). His aesthetic sensibility infused other researchers' sense of practical knowledge with an underlying belief in the creative and restorative powers of a mind that brings harmony to some of the perplexing features of everyday life.

In summary, many investigations into teachers' practical knowledge is undergirded by a concern for accurately portraying the experiences of teachers in classrooms and schools. Many of the studies conducted into the knowledge of teachers are influenced by Dewey's consideration of problematic situations. A common thread in the discussion is that practical knowledge is an experiential and active form of knowledge. Though it refers to content knowledge, the content is "on call" in response to the unsettled and tensional conditions of the school and classroom, or what Schwab describes as the frictions in the machine. Clearly, the concept of teacher practical knowledge is a very inclusive concept that speaks to, if it is not synonymous with, the life-world of teachers.

**How Are We to Represent Teacher Practical Knowledge?**

Knowledge is rooted in experience and requires a form for its representation. Since all forms of representation constrain what can be represented, they can only partially represent what we know. Forms of representation not only constrain representation, they limit what we seek (Eisner, 1988a, p. 15).

Returning to the real world of the classroom presented theorists with methodological problems as they soon realized they lacked appropriate forms of representation to convey the practical knowledge and experience of teachers. Recognizing this to be the case, Connelly & Clandinin (1988) pursued a research language...

... that will permit us to talk about ourselves in situations and that will also let us tell stories of our experience. What language will let us do this? This language, we, and others, have developed is a language close to experience, a language of affect, morality, and aesthetics. It is a language of images, personal philosophy, rules, practical principles, rhythms, metaphors, and narrative unity (p. 59).
Finding a language to describe the practical certainly concerned Schwab (1983) who wrote: “a practical paper must necessarily exemplify the arts of the practical insofar as this is possible in expository prose as against the natural language of the practical which is deliberative exchange among several persons” (p. 239). The spoken, rather than the written word, is the language of the practical. Out of respect for the oral tradition, and true to Dewey’s notion of experience, Schwab resisted the “tidying up of language to conceal slippage and playfulness in the use of words and concepts” that he associated with the oral tradition (Reid, 1984, p. 109).

Others, such as Connelly & Clandinin (1988) considered the narrative or story form as a natural vehicle for conveying teacher knowledge. Listening to the stories that teachers tell about their practice enabled them to appreciate the interrelated dimensions of teacher knowledge. For many researchers, providing data and interpretation through the story form offered them a way of “... capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal, and thus redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness” (Carter, 1993, p. 6).

Who Can Legitimately Produce Knowledge?

The study of teacher practical knowledge is closely aligned with the agenda to hear the voices of teachers. Voice in education denotes the commitment to return to the “teachers right to speak for and about teaching” (Elbaz, 1991, p. 10); it has a political as well as an epistemological meaning that overcomes the “opposition between personal and academic modes of knowing” (Carter, 1993, p. 8). In the past, the voices of the researched have often been muted (Butt, Raymond, McCue, & Yamagishi., 1992; Ellsworth, 1989). In the field of curriculum reform, where much of the early dialogue regarding teacher knowledge originated, teachers were constantly being told what they had to do by those who had never experienced “chalk face” or those who had forgotten about the realities of the classroom (Elbaz, 1983).

Redefining the teacher as a knowing subject altered the relationships of authority between the researcher (as the one who knows and is responsible for theory) and the researched. After a dearth of research that respected this principle in the 1970s, numerous

How Should We Study Teacher Practical Knowledge?

For Elbaz (1983), getting at the practical knowledge of teachers involves a methodological stance that...

... seeks to bridge gaps existing between areas of knowledge with particular points of view which enjoins us to view as separate—theoretical and practical knowledge, the cognitive and affective domains, and knowledge viewed (empirically—analytically) as product and knowledge viewed (phenomenologically) as process. . . . The aim is to develop a method of studying teachers (and of conceiving their role and work), that takes account of both cognitive and affective considerations; that reflects their orientation to action and to experience, without ignoring the stable and invariant features of their work and knowledge; and that acknowledges the importance of theory while firmly situated in practice (p. 23).

A comprehensive overview of the various methods used in the study of practical knowledge was suggested in Connelly & Clandinin's article (1990) titled “Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry” where the authors described narrative as “both phenomenon and method” (p. 2). As a phenomenon, narrative refers to the stories people tell of their experiences and situations. As a method, narrative is understood as the “study of the ways that humans experience the world” and it is aligned with “qualitatively oriented educational researchers working with experiential philosophy, psychology, critical theory, curriculum studies, and anthropology” (p. 3). Narrative inquiry also emphasizes the collaborative nature of the research process, engaging both the researcher and the researched in dialogic and caring encounters where both share in the production of stories.

Geertz’s proposal for thick descriptions of phenomena, and for fieldwork methods in general, fired the imagination of researchers into teacher practical knowledge. In the effort
to produce thick descriptions, researchers interested in the practical knowledge of teachers have adopted modes of inquiry associated with oral history, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, ethnography ethnology, literary criticism and the case study. The inclusive nature of the definition of teacher practical knowledge (as a special case of the general stock of knowledge) certainly presents the researcher with plenty of room with regard to genres and methods. Grumet’s (1987) work summarizes the situation.

For many years now, curriculum theorists and educational researchers have been working to devise forms of research in education that honour the spontaneity, specificity, and ambiguity of knowledge. Fleeing from ‘banking education,’ the ‘process/product’ paradigm, and all the objectives, competencies, and skills that atomized human action, we sought to return concepts of educational practice and research to persons, honouring both the history and agency of subjectivity. Perhaps we would have wandered forever, adrift in the complexity of human experience, had not the presence of positivism and instrumental rationality, hovering over us like helicopters ready to lift us out of our dilemma and deposit us on firm ground, provoked us to stake claims to the Lebenswelt, pitch our tents and cultivate ‘thick description.’ There we have laboured in settlements called ‘qualitative research,’ ‘human science research,’ ‘reconceptualization,’ ‘teacher thinking,’ ‘ethnography,’ while the ‘copters still circled above (p. 319).

**How Can We Establish “Validity” in Studies of Practical Knowledge?**

Connelly & Clandinin (1990) noted how the “language and criteria for narrative inquiry are under development” (p. 6). For these and many of the authors cited, terms such as validity and reliability are derived from the natural scientific approach to the social world. They reflect paradigmatic, rather than narrative ways of knowing. Paradigmatic thinking is grounded in logico-scientific, mathematical, and context free methods which can be proven to be either true or false (Bruner, 1984). The concern for validity leads researchers to hypotheses testing (Wolcott, 1990), and to representational rather than constructivist theories of reality. Connelly and Clandinin evaluate research according to criteria such as apparency
and verisimilitude, adequacy and plausibility, transferability, consistency, wholeness, readability, economy, selectivity, familiarity, continuity, closure, aesthetic finality and sense of conviction. In case study research, Merriam (1988) considers the trustworthiness of the work, rather than its validity. She also proposed concepts such as: "[w]orking hypotheses, concrete universals, naturalistic generalization, and user or reader generalizability" (p. 184) to replace terms like external validity.

Wolcott (1990) proposed numerous different ways to handle the implicit challenges of validity. He advised researchers to "talk little and listen a lot" (p.127); to report fully, even through some data may not seem to fit into the account being developed; seek feedback from colleagues and friends as well as participants; achieve balance by being fair, complete, and sensitive to the situation. Researchers should also be "rigorously subjective" regarding their role in the research process. He proposed a number of criteria such as balance, completeness, sensitivity, plausibility, internal consistency, and appropriateness to judge the account.

Problems with the Study of Teacher Knowledge and Experience

Studies of teacher knowledge can be situated within the broader debate between agency and structure theorists. Agency theorists tend to see the world as a creation of the consciousness of an autonomous, reflective, social actor, while structure theorists tend to focus on the influence of social, political and economic forces on human consciousness and action (Anyon, 1981; Apple, 1981; Carspecken & Apple, 1992; Giroux, 1980/1999). The central issue for structure theorists is how schools produce and reproduce knowledge that legitimates and perpetuates class inequalities and serves particular interests (Anyon, 1981; Kickbush & Everhart, 1985; Gibson, 1986). Some theorists try to find middle ground between these positions. Kanpol (1991), for example, warns us about establishing any easy, one-to-one correspondence between institutional and social contexts and educational practice.

These debates have implications for the role of the teacher in the processes of social reproduction. For Giroux (1980/1999), the teacher is a social agent who Appropriates–uses, shapes and resists–social, economic and political interests embedded in contexts. Some theorists (Britzman, 1986; 1989; 1991; Wilinsky, 1989; Wright, 2001c) claim that studies of teacher practical knowledge such as those conducted by Connelly & Clandinin have
overstated the teachers’ abilities as epistemic agents by ignoring the context of their knowledge, experience and identity. Schwab was similarly concerned about the social context of teacher knowledge, criticizing the school reform processes that were the product of curriculum experts and policy planners far away from schools and classrooms, “in Moscow,” he joked, that limited what the teacher could do in the school.

Internal squabbles have appeared in the teacher practical knowledge movement between Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi (1988) and Connelly & Clandinin’s (1984; 1985; 1986). Butt and his colleagues believe that Connelly and Clandinin’s work neglects “the process of formation of teachers’ knowledge” and also because there is a “lack of consideration of the stream of social/institutional contexts that shape teachers’ knowledge and expression” (p. 103) in their assessments of teacher knowledge. Their criticisms have “implications not only for how we regard the substance of personal knowledge, but also for the process of formation, as well as, therefore, important considerations as to the modes of inquiry we use to elucidate teacher knowledge” (p. 103). Butt and his colleagues would have us pay close attention to the “framework of particular contexts”–the “intrapersonal (existential), interpersonal, cultural (collective), practical, professional, institutional and societal contexts” (p. 121)–that shape the teachers’ knowledge.

According to Elbaz (1991), Butt and his colleagues do not appear to take their own advice, positing instead the study of teacher knowledge and experience as a completed work (unified object of study), relatively freed from social and economic constraints:

... the treatment of both narrative and biography seem to belie Connelly and Clandinin and Butt and Raymond’s convictions expressed elsewhere that knowledge is constructed, dynamic and changing; their formulations do not always take into account the fact that teacher’s knowledge grows out of a complex, dialectic relationship with the discursive social matrix that shapes it.

... In short, both Connelly & Clandinin and Butt & Raymond fall back on conceptions of unity which are posited within the discursive space of modern thought. It is one thing to share the quest for unity ... but it is quite another to see unity because one has posited it before one looks” (p. 5).
Perhaps her criticism of Butt and his colleagues is a little harsh; certainly at times they appear to try to be true to Dewey's and Schon's "problematic views of classroom life," those confusing, conflicting, problematic situations which demand interpretation (Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi, 1988, p. 121). There are times in their work (Butt, Raymond, & Yamagishi, 1988), when they see the world as a setting of conflict and contradiction, and where the formation of a teacher's practical knowledge is considered in light of formative economic and political influences. There are openings in these works then, for a critical theoretical perspective on the topic.

Recently Connelly & Clandinin (1999) seem to be onto a "post-modern something" (Wright, 2001c) that shows a growing tension with their earlier quest for unity in the object of inquiry (teacher personal practical knowledge) and the bias toward agency identified in their work by their critics. They appear to be struggling with a language that enables them to understand the influences of the social context on the knowledge of teachers. They seem though, to lack a more penetrating perspective regarding the relationship between context and teacher practical knowledge; what appears to be missing is a critical vocabulary to explore these kinds of connections. For example, they refer to the manner that policies and research prescriptions influence the classroom, using the concept of the conduit to do so. A critical vocabulary here—terms such as mediation, appropriation, hegemony, dialectic—would be much more insightful, and illustrative of the dynamic qualities of knowledge and context.

Clandinin & Connelly's work on practical knowledge provides the most obvious example of the efforts to make whole what has been smashed by tidying up the confusing and conflicted experiences of teachers in the story form, despite the fact that some theorists recognize that the "object of study will always exceed its analytic circumscription" (Marcus, 1998, p. 188). They also appear uncomfortable with "messy" texts that "wrestle" as Marcus says, with the "loss of credible holism." so at best, even though there is a sense of the whole, there is not an "evocation" of totality (p. 188), where all parts fit seamlessly and unproblematically together. These texts "insist on their own open-endedness, incompleteness, and uncertainty" (p. 189) in order to "provide new cognitive mappings" (p. 188). Perhaps the story form tends to collapse the tension between experience and narratives of experience.
Influenced by deconstructionist and critical theory, Elbaz (1991) and Elbaz & Elbaz (1988) highlighted the messiness of experience and the textual qualities of research into teacher knowledge. According to Elbaz, Connelly & Clandinin (1990) saw life as a completed work so that they treated teacher knowledge and experience as a static and complete entity in itself—a well-wrought urn—rather than as an on-going negotiation between author (the teacher) and the text (the broader social, political and economic context).

The notion of the literary work as an object is firmly situated within that conception of knowledge, harking back to neoclassical discourse (e.g., the Cartesian cogito), which has variously been referred to as the empiric-analytic, the analytico-referential. In this view, reality is compiled of a finite array of discrete objects (or can be treated as if it were so composed) which can be fully and exhaustively known. This work of the mind, seen as the operation of Universal Reason, gives rise to knowledge of that truth (or of Universal laws) which exists in the world independent of the mind. Such knowledge is at once a possession—‘mental furniture’—and a source of power insofar as it gives its owner domination over reality (Elbaz & Elbaz, 1981, p. 109).

Some earlier studies of teacher practical knowledge however, seemed better prepared to deal with the organizational and social contexts of knowledge production. Feiman-Nemser & Floden’s (1986) study of teaching cultures for example, highlights the normative, organizational and cultural contexts of knowledge formation. They use the term to refer to the “work-related beliefs and knowledge teachers share—beliefs about appropriate ways of acting on the job and rewarding aspects of teaching and knowledge that enables teachers to do their work” (p. 508). They claim that uncovering the “practical wisdom of competent teachers” is a “major task in research on the cultures of teaching” (p. 505). In the genealogy of practical knowledge, these authors inherited their definitions of teaching cultures, partially at least, from the seminal study of teacher practical knowledge conducted by Elbaz (1983). Similarly, Clandinin & Connelly (1999) cite Feiman-Nemser & Floden (1986) as pioneering studies into teacher personal practical knowledge. Despite these theoretical connections, the examination of teacher knowledge as a dimension of teaching cultures (and vice-versa) has been nearly absent in the discussions.
Summary of Literature Review: Teacher Practical Knowledge

In the literature review, I established the affinity between the processes of modernization and fragmentation of society and the desire to recover forms of interaction, ways of thinking and being that speak to the everyday conceptions and natural attitudes of persons in the social world. This concern with the life-world of social actors is taken up in educational theory in the investigation of the practical knowledge of teachers. The concept of “teacher practical knowledge” is a highly inclusive one that refers to all dimensions of a teacher’s professional and to some extent, personal life.

Returning to the places where teachers dwell—understanding the life-world of teachers—has implications for the methods researchers adopt, for the epistemological and political status of teachers and for their professional development. Studies of teachers’ practical knowledge aim to overcome the schism between theory and experience or practice. However they also appear to privilege the experience and agency of teachers to the detriment of a more in-depth understanding of the contexts that shape teacher knowledge and practice. This study compensate for the little attention paid to the institutional contexts of teacher knowledge because it examines how teachers, who are untrained to teach in prison, come to terms with unfamiliar institutional and interpersonal contexts on the inside.

In the next section I review some of the literature on prison education programs and prison programs in general in order to situate the study for the reader who may be unfamiliar with the literature. This review is organized according to the four commonplaces of education described by Schwab. It begins with a review of the nature of the prison as a milieu, the reason being that there is an assumption that, given the total nature of the prison, the milieu may be the most significant dimension of schooling in prison. The privileging of one commonplace over another is warranted. In his early work, Schwab (1973) wrote, “[defensible educational thought must take account of four commonplaces of *equal* rank: the learner, the teacher, the milieu, and the subject matter. None of these can be omitted without omitting a vital factor in educational thought and practice” (p. 509). Later though, Schwab (1983) revised his position on the commonplaces to suggest that they were not of equal rank,
after all. A commonplace should get preferential treatment if that is where many of the practical problems teachers encounter are situated.

Schooling in Prisons

Commonsense suggests that this study presents us with an opportunity to study education in a unique, non-traditional teaching milieu for which teachers are ill-prepared because they lack professional training. This milieu therefore presents them with a number of practical problems which they must resolve. These problems are not new, however. Quite some time ago, Austin MacCormick (1931) posed the question which teachers, it seems, must answer for themselves when they start to teach in prison.

Because they chance to be convicted criminals, with certain attitudes of mind as a result, and because they are in a prison under certain handicaps imposed by its physical features and its routine, what changes in our usual educational content and method will be desirable and necessary? (p. 9).

I begin the literature review with an overview of the literature on the prison as the milieu for the teachers' practical knowledge. The prison and the school within the prison are examined from the perspective of the cultural formations inherent in formal organizations. I then review some of the literature that describes the attributes of the prisoner. The subsequent section examines the literature that suggests what is to be taught in the prison, the subject matter. Curricular frameworks are generally proposed as a means to intervene in the cognitive, moral and social behaviours of offenders. Very little appears to be "hidden" about the curriculum in prison, as the desire to change the prisoners' behaviours seems necessary, given their characteristics as morally and socially, or developmentally delayed. I then provide a brief summary of the literature on the prison literacy teacher from the perspective of insider accounts. Here, there seems to be little to say, which is really the problem that this research project is meant to address, in some small way.
Milieu

Theorists writing about schooling on the inside make the case that the school is a different professional place from the rest of the prison. Perhaps this is the case in any large organization where staffs are responsible for different functions and attaining different goals, so that myriad subcultures form around the primary culture of the institution (Jermier, Slocum, Fry, Gaines, 1991). It would be helpful to keep this idea of the prison as a formal organization consisting of numerous subcultures in mind as I examine the literature on prison schools.

Gehring, Tremper & Eggleston (1991) described the prison as a struggle for power by the bullies (guards) and the bullied (prisoners), two distinct and opposing subcultures, where the teacher is caught somewhere in the middle. This image of the prison as a scene of hidden warfare between groups with irreconcilable differences appears to be characteristic of most total institutions where there exists a hazy, unofficial inmate prison culture in opposition to the official institutional culture (Goffman, 1970; Wheeler, 1969). Teachers do not appear to fare well in prison either, according to some theorists. Through their actions, words, and sometimes, reprimands, guards betray their general anti-educational biases (Eggleston and Gehring, 1986; Gunn, 1999). Teachers are frequently cautious about appearing too close to students in front of others, for fear of being labelled a “bleeding heart liberal” by them and other prison staff (Gunn, 1999).

 Everywhere, it appears, teachers experience the “tension between the instructor’s autonomy and the exigencies of the Department of Corrections” (Gunn, 1999, p. 79). Gathright (1999) attributed the conflict between school and prison personnel to the fact that the goals and practices of education are secondary to the overriding purposes of security and confinement within the prison. Mathews (2000) argued that there are clear ideological differences between prison staff and teaching staff, and that many of the problems that teachers encounter in prison can be attributed to these differences.

Theorists (Duguid, 1994; Eggleston & Gehring, 1986; Werner, 1990; Wright, 1997) have described how schools are subordinate to prison operations such as “feeding” offenders, housing them, and keeping the institution clean, and how these functions interfere with school operations. Duguid (1990a) acknowledged that the struggle between the school, which he
believed can offer meaningful educational programs, and prison operations can be attributed to the

. . . four unstated goals in any correctional service that get in the way of ‘inmate-centred programs.’ These unstated goals are (1) increasing the ease of the employee’s work routines; (2) reducing outside criticism; (3) maintaining the moral superiority of employees over prisoners; (4) maximizing the autonomy of bureaucracy. These management goals can powerfully inhibit any program that aims to create a liberating, self-esteem producing, and skill-enhancing change for prisoners (p. 19).

According to Duguid (1992), prison programs set goals for prisoners that differ from those set by teachers. Prison schools promote the prisoners’ personal development, “movement, growth, maturation and improvement” rather than their “change, transformation, or adaptation” (p. 38) to suit institutional imperatives. For some theorists, schools can and should enable students to grow and mature by providing them with opportunities for moral development. Ideally, schools should become models of the just community (Kohlberg, 1986), a polis of sorts, so as to “permit inmates’ participation in governing at least some significant aspects of their lives,” and to “serve a powerful role in the facilitation of cognitive and affective development” (Arbuthnot, 1990, p. 58). As democratic forums, schools could encourage dialogue, equalize power relations, and stage conditions where students could “learn by doing.” As a consequence of these democratic experiments in self-government, students would share a sense of ownership and responsibility, and act in socially responsible ways. (Arbuthnot, 1990).

In a recent work, Duguid (1999) envisioned schools as democratic, if messy, spaces “for the exercise of accommodation, compromise, and fairness along with guile, bluff and force in social interactions or a version of the ‘public sphere’ that was taken away at the point of incarceration” (p. 19). Educators, he said, must work in the neutral space between the dualisms of prison life, somewhere in-between the battlelines of the keepers and the kept and between conceptualizations of the prisoner as either good and evil and so on. Certainly some critical theorists have viewed the school as a positive place:
... prison classes constitute one of the few areas within an otherwise hostile institution where civil discourse can occur. Thoughtful discussion enhances communicative competence. In an institutional setting where communication tends to be brutalized or shaped by bureaucratic protocols, fostering dialogue around relevant issues is a worthwhile educational activity (Collins, 1998, p. 61).

Davidson (1999), another critical theorist, would probably disagree with Collin's comment. Davidson has argued that the "possibilities for participatory education do not exist within the constraints of officially sanctioned prison schools," in "contexts where people are labelled deficient and delinquent, and staff have an official mandate to rehabilitate (i.e., to normalize) them" (p. 3). Because of "asymmetrical power relations operating within and upon the setting," (p. 3) education for empowerment or self-actualization is only possible if teachers and ex-inmates are brought in from outside the prison. If anything, he added, educators inside the prison are unwitting contributors to the identification, classification and management of groups of people "according to their risks of recidivism" (Davidson, 1996, p. 12). In other words, teachers have assumed the role of risk managers.

The Learner

Generally the learner as prisoner is characterized as authoritarian, impulsive, hedonistic, egocentric, present-minded, and lacking in empathy, self-esteem, and internal loci of control (Gehring, Tremper & Eggleston, 1991). As a result of "deficient mediated learning experiences," prisoners fail to develop adequate thinking strategies and problem-solving abilities with which to organize, understand and operate effectively in the world (Ross & Fabiano, 1985b; La Bar, C., Parkinson, S., Lloyd, A., Coombs, J., & Wright, I., 1983). They are also described as concrete thinkers, pretentious, irresponsible, poor decision makers and suspicious (Samenow & Yochelson, 1976).

Much of the current thinking about learners, education and rehabilitative programs can be traced to Ross & Fabiano's (1985b) seminal, paradigmatic text Time to Think: A Cognitive Model of Delinquency Prevention and Offender Rehabilitation. From their research on social
cognition and development theory, Ross and Fabiano established correctional and educational program goals with a central focus, teaching offenders social competence: social skills, self control, empathy, and positive pro-social coping behaviours. Sourcing Piaget, Fabiano confirmed the developmental logic of their model: “Cognitive development,” she claimed, “proceeds through a series of hierarchical stages, each stage reflecting the acquisition of more advanced cognitive skills.” In offenders, Fabiano (1991) added, “this development had been delayed” (p. 16). Embracing Kohlberg’s moral development theory of delinquency, Fabiano (1991) maintained that criminal behaviour was “associated with developmental delays in the development of moral reasoning about moral issues” (p. 8).

Literacy and rehabilitation programs have been strongly influenced by human development theories that identify the behaviours and attitudes of prisoners along a developmental continuum. Research along these lines has appeared in studies of developmental delay (Fox, 1989; Winters, 1993; Khatibi, 1991), Kohlberg’s moral developmental framework and its relation to prison education, (Arbuthnot, 1984; Eggleston & Gehring, 1986), Erikson’s Ego Developmental Theory (Farelly, 1993), cognitive development, based on Piaget’s work as well as that of Ross & Fabiano’s (Larson, 1988; Garrido & Sanchis, 1991) and moral, cognitive and ego development (Wright, 1997).

Subject Matter

Observing Duguid’s prison humanities program in British Columbia, Eggleston & Gehring (1986) identified five major elements of the Canadian model of prison literacy: “cognitive instruction, participatory decision-making, Kohlberg’s moral education, Samenow and Yochelson’s theory of criminal personality, and an emphasis on the humanities” (p. 89).

The Humanities program offered at British Columbia Penitentiary and Matsqui Institution from 1972 to 1993. Initially the program was supervised by Doug Ayers until 1983 when Stephen Duguid’s assumed leadership for the program. Commenting on the program, Duguid (1980) stated that it was “aimed at demonstrating the connection between education and cognitive and personality changes among prisoners” (p. 30). The program “concentrated in the humanities and the social sciences, starting with a few courses in English, history and psychology, and then expanding to include a full range of courses in these fields plus
sociology and anthropology” (p. 30). It blended humanist values with development theory and promoted the growth, maturation and development of offenders.

Based on the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and Thomas Lickona as well as the work of Yochelson and Samenow, the program was concerned with the prisoner’s moral development, the assumption being that criminal behaviour resulted from an

underdeveloped moral structure or moral reasoning ability. Further to this, it is held that cognitive development is a necessary step in moral development, that to advance from one stage of moral development to another, more ‘social’ state, one must be able to reason in a more sophisticated and analytic manner (Duguid, 1980, p. 30).

By providing students with exemplars of the Great Tradition in philosophy, literature and social theory, the program would spark cognitive and hence, moral development. The democratic thrust of Duguid’s (1990a) program was clear:

The third level at which the program operates concerns the creation of an alternative community within the prison. The aim is to acquaint the prisoner/student with an alternative set of social relationships, with individuals unlike those he may have known before, and with ideas and social practices which challenge long held beliefs (p. 30).

In their deliberations regarding subject matter, prison teachers must be cognizant of the objectives of the prison and the needs of the state. They must also recognize the needs of the student which may not coincide with those of the prison. In an article titled “Education for What? Curriculum, Pedagogy and Program Objectives,” Duguid (1990a) struggled to find the middle ground between being correctional and being an educator. Teachers, he said, should teach decision-making skills and cognitive reasoning skills (social competence), while promoting the student’s self-esteem. Revealing a “casework” bias, he maintained that schools are also places for students to engage in pro-social activities so as to acquire “an alternative identity complete with career goals, potential social networks, new languages and rituals, and new values” (p. 124).

T. A. Ryan (1991), a prolific theorist of prison education, has influenced the Canadian prison literacy discourse as well. Ryan defined literacy in its broadest sense to
"refer to the development of the whole person through the acquisition of cognitive decision-making, problem-solving, and social skills in conjunction with the mastery of basic communication and computation skills" (p. 18). Ryan championed adult-based literacy materials, appropriate in content and method. They should reflect the “diversity of human experience,” and address “real-life concerns” such as family, sexuality, violence, and substance abuse—the kind of information that inmates need in order to return to society. Effective programs should offer curricula that integrate basic skills development with life skills development.

Discussions regarding the subject matter are often tied to instructional considerations. Process-based literacy programs propose the use of the prisoner’s experience as curriculum content:

If we are concerned with Process Education, as distinct from the transmission of content, the learning of processes such as thinking, feeling, relating, and valuing become paramount. We then associate these processes with a broad definition of Experiential Learning, the notion of developing and using one's own cycle of experience (Johnson, 1985, p. 32).

I (Wright, 2001a) have documented the rise of the Human Capital Paradigm of literacy in the recent educational discourse in Canadian corrections. I borrowed from O’Sullivan’s (1993) study of educational policy and practice in Ireland, in the 1990s. The human capital paradigm promotes curricular content aligned with the “needs of the economy, the management of financial savings, and the provision of vocational subjects” (p. 262). Educational themes, terminology and concepts connect education to the economy and working skills. Good education programs are tied to the criteria of productive efficiencies: “better value for the money.” The personal growth paradigm, on the other hand, grapples with the issues of “cultural identity, language, civic competence and moral development” (p. 262). The ascendancy of the Human Capital Model in Canadian corrections is evident in the recent decision by the Correctional Service of Canada to assign the responsibility for all correctional programs including education, to Corcan, the industries branch of the Correctional Service. In practice, teachers are now offering more employment-related
programs such as employability skills, job preparation seminars, and promoting activities such as resume writing in their classrooms.

Nevertheless, it is common to hear administrators speak about education in such a way as to blend these two perspectives such that moral development, civic competence, conformity, standards, behaviour and beliefs are hitched to financial concerns regarding the costs of incarceration in contrast to the cost of education and the savings accrued by the public if the recidivism rates are lower or if offenders find employment because of their prison education. These paradigms co-penetrate, expand upon the other (through compatible themes), and create a synergistic field of “commonsense” for many prison officials.

**The Teacher**

Little is known about the professional lives of prison educators because most of the literature focuses on the student/prisoner and the program. Nevertheless, one of the most ambitious and worthwhile studies of the prison teacher’s skills and competences was undertaken by the Robert Presley Institute of Corrections Research and Training in conjunction with the Correctional Education Association of the United States. The goal of the project was to describe the characteristics of successful correctional educators (Gehring, 1992). Some nine key characteristics and 82 skills were identified, along with a number of performance indicators. Successful teachers were deemed to be high energy, self-aware individuals who related well to others, stimulated an interest in education, could manage resources well, and so on.

I briefly reviewed Fox’s (1994) and Mullen’s (1997) qualitative study earlier in this paper. Other studies have described the teacher as conflict manager (Gathright, 1999), and as adult educator (Montross & Montross, 1997) more or less from an outsider’s perspective. A closer, insider’s look at the teacher’s world is shared in a small two page article by Brand (1999) on the day in the life of a prison teacher and there is the small contribution to this literature based on my work (Wright, 1998).
Summary of Chapter Two

This study is situated within the knowledge debates in education that I have summarized as an attempt to restore and value the practices, experiences and knowledges of the teacher’s life-world. In educational research, the privileged position of the life-world in the debates is largely a response to positivist studies and theories of education, to the overbearing importance afforded to theory over practice, as well as to the effects of modernization on society.

My overview of the literature on prison education indicates how little work has been done on the knowledge and experience of the prison educator. It is suggested that teachers have little experience with either the prison milieu or the prisoner as learner because professional training is not available to them. According to some theorists, prison education programs can contribute to the formation of critical discursive social spaces or public spheres. What happens in practice remains to be seen. Although much has been written about what should be taught, and how it should be taught in prison, there are few insider accounts of the teacher’s professional world inside the prison. Certainly the topic is intriguing and warrants further inquiry.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Case Study—Overview

A qualitative case study approach to the topic was selected for a number of reasons. Qualitative research can enhance the lives of neglected peoples, improve practice, generate knowledge not accessible through quantitative approaches and even maximize the people-oriented skills of the researcher (Deyhle, Hess, LeCompte, 1992). Since qualitative research is an appropriate method to hear the voices of teachers as they speak about what they know (Butt, Raymond, & Yamagishi, 1988), this approach will help us to appreciate the hidden heritage (Eggleston & Gehring, 2000) of prison education practices. Because so little is known about the practical knowledge of prison teachers, it is premature to conduct research that verifies hypotheses or asks quantitative-style questions about frequency and quantity (Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi, 1988). The qualitative case study is a useful, appropriate, and workable research design that

... seeks to understand specific issues and problems of practice. In so doing, case studies in education often draw upon other disciplines such as anthropology, history, sociology, and psychology both for theoretical orientation and for techniques of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1988, p. 23).

This study used data-gathering techniques associated with fieldwork. I conducted semi-structured interviews with four individuals and three focus-groups. I also reviewed physical evidence to gather data. Transcripts of these interviews were the primary source of data for the study.

Commonsense tells us that schooling in prisons raises issues regarding power and practical knowledge. Collins (1995), an adult educator and theorist, wrote that the study of schooling in a correctional setting “can tell us much about the social control aspects of adult education and conventional schooling on the outside (p. 57).” This is particularly relevant, he believes, in an era of schooling shaped by the disciplinary tactics embedded in the “back-to-
basics’ slogans and the widespread use of the technologies of surveillance and control in the typical inner city school. Despite his concerns, Collins nevertheless argued that teachers do not simply function as agents of social control, they may also be part of the struggle against the prison ethos. Other theorists such as Davidson (1996) are not so optimistic. Davidson was influenced by Foucault’s (1995) work on the disciplinary power of the prison, and its ability to shape behaviour and identities through the normalizing gaze of prison staff ensconced in the machinery of the panopticon. Davidson believes that contracted prison literacy teachers, such as those working for The Education Company, have little choice but to become part of the apparatus of knowledge, power and control.

In my attempt to honour the voices of teachers, I will not focus on the concerns expressed by these authors. However, given the situated knowledge of these teachers, I hope to comment on the role of prison teachers in the resistance or reproduction of the prison ethos. In this way, this research is foreshadowed by the critical concept of the public sphere. This term refers to democratic, social spaces where communicators engage in a critical dialogue and hopefully reach a consensus based on the force of the better argument (Terry, 1997; Giroux, 1983; Habermas, 1962/1996; Fraser, 1997). Undeniably, there is a democratic theme which runs though the prison literature that suggests that these spaces are both desirable and necessary if any serious education of the inmate is to occur (Duguid, 1998; Kohlberg 1986; Arbuthnot, 1990).

**Qualitative Research**

In the literature review I established that the study of practical knowledge is generally conducted with a qualitative approach to the topic. The features of qualitative research and its contribution to educational studies have been described extensively in the literature (Yinger, 1987; Merriam, 1988; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Eisner, 1991; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Anderson, Herr & Nihlen, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995; Booth, Colomb & Williams, 1995; Gay, 1996, Wolcott, 1990; 1992).

This qualitative case study of teachers’ practical knowledge is based on the rationale that a case study approach to a topic can provide workable knowledge about problems of
practice. The distinguishing characteristic of the case study is its commonsense “boundedness” around a specific issue, a problem of practice, program, institution or social unity (Merriam, 1988). A case study can be of an institution, a program, or a responsibility, as well as of a person or enterprise (Stake, 1978).

Case studies are particularistic, descriptive, heuristic and inductive analyses of phenomena (Merriam, 1988). Researchers doing case studies often produce “thick descriptions” of situations that are holistic, interpretative, and that provide a good sense of the underlying personal, social, and cultural values of the participants. Case studies are heuristic forms of inquiry which provide the reader with a useful and deep understanding of the topic. They honour the specificity and spontaneity of the situation by approaching the topic inductively without imposing theory and hypotheses on it prematurely.

Data

Case studies typically gather data through observations, documents and interviews. Data for this project was gathered primarily through nine extensive one-on-one interviews (four with one person) and three focus-group interviews for a total of seventeen participants. All interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and returned to the participants for review and further comment. I contacted some participants again after the interview to clarify my emerging impressions of the data. After these conversations, I sometimes believed it was necessary to follow up with a list of questions for clarification. My discussion with Holly about importance of caring is one example, and extensive passages from her response to my questions are included as part of the data.

I collected and reviewed physical evidence consisting of memoranda; policy documents; RFP for Prairie Region, Commissioner’s Directives; Task Force Reports, job descriptions; handbooks; teachers’ journals and instructional materials, teachers’ annual reports and the annual reports of The Education Company. Feedback from presentations at conferences and publications by this author provided additional data for my interpretations. My field notes recorded some of my experiences as a researcher and some of my theoretic notes and tentative hypotheses emerging from the data.
First-hand accounts of prison experience written by students (See Wright, 2001a), guards (Conover, 2000), and inmates (Caron, 1985) were helpful too. A term paper in an introductory qualitative study course at the university and my initial qualifying paper for candidacy became part of a reflexive inquiry into the self and it was during this process that I heard my researcher voice.

The transcripts from the interviews with teachers constitute the primary source of data for this study. A sample interview is included in this dissertation (Appendix B).

Data Gathering

The Focus Group

Focus group interviews were conducted in order to explore the topic and gather qualitative data (Morgan, 1993, 1997; Krieger, 1988a; Morgan & Krieger, 1998). I used an interview guide, based on general topics and open-ended questions, to initiate the interview. Often however, I gave priority to the flow of the conversation that honoured the enthusiasm and interests of the interviewees. Group numbers for this study were determined by the number of teaching staff at each school. There were seven participants in the first group, three in the second, and two in the third. I conducted a total of nine one-on-one interviews with five participants. One person consented to four interviews, another to two interviews, and the others to one each.

The interviews varied in length but they all exceeded the original 90 minute time frame set for them because of the number of participants in the group, with each person wanting time to speak, the participants' interest in the topic and the conversational, semi-structured nature of the interview. In one, two-person focus group, we began our discussion at approximately 4:30 in the afternoon, and concluded our conversation about 8:30 that evening (eating dinner briefly, in between). The participants indicated how much they enjoyed talking about teaching, schools and prisons, and so we just kept talking. After the interview, these participants called to say how important they thought our conversation was, and how much they enjoyed the time we spent together.
Some of the participants in the one-on-one interviews asked for second interviews to elaborate and clarify points she made in the previous interview. In one case, a participant and I spent two long conversations (approximately three hours in total) after the interview, clarifying and in some cases working through the language of the interview, as English was not her first language. This participant was then sent an initial interpretation of the material, which made for another long conversation in which she agreed with many of my interpretations, and the framework I adopted. In the second case, the participant and I met on four separate occasions: twice in March and once in May and June 2000 for about 90 minutes each time. The second interview in March occurred the morning after the initial interview conducted the evening before, at the participant’s request, because she felt she had more to say, and wanted to say some things differently. This person was contacted numerous times during the interview interpretation phase to verify the emerging interpretations of the transcript.

Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative, semi-structured interviews (Seidman, 1991; Oakley, 1981; Devault, 1990; Kvale, 1983) were used to gather data. The semi-structured interview is “guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time. This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging world view of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 1988, p. 74). Morgan (1997) suggested that general topic questions be developed according to a funnel design (see Appendix A), and followed up with more specific, detailed questions and requests for clarification and elaboration as the interview progresses.

Analysis of the Data

Following Sandra Weber’s (1990) suggestions, I travelled conceptually back and forth between data and theory, building theory from what the teachers were saying, and learning more about their experiences and knowledge from theory, by grounding theory in the
data. I began by reading the transcripts while listening to the tapes (to return to the original sense of the interview) and penciling in initial interpretations on the transcript.

It was only in the late stages of writing that the current structure of the dissertation emerged. As I reviewed my interpretation of the data I realized how easily it made sense from the perspective that teacher practical knowledge and experience appears as the knowledge on call "in respect to identified frictions and failures in the machine and inadequacies evidenced in felt shortcomings of its products" (Schwab, 1969, p. 17). These situations of practical conflict, as I noted earlier, demand new kinds of integrations, and creative resolutions which come about as a result of questioning, searching, and deliberating (Lyons, 1990). I then returned, almost after most of the ideas had taken shape on paper, to the narrative passages I had collected, to discover that they easily could be understood as teacher problem-identifying and solving activities. Near the end of the writing process, I found it helpful to reread some theoretical materials, such as Goffinan’s (1961) study of total institutions and presentations of self (Goffman, 1959) that I had read long ago.

Two sensitizing concepts appeared in the very late stages of writing which helped me to give shape to my impressions of the teachers’ life-world. I found it useful to consider teacher practical knowledge as an effort on the part of teachers to define their situation in prison as educational. Accomplishing a shared definition of the situation "mobilizes" social actors in a manner so as to convey what the situation means—what is to occur there, what identities can be assumed, what relationships are permissible, who can participate, and in what ways, and so on. A definition of a situation occurs because of a person or group’s ability to assemble and control the details that they present to others (Goffman, 1959). Agreeing on the definition of the situation “involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honoured” (Goffman, 1959, p. 10).

The other sensitizing concept has to do with social distance which refers to . . . feelings or relations of ‘aloofness and unapproachability,’ especially between members of different social strata. Conceptions of social distance are formally institutionalized in extreme systems of social stratification, such as
apartheid or caste, but informally, they exist in all societies (Jary and Jary, 1995, p. 608).

Managing social distances and conveying impressions of, or defining a situation are interrelated activities (Goffman, 1959). These two concepts appear in various guises throughout my analysis of the data, which is everywhere lightly touched by them.

Most times, however, I tried to honour the teachers’ voices. Throughout, I tried to keep the interpretation of the data open, aware always that experience is much broader than any interpretation. I purposely provided somewhat lengthy passages to illustrate how teachers were working through their problems, as this process of deliberation is very much a part of the practical knowledge of teachers.

I checked on the accuracy of my interpretations by consulting with participants, and getting feedback from participants (prison educators) at conferences on my research. I conducted ongoing informal member-checking in my roles as senior administrator of The Education Company, and as a member of numerous committees related to prison education.

Gaining Entry

Many qualitative research projects begin with descriptions regarding how the researcher “gained entry” to the research. This term suggests the movement (physical and psychological) that accompanies field work procedures. Like many other researchers, I went through this traditional rite of passage by asking the Correctional Service of Canada for permission to interview the staff of The Learning Company. For a while, I was caught in a Catch 22 situation of sorts, where the Service would not give me permission unless the University of Calgary granted me permission and vice-versa. Eventually the situation was resolved.

Going through this process was helpful, causing me to recognize the very real transition in social relations that occurred in the shift from supervisor/staff to researcher/researched. Rightly, the CSC was concerned that my data would be contaminated by the power relationship exerted on staff by me as a result of my position as a senior
administrator for TEC. Hopefully, the fact that I only interviewed those who volunteered for the project addressed, partially at least, this concern. I also actively solicited the participants' confirmation or criticism of my interpretations, hoping to dilute my authority over them and the interpretation. Writing up the requests for permission to interview, and preparing the ethics proposals helped me to focus on the ethical concerns of the project, and subtly created a research space for me as well.

I set the tone of the interview by engaging participants in a general conversation about prison education. I had already become familiar with the research questions beforehand (which were quite straightforward), so I was able to participate in the conversation, and from time to time, interject one of my research questions when it seemed appropriate. I often was able to establish and maintain rapport because of my own experiences as a prison teacher, counsellor and administrator. For these reasons, I believe there was the spirit of a mutually-shared, lively interest during the interview phase of the research.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations

This study is delimited because it examines the professional lives of contracted teachers, working in the field of adult education in the federal penitentiaries of western Canada. It is not representative of teachers who may be employed as civil servants by the Correctional Service, nor of teachers who are part of the local school board and who work in prisons, provincial or Federal. Nor does the study make any claims about the experiences of college and university teachers who work in prison. The interview, as the primary source of data for the study, reflects the limitations imposed by the number of staff present at the school, so that in some cases, the focus-group consisted of just two participants. The settings for these interviews (in restaurants and homes of participants) and the use of an audio tape recorder likely interfered with the natural dialogue of the participants. Time was always a factor that limited what could be said, who got to speak, and how often.

I assume that we can use a focus group approach as a qualitative research method to understand the knowledge and experience of prison teachers. Group dynamics obviously
affect what interviewees say about their professional and personal lives (Albrwecht, Johnson & Walter, 1993; Morgan, 1993; 1997; Krieger, 1998a). This project does not segment interviewees for gender, age, nor race as these factors come into play every day in the school and constitute an important part of the teachers’ knowledge and experience.

We must also recognize the potential negative effects of my status as their supervisor. I assume that there was some level of trust already present because these staff volunteered their time. The reporting relationship in TEC is such that these staff report to a local manager, a Teacher Coordinator, who reports to a Director of Programs, who in turn, reports to me.

The Researcher's Self

Long ago, I began my studies at the university with a course in Qualitative Research. As part of an assignment, I decided to conduct an auto-ethnography. This meant treating my own world, as a researcher, and my house as a foreign culture. The point was to investigate my own signature or “bias” as a researcher, this person as “instrument.” Reviewing my journals, essays written for undergraduate courses, and some graduate courses, and examining favourite books, I discerned many recurring themes. I then realized that these smaller themes could be unified under more general life themes. This was important work for it enabled me to become conscious of some of the dimensions of my personal philosophy. The narrative I constructed for myself seemed to be a tragic one, based on the ruptures and discontinuities brought about the deaths of many siblings, my father, and the chronic illnesses of my two children. It was also a story of hope, and recovery and determination. My personal mythology seemed entwined with the image of the phoenix, rising each time from the ashes. Perhaps it is little wonder then, that I am attracted to the tragic sense of life that infused Benjamin’s work and that is captured in the Klee painting. During the course of this research I constantly returned to my writings on my own signature, and asked if, or how and where these themes were shaping the project. In this way, I attempted to bring a heightened sense of this self to my role as a researcher, following Wolcott’s (1990) suggestion that the best we can do, as qualitative researchers, is to bring to the study a rigorous sense of one’s subjectivity.
Summary

I have chosen a qualitative case study approach for the study of teacher practical knowledge because the case study is considered an appropriate approach for the study of practical issues. A qualitative approach enables researchers to unravel the meanings and perspectives of the researched and leads to a better understanding of their live-worlds. The boundedness of the case study is one of its defining features. In this dissertation, the “case” is defined by contract literacy teachers working in the Federal prison system in the Prairie Region of western Canada. The data for the study is gathered by means of the focus-group and one-on-one interview which is triangulated by other data drawn from the researcher's notes, an introspective study of self, physical evidence and by the validation of interpretations by the researched. I believe this study should lead to a greater appreciation of the collective voices of prison teachers, provide interesting data for future professional development programs and help us understand some of the connections between teacher knowledge, experience and context.

In the next section, I provide the reader with the data and my preliminary interpretations of the material. The work in this section is often impressionistic (Wolcott, 1990); it does not seek to tell the reader what is happening so much as to show them the experience of prison teaching from the perspective of the teachers, and thus draw them into the story as it unfolds. Through the impressionistic vignettes, the text remains open to other interpretations; the text is, in this sense, “messy.” In part four of the next section I offer a less impressionist account of teacher knowledge by providing two in-depth accounts of the practical knowledge of two prison teachers. In the conclusion, Chapter V, I bring together some of the salient features of teacher practical knowledge and make the claim that it is knowledge that arises in the borderlands between the cultural, social, and epistemological practices of a school within a prison.
CHAPTER IV: DATA

Introduction

Describing the practical knowledge and experience of teachers to the reader is not an easy task. The concept opens up an enormous territory of inquiry, referring to almost all the ways that teachers know and experience their professional world. After much consideration, Chapter IV is divided into four parts according to the commonplaces of learning: milieu, learner, subject matter and teacher. It will become evident to the reader that the prison teacher’s practical knowledge does not fall into neat categories and that there are relationships to be found amongst the commonplaces. I am merely singling out one of the commonplaces for preferential treatment in each section.

As my interpretation of the transcripts unfolded, I realized that teachers were often describing the problems or practical conflicts that confronted them in prison schools. Their practical knowledge appeared in the context of a “series of actions undertaken with respect to identified frictions and failures in the machine and inadequacies evidenced in felt shortcomings of its products” (Schawb, 1969, p. 17). The practical knowledge of teachers appears in these situations; it is the knowledge that is “on call.” Some of the more lengthy interview segments are reproduced to illustrate the kind of knowledge that appears as problems get defined and deliberated by teachers.

After examining the teachers’ practical knowledge of the milieu, students, and subject matter, I take a closer look at the practical knowledge of two teachers in particular. These in-depth accounts are meant to overcome some of the fragmentation in the jostling of the multiple narratives of teachers from different prisons. The first story, about Holly, focuses on images of prison teaching. As I noted earlier, images embody the cognitive, affective, and moral dimensions of a teacher’s life. The second portrait examines one teacher’s “knowledge embodied in and manifested through practices, routines, spatial orderings, and aesthetic dimensions of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 1987, p. 138). I am particularly interested in the aesthetic dimension of Samantha’s experiences in prison and how it affects her sense of self. Her story, therefore, naturally singles out the teacher as the common place for
preferential treatment. It also anticipates my discussion and summary of the data in chapter five because it introduces the reader to the idea that the prison teaching experience can be interpreted from the perspective of borderland theory.

To help the reader appreciate the identities and connections between the data selected from the many participants I interviewed, I have included a list of all staff interviewed for this study below, in Table I. I have not identified staff who may be at other locations and whose memos or journals, or comments I may have used. I have used pseudonyms for all staff and for the institutions in which they work.

Table I: Institutional Location/Security Level and Teaching Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Institution (minimum)</th>
<th>Collette, Mary, Suzette</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canyon (medium)</td>
<td>Lara, Kathy, Anna, Tom, Jena, Cathy, Pamela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quarry (minimum)</td>
<td>Holly, Joyce, Marlene, Karen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Rock (maximum)</td>
<td>Marlene (also at Quarry), George,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midway (maximum)</td>
<td>Samantha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwood (medium, now minimum)</td>
<td>Ms. Wallace, Angela</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Stronghold (maximum)</td>
<td>Agnes, Sarah, Gordon,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Problems with the Milieu

Going Inside

And that inmate, when he sensed how nervous I was, kind of took over. He became the guide and showed me the ropes to the whole thing and worked with us. And I think that’s something; when you’re working in a place like prison, you really work by the seat of your pants (Lara).
Imagine that you have just left your professional home unexpectedly to teach elsewhere, in a foreign country, perhaps one that you have never travelled to before. Getting off the plane, unpacking your bags, and walking into the school for the first time would be difficult, exciting, and perhaps perplexing experience, as you struggle to make sense of, or define the situation. You have become a stranger. "The discovery that things in his new surroundings look quite different from what he expected them to be at home is frequently the first shock to the stranger’s confidence in the validity of his habitual ‘thinking as usual’" (Schutz, 1964, p. 99). There is an interruption in the “flow of habit” which “gives rise to changed conditions of consciousness and practice” (p. 96). In the following paragraphs, I present the reader with samples from different interviews that speak to the common experiences of being an estranged teacher inside prison.

We begin to understand how teachers in prison feel as Lara says: “When you’re working in prison, you really work by the seat of your pants.” Teachers run into the problems with thinking as usual; they become strangers. Kathy, another teacher working at a high medium security level prison, runs into problems with her thinking as usual because the prison does not conform to its cultural stereotype. In many of the stories, teachers seem to have a pre-formed image of prison from the media which must be overcome.

I didn’t know what to expect—I mean, I had one cousin who worked in a jail, and that was it, and he didn’t really tell me any stories, and so I just knew what I had seen in the movies. When I got there, the inmates were just walking around, and I was thinking; why aren’t they in their cells? Somebody’s not doing their job here! I had visions of being in a classroom with a guard with a gun, and I got there, and it was a little more lax than that!

Marlene, a third teacher working at a maximum security facility, describes how her decision to teach in prison is met with resistance as she experiences the feelings of separation from both her husband and the community: many say that she is wasting her time, and others in the community “harden their hearts” to the idea of her working there. Samantha, whom we will hear from again in the section on the teacher, expresses feelings of estrangement from the community because no one knows there are “educators in prison who teach inmates.” If
the "community" is at all "aware" that there are educators in prison, it "is not very aware of what a correctional educator's role would be," and even if they do know,

I think they have a hard time understanding why we would be doing it. Why would you want to do that? Why wouldn't you rather just teach in a school on the outside? What can you possibly gain from that, other than a living, or whatever?

Teaching in prison, Samantha says, is also perfect for "people who want a change ... because it's really a change" and then adds: "Teaching on the inside, yeah, it's totally different. A different experience. Most of us fall into that ... I fell into it."

Holly, who teaches at Quarry institution, is "surprised" when she discovers an announcement asking for prison literacy volunteers in her church bulletin. Collette, at the Women's Institution, is aware of the need to make a place for other, younger teachers in the public school system, "fell into adult education classes" so that maybe one day she could "say to a company or anybody, I can teach," and through a connection at the prison she was invited to teach there. Mary who works with Collette in the school, was working as a volunteer at the prison when a friend of hers says that the teacher is "looking for subs," and she happened to be in the "right place at the right time."

George finds out about teaching in prison from Holly, a "relative who thought that I would enjoy substituting" at the prison where she worked. George too, experiences the discontinuities between what he learned in university and the knowledge needed to teach in the minimum security prison, stating that most of his university education was "irrelevant because it focussed on education of children and youths." Teachers experience the discontinuities that are brought about as contracting companies lose the contract and leave with their teaching staff, curricula, computer hardware and software and another contracting company arrives: "there is nothing in place, you know ... ? Because we had come in, all the staff was gone that had been there. They had all been replaced, and we were doing some heavy duty slugging through it."

Going to teach in prison is an enticing form of professional travel for some teachers because it holds out a promise of encounters with different Others as well as novel situations and experiences. Teachers come to prison, Anna says, for two reasons: first for a job, and
second because: “It’s a different culture in a sense and I sort of like going to different cultures—I think people are interesting and how they interact in different settings is interesting.” Samantha describes the prison as a “foreign” place. For Tom who works at the Canyon, with Jena, his manager, it seems to be an exotic one:

    ... with me, as soon as I heard that there was a job in the prison; it’s like ‘Wow, that’s cool, I’d love to work in a prison!’ You know, it seemed like one of those jobs where you can tell your friends—well, guess what I did! So, when my sister told me about the ad, and I phoned to see what kind of position it was, I spoke to Jena, and she said, ‘Now, one thing I have to tell you—it is in a prison.’ And I’m thinking; that’s the main reason why I’m calling!

    Travelling to prison gives Tom the right to make claims about his special knowledge, much like tourists who speak authoritatively and authentically, because they have been there; these knowledge claims set him aside from his colleagues and members of the general public, who have not been inside:

    ... when I first started teaching there, I used to tell my friends, oh yes, I teach in a cage, and I have a cattle prod and every now and then one of the inmates runs up and goes ‘I’m going to kill you!’ and I take my cattle prod and zap them—and then he’ll be like: ‘Okay, I’m calm now, I’ll go back to my desk!’

    Gordon experiences the inside as a form of professional estrangement from the university, and like Tom, makes similar knowledge claims based on the uniqueness of the prison. He believes that correctional education is “separate and distinct from the field of secondary education, the field of even adult education. Although they may be twins, they’re not identical.” This is because “we’re going to have to recognize that correctional educators have a set of experiences and developed skills that make them unique from other educators in the public school.” These experiences separate his teaching world from that of other teachers who “may have a surface understanding of what it’s like to teach in this environment, but don’t have a true conceptual understanding of correctional education... as it stands now, correctional education is piggybacked on graduate programs in criminology, psychology or
education.” The solution for Gordon, is “to recognize and ultimately move towards academic recognition” of correctional education as a specialized field of education at the university.

For many teachers, the prison is a fearful place. Invariably in our conversations there is the story of the substitute teacher who shows up in the parking lot of the prison, only to return home, not daring at the final moment to cross through the prison gates. There are the other stories of novice teachers who, after their first day of class, end up crying in the parking lot at the end of the day, deciding that the prison is not the place for them. Only after working two years in prison is one teacher able to say that she is “not afraid to go to work anymore.” Another teacher describes how she enlisted the aid of a teacher, to “protect her on the way in” and was “saved” by her, as she “learned the ropes.”

How is it then, that teachers come to resolve the practical conflicts embodied in the unfamiliar place they teach? It would seem that teachers build a knowledge of practice much like a stranger might. The position of the stranger is “the position of the individual on the margin, part inside and part outside the group” (Jary & Jary, 1995, p. 656-657). Like strangers, teachers in prisons are always looking back at what they left behind. A common feature of the prison teacher’s knowledge then is this strategy of making sense of the prison by oscillating between the teaching world of the prison and teaching in their home world.

One prison literacy teacher and administrator is fond of describing facetiously, how in prison, there are no extracurricular activities, no parent teacher interviews, and no home visits. Teachers are often pleased that they are not permitted to stay after school with a student, because in the evening the school is not monitored by guards. (Staying later with a student, even when it is operationally possible to do so, is also treated with suspicion, as we will see.)

The prison school is a different and positive place for Kathy at Canyon, when it comes to the often-dreaded task of “marking” student assignments late into the evening. Teachers are not allowed to take student materials out of prison because of privacy legislation which protects the identities of students while they are incarcerated. For this reason, Kathy likes “working at the pen because of the hours and you can leave it at work. I really enjoy that. I don’t know what I’d do if I did have to go back to public school. You know, you can do your work and leave it there. That’s what I like about it.”
Feeling like strangers, and experiencing their separateness, most teachers make enormous efforts to pull the outside (the community, its norms, and practices) into the school, so that it becomes more like an outside than an inside. Joyce has worked with Holly for more than ten years at The Quarry, a minimum security facility. Joyce is considered to be an effective, no-nonsense teacher, who gets along well with students and who is able to manage the tough classrooms where her students are often warring gang members. Joyce says that teachers teach the prisoners as if they were students on the street, thereby connecting the students in her classroom to students at distant, if nebulous centres of meaning and practice, somewhere else.

Like strangers, teachers bring what they can from the home world. This includes a sense of identity. It would seem that, in the tension between inside and outside, at least some teachers assign ontological priority to their identities in the home world. Jena says the “best staff that I have hired are consummate professionals. They clearly delineate between their jobs and their other lives and work very carefully not to confuse the two. Often in the evening we will say: ‘it’s time to go home to our real lives.’”

Like strangers, teachers try to create a school inside that mimics schools on the outside in regard to schedules, organization, and ceremonies such as graduations. This is what it is like in the “real world” so students should come to know school this way. The ontological priority of the outside world exerts its influence in the curricular decisions of teachers, who import programs from the community, because these are recognized by the community and have the status of being a “real” program. In this regard, programs from the community have epistemic authority.

In these many ways then, teachers experience a situation requiring definition because initially, there is nothing in place. Teachers express sentiments of rupture and discontinuities that speak to their initial estrangement; they devise conceptual strategies to overcome the absence of definitions by developing a system of comparisons with the home world, which generally is given ontological priority as the real world. The practices of the teachers emerge in these tensional spaces between insides and outsides (prison and community). This does not resolve the problem of going inside once and for all, because there are other insides and outsides to contend with (the school within a prison), which is the topic of the next section.
School in Prison

“We’re a school inside of what? A prison!” (Samantha)

Samantha has worked at Midway for five years. In the four one-on-one interviews that I conducted with Samantha, she seemed perhaps the most sensitive to the relations between the school, the prison and the outside, perhaps because she is doing a graduate degree in education. Her comment above defines another situation of practical conflict, the fact that teachers must cope with a school that functions within another organization. This is a common problem for teachers. Unlike his counterparts in a traditional school, Gordon from The Stronghold says, “where there’s a certain commonality of understanding and knowledge, we deal with an institution where the school is only a single part of that body” which means that

... we have to deal with the concerns and perceptions of individuals who are not educators. And who, for one reason or another, may not share our perspective on elements of education for the purposes of education. And that sometimes becomes difficult.

Generally, teachers work creatively to resolve this practical problem by defining the school as a different place on the prison landscape. Jena’s handwritten note on the transcripts of the focus-group interview she in which she participated, makes this quite evident.

This is key. We create a world that is separate from the rest of the institution. We teach students rather than offenders. The men always see us differently from other staff. I have heard the school referred to as a sanctuary. We are consciously creating a safe place that is nonjudgmental.

Gordon describes the school at the maximum security institution where he works as a refuge from all the currents that exist in the correctional environment. So here the students take refuge from the negativity on the unit, from the muscling and profanity and the negative thought patterns that take place. And because they’re engaging in a process whereby they’re bettering themselves and improving their understanding, they also experience a bit of self-worth
which combats the negativity they feel ... so this becomes therapeutic. So that when they walk out the door they feel a little more proud, a little more empowered than they did when they walked in. And that's something that successful correctional educators do ... they create a refuge in their school to combat the correctional environment.

In one of these interviews I found myself sharing my story of the institution where I first started teaching. Though I could not describe the school as a positive place, I shared my image of the classroom as a world unto itself where I felt there was room for democratic and critical forms of dialogue:

Once I got inside the classroom, the institution was closed out when I shut my door. This became my classroom and it was our world and that was my image of school, what happened in that classroom. Whatever was going on "out there" did not exist, this was the only world that was important, that mattered. So I guess if you talk about my image of the classroom, my image was--this is my world, this is the only world and when the doors close everything goes, everything can be said and you can criticize me, you can say things that maybe are too political or whatever.

Teaching in a prison school and defining the school in such a way as to distinguish it from the prison is not much of a problem for educators who teach in schools that are physically located at some distance from the administration building or the units where the prisoners live. One female teacher taught male inmates in an old root cellar in the middle of the field on the borders of the prison compound, where she was quite at home, and resented her move into the new classrooms built for her in the administration building. Joyce who teachers at The Quarry along with Holly describes her school--a former warden's residence--as a "comfort zone" for students "because it was a building away from the rest of the institution and ... there were just the students and the teachers, [we] really didn't see anybody else, nobody came to check on us or anything (laughing)." When the school was moved to the main institution, it altered her interactions with students because

... everybody is in this building and you hear the PA system calling people out, everybody is visible, the administration is visible, the cars are visible ...
it's not as closely knit . . . I don't think we've developed quite the same relationship like we used to be able to, in the other building.

Schools within prisons appear to be back regions where social actors are permitted relatively autonomous forms of interaction and behaviours that would not be permitted in front of other socially or operationally demanding audiences (Goffman, 1959). “Everybody in the building” creates a new and perhaps demanding audience for Joyce, and destroys the intimacy with her students. Back regions are the locales of different meanings, norms, and power that are not available for scrutiny by others who set the normative standards; these are zones where social actors “recover forms of autonomy which are compromises . . . in frontal contexts” (Giddens, 1984, p. 127). In the hotel business, for example, back regions would be the kitchens, the spaces behind the buffet lines, where the waiters fill the trays, the stall that separates the kitchen staff eating a meal, from the paying customers who are eating theirs and so on (Goffman, 1959). Teachers seem to solve the problem of being in a school within a prison by actively working to create a definition of the situation where more authentic, closer social and educative relationships between student and teacher are permitted. Similar to the tension between prison and community, the tension between the school and the prison is never quite resolved. Nor is it always possible for teachers to be able to define the school as a different place, as we will see in the next subsection which describes the teachers’ practical knowledge as they are confronted with the problem of controlling space in prison.

Controlling Space

Teachers in prison appear to solve the problem of location by defining the school as a sanctuary, refuge, a safe place, and a world separate from the institution. This is easier it seems, if the school is physically distant from the prison. But what happens when the school is clearly inside the prison walls? How then do teachers manage to define the school as a school even though it is within a prison? This is a question of shaping definitions of the situation by controlling the setting for practices, interactions, or behaviours (Goffman, 1959).

The following memo is an attempt by staff members to solve a practical problem in their school that hinders their ability to do their job and to define what that job is. Frustrated by a lack of control over inmate movement into the school, the staff collaboratively wrote a
memo to the Deputy-Warden of the high medium level security institution where the school is located, to make the case for monitoring prisoner movement by keeping Barrier 23 (the Barrier closest to the school) open as a means of escape in case of fire, and for closing Barrier 22, the next barrier farther down the hallway from the school, that had previously been a security checkpoint for inmates. With Barrier 22 open, prisoners are able to leave the prison units and come directly to school without passing a security checkpoint. This memo has been reproduced in full, because it serves as a good illustration of these teachers’ practical knowledge of the spatial practices in prison and it is rich in details about that knowledge.

_BARRIER 22_

With Barrier 22 left open and no guard at that opening, inmates can enter the school without having to go through a metal detector, pat-down, or any other form of searching. This has the potential for significant security issues. Inmates could bring contraband to the school without the possibility of it being discovered. Weapons could also be introduced into the school environment. Security for staff and inmates is therefore compromised.

Inmates can leave the school without the need of a pass because no guard will stop them between the school, the dome, and the units. This creates significant problems when inmates are given breaks from class or when a program is let out earlier than school students are. Since there are no controls over the inmate movement at Checkpoint #22, inmates return to the units quite easily. If they do not return to class after scheduled breaks, trips to the bathroom, etc., the teachers/PDOs [Program Development Officers] are then setting out to find them, leaving the rest of the class unattended. A recent incident clearly illustrated this point. F. D., a student in the school, did not return after a scheduled coffee break. After the break was over and his absence was discovered, his teacher looked for him around the school area and did not find him. The Teacher Coordinator then called Unit 3 and was told that the inmates from that unit were in the rec. hall. The Teacher Coordinator then called the rec. hall and got no answer. He called Unit 3 again and was told that the inmates were unsupervised because the officer was
on lunch break. F.D. could have been anywhere in the institution, thus posing a serious security concern.

The responsibility for all of these inmates cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of the teachers and PDOs in the school. We should not have expectations placed on us that are beyond any other workplace supervisors. Teachers are trained in the procedures that are essential to the running of classrooms. The CX [Correctional Officers] officers are trained in the security procedures that are essential to the effective running of the institution. It is these staff members that should control the movement of inmates. Also, as there are contract staff in the school, they are restricted by their contracts from performing certain security measures. Locking Barrier 23 [at the school entrance, after school starts] is a serious fire hazard. It blocks any exit to the outdoors in case of a fire, which is contrary to the fire orders. During the fire drill of April 27, an officer opened the barrier before the drill actually began. This would not have occurred during a real fire. Effectively, staff in this area would be trapped during a real fire, having no alternate escape route. In addition, the closure of Barrier 23 restricts fresh airflow into the school. There are already serious problems with the air quality in the school, and closing Barrier 23 only serves to exacerbate those problems.

The proposed open air smoking area, the courtyard opposite the entrance to SIS [Stores and Institutional Supplies], will not be a feasible option. Inmates in Protective Custody use that area during the afternoons. Consequently, the inmates in general population from the school will not be able to use that area simultaneously. Besides, having the smoking area so far from the school will entail a larger search area when an inmate does not return to class after break. In order for teachers to search for missing inmates, a classroom full of inmates must be left unattended during that time (at minimum, 10 minutes).

There have been incidents in the past where inmates have stolen items such as a VCR and a fan from the school and brought them through
Checkpoint #22. If Barrier 22 is open, more such items will disappear. Previously, staff only had to call the officers and ask them to check for a suspected missing item during their routine frisks of inmates passing through the checkpoint. Now, it creates a significant change in routine in order to carry out such a thorough search.

The barriers are sometimes locked on both sides of the entry to the school during lunch breaks, the times that inmate movement does not need to be controlled. This has led to some incidents when teachers or PDOs are locked out of or locked inside the school.

_Suggestions for Improvements_

The procedures at Checkpoint #22 should revert to previous practice. Inmates should walk through the metal detector inside Checkpoint #22 and then into the school. This significantly reduces the concerns over contraband or weapons being introduced into the school, controls inmate movement, and limits the potential for items to be stolen from the school.

Barriers 22 and 23 should be left open during lunch times to ensure that staff can enter or leave when necessary. Because the inmates are not to be coming through to the school area during the lunch break, the barrier close to the dining hall can be locked.

The simple act of locking Barrier 22 and 23 at the same time will create an area that is only approximately 20' by 7'. During the scheduled breaks for school, this area would become far too congested for safety. Barrier 23 should be opened to alleviate the congestion and allow air movement. A restricted area, marked by yellow paint in front of and beside Checkpoint 22, would serve to control access to the South Compound fence. Even if something was passed to an inmate through the fence, that inmate would have to go through Checkpoint 22 before returning to the unit, giving an opportunity for an officer to find said objects.
This memo responds to the practical problems of controlling carceral spaces, which these teachers identify as the unrestricted movement of prisoners and contraband goods into and out of the school; the issue of controlling space is linked to other issues such as their health, security and contractual obligations. In this memo, the practical spatial knowledge of teachers appears as they partially take on the role and language of border police and offer recommendations as to how the flow of people/goods can be facilitated, rerouted, interrupted, halted—from both directions. This memo provides us with a sense of the spatial orderings of prison teachers; this is an important dimension of their practical knowledge. The memo is paramilitary in its tone and content as they speak of the school inside the prison in terms of checkpoints, barriers, large and not so large search areas, restricted areas, compounds and in terms of processes that limit or “control access” of inmates to the prison territories. They come to know the problems of making a school inside prisons in terms of controlling space which has implications for teacher safety, surveillance and control.

Patrolling the borders of the prison and the school is necessary if teachers are to establish the definition of the situation as “school.” Barrier 22 not only sets the school apart from the prison, physically, but also in terms of the roles that teachers are assigned inside. The authors of this memo resist being identified as guards, for it is difficult to define the school as a different and positive place in the prison with objectives such as working on the prisoner’s self-esteem, when one is being asked to manage them in the general and common physical space of the prison. Policing larger areas of the prison is not acceptable (nor physically possible) for teachers because it redefines them as guards.

Furthermore, the school is a different place because that is where the contracted teachers work. The spatial order intersects with their identities as teachers and statuses as contractors; they are not trained for, nor do they feel they have the authority to be a guard, that is someone else’s responsibility. They solve the practical problem of locating the school by keeping their definitional distance from the rest of the prison, by defining what they are not.

Appropriating social and physical spaces in the prison and defining them as school involves knowledge of bodies moving not only in space, but in time. This memo sheds light on the temporal as well as spatial dimensions of teacher practical knowledge. Barrier 22 is
a memo about the control of movement—"inmate movement" but it is also a description of how this practice is to be managed in time. According to the schedules of the day, barriers are to be left open or locked, monitored and left unsupervised. "Movement" refers to a specific temporal-spatial structure of meaning and practice; there are clear distinctions to be made between periods of movement and periods of lock-up, when inmates are counted. Lock-up is part of the regular routine of a prison so that inmates are counted just before mass movements—before lunch or dinner, or before recreation and events scheduled in the evening. Lock-up is also a strategy to counteract emergencies and breaches in security such as when there is a fight, a stabbing, or an escape; lockups may be brief or prolonged depending on the causes and seriousness of the disruption.

Samantha’s Staff Orientation Handbook establishes the rules for “Male Patient Movement” for new teachers at Midway, so that these male patients do not come into contact with the women patients at the institution. She writes:

Male patients and female patients are not allowed to have any contact, including physical, auditory or visual. Prior to the movement of any female patients, there will be an announcement over the intercom from Control indicating that male movement has been discontinued until further notice.

This means that male patients cannot exit the school area until the movement ban has been lifted.

The rest of this section describes how teachers are to sign student passes, how to ensure that prisoners exit through the proper school door, and so on.

Teachers come to understand periods of "movement" and "lock up" as special routines that permit and prohibit their actions. Understanding the rules for inmate movement, the teachers make the case to open Barrier 23 during times when inmates are in the dining hall, so they are free to move. At Archambault, a maximum security prison in Northern Quebec where I taught, I was not allowed to travel the hallways of the prison when there was "movement." I had to wait, along with others, in small caged cubicles to the side of the steel wire walkways between the buildings until the inmates made their way to their places of work, school, or returned to their cells. Movement was considered by all as a time of higher risk.
For teachers, an unexpected lock-up is a pleasant relief from the 37.5 hours of contact every week. It is a time for teachers to catch up with correcting student work, prepare curricula, talk with other teachers about their students, and just generally experience the relief that comes from not having students in the school. Controlling movement during periods of lock-up (some say, lock-down) is often experienced by teachers as a matter of gaining time.

This interpretation helps us to understand how some teachers resolve the problem of overlapping physical and social territories between the prison and school by learning the rules for controlling space and their functions within spaces to shore up the distinctions between these places. It is possible to come at the matter of the teachers’ practical knowledge of the milieu another way, which is to look at the responses by staff to a teacher who appears to be breaking the rules. This is the topic of the next section.

**Rule-Breakers**

Throughout the training period and a matter which continues to this date is Ms. Wallace’s poor ability to adjust to a minimum security setting in some aspects . . . she is very lax in her security practices. Ms. Wallace has been taught repeatedly the Institutional Policy regarding inmate movement and control (Angela).

Practical conflicts surface when teachers fail to follow the rules. Rules are formulae “constantly invoked in the course of day-to-day activities, that enter into the structuring of much of the texture of everyday life” (Giddens, 1984, p. 22). Faulting the performances of others reveals much about one’s own knowledge of the rules.

What rules might be broken in prison schools and how should teachers manage educators who are rule-breakers? We already know that there are rules regarding the use of space in prison, and the importance of knowing what movement means. Ms. Wallace’s story is about someone who, by most accounts, did not seem able to function in a prison school. I was alerted to major issues in the school that she managed on behalf of The Education Company by one of her staff members who first called, and then came to see me about her security concerns with regard to the Teacher Coordinator’s behaviour. When the staff member arrived at the office, she presented me with a nine-page report, documenting the
security infractions she had witnessed at the school. As I began my inquiry into her performance, it became clear to me that the prison authorities were also not happy with her work. The calls from the prison staff (CSC) expressing concern over Ms. Wallace's management of the situation became more frequent. I sent another Teacher Coordinator to the school for one week to observe the situation, and she too, produced a lengthy report. The following is an excerpt from a former Teacher Coordinator's report (he is now with the CSC) that identified the problem with Ms. Wallace. In his report, he writes about his concerns with her "management style;" her interaction with others is the key problem. He states:

Every time I was acting in a supervisory capacity, there were problems at the school. These inevitably involved confrontations with staff and/or offenders. Small problems quickly escalated and became much larger than was warranted due to her style of communication. Typically she would ask my advice and then argue with whatever solution I proposed. Her tone was inevitably abrasive and defensive, even when it was explained to her that her actions put her at risk in a correctional environment . . . Frequently staff members expressed that Ms. Wallace was a security risk because she "wouldn't listen." This indeed was my experience. I frequently heard offenders complain about similar matters and enrolment in the school dropped dramatically. What was alarming was her unawareness of how she was affecting those around her. I am grateful that we were at a "Minimum Security" level during her time here.

In the negative performance report on Ms. Wallace written by a peer evaluator, another Teacher Coordinator, we find that it is her pattern of communication—in this case—knowing when and what to say to the student that is inappropriate. She describes a situation where an instructor had been having quite a bit of difficulty interacting with a student and has gone to Ms. Wallace to have the student suspended, but instead, the Teacher Coordinator told the instructor to send the inmate home. The instructor suggested again that she see the problem student as it was the same student that the instructor had trouble with, just a few days ago.

Again the Teacher Coordinator disregarded the question and restated that the instructor was to send the inmate home. The instructor said again with more
Again the Teacher Coordinator disregarded the question and restated that the instructor was to send the inmate home. The instructor said again with more persistence that the Teacher Coordinator should speak with the student. The Teacher Coordinator then asked the instructor to send the student into the office. When the student came in, the T/C asked the student what the problem was. He explained that he did not want to do the assignment. When asked why, he stated that by responding on his views on women in the workforce, it may get back to the Parole Officer and affect his time here. (This should have been an alert!). The T/C agreed with him and said that they could change the assignment.

After describing this incident, the writer of the report faults her for not appropriately managing the interaction citing issues that

... include support towards staff, institutional issues in regard to his (the inmate’s) views and crime, accommodation towards the inmate, and the potential hazard caused by sending an inmate back into class who was just removed for not complying with direction by the instructor... It was also explained to her that she must listen closely to what the staff are saying and should have a plan of action that is consistent with every incident of noncompliance.

Honest communication in prison is considered very important. Ms. Wallace is faulted for not supporting CSC and not “sticking to the facts;” she engages in gossip. Significantly, she encourages alliances among staff. “This is very dangerous when staff is involved in playing games.” Along similar lines, teachers must always be kept informed. “Lines of communication must be open. Instructors must be kept informed of dealings and discussions with inmates.” Keeping the other teachers and the CSC informed is not possible in this school because the T/C has not prepared casework records that would help her to process the problem inmates so they can be “actioned” by the CSC. The casework record should be a “record of the dealings of every inmate and the counselling that took place.” Ms. Wallace’s lack of attention to record management is important “for security purposes.”
It is clear to the writer of the report that Ms. Wallace’s “style of management was very accommodating to the inmate’s wishes and that there was no clear sense of control or expectations defined for consistency.” Her final recommendations consist of the following (emphasis and format in the original):

- **Always** keep the lines of communication open. Share all discussions/meetings with inmates with affected staff;
- **Never** side with the inmates against staff (CSC or The Education Company);
- **Try** to always look on the positive side of things. Your are the staff’s strongest cheerleader;
- When an instructor brings an inmate in to speak with you because of inappropriate behaviour, you must deal with the issue. It is imperative that you calm the situation down first, if at all possible. Always try to hear the story from the staff member first, if at all possible. This better prepares you for the inmate’s arguments justifying his actions and you have a stronger stand in keeping to the real reason why the inmate is in your office.
- There are some trivial discussions you can have with inmates without having the instructor present. However, always support the instructor, stick to the expectations of students in the classroom, let the inmate know that you always talk with the instructor, and follow-up with a discussion to the instructor of what was discussed. These interactions are important and should be documented. This is the only way people (Parole Officers, Program Delivery Officers and other instructors) can identify patterns of behaviours or thought processes.


The management of risk, through appropriate interactions, is a dimension of a teacher’s practical knowledge of the milieu. Teachers with prison teaching experience soon learn to evaluate one another and their students in terms of risk, and they learn to monitor their behaviours and that of others, in order to control their environment. Teachers develop risk management procedures—communication formats—for dealing with various dangers
Teachers learn the rules regarding whom they can and should speak to, about what, when, and for what reason. It is not that there are extraordinary communicative practices at work in prison. Themes such as “sharing information between staff members” as well as making sure that “students are treated in a respectful way” would probably be the same themes that surface in a typical school. Perhaps what is different in a prison is that communication is highly strategic. In prisons teachers learn to manage their interactions with potentially threatening Others for their own safety and for the good order of the institution, and more locally, for stability and predictability in their environment.

The rules of practice that teachers learn describe relationships of candour, openness, information sharing, amongst teachers, and rules regarding disclosure when it comes to inmates. In terms of the interface between school and the prison, teachers should learn to tell all—to the right people at the right time, to control the definition of the situation. In the next section in this investigation of the problems of a school within a prison, I explore the problems of time that arise as teachers experience conflicting rhythms and routines of these two locations. As always, as they solve the problems of schedules and routines, they illustrate what they know about the prison and school milieus.

Time

You have to, at the drop of a hat, change course. Or there may be a demand of security. Or there may be a demand of a search [after] an altercation. So the physical plant is always changing and we are at its mercy. I find too, that there’s a certain climatic change. A fervour. Because again, if a group of offenders—let’s say it’s impulsivity or it’s anger or whatever . . . the rest of the staff reacts and we react, so we’re all moving with this wave. And that’s the constant change (Agnes).

How do teachers learn to manage time in a school that sits within a prison? Given popular images of the prison as fortress/island and as a static place of corporeal immobility, we might imagine that time and its management presents few problems. Yet understanding the “meaning of time is not a simple matter. . . . Subjectively . . . time means different things to different people at different times” (Anderson, 1993, p. 17). For Agnes, working at the
Stronghold, a maximum security facility, she finds that in the school where she works, that things “constantly change . . . we are at the mercy of what is going to happen.”

Rather than a static place of enclosure and punishment, prison appears to teachers as a dynamic, transitory and constantly changing place where students come and go through the “whirling door” of the prison school. It seems to teachers that the prison school is really a place where students and others are constantly on the move, bumping into one another, and even wandering, as in the case of the prisoner described in Barrier 22.

In their Annual Report on their school, Mary and Collette convey their experience of the school as a place of movement or transition, and it is the peripatetic quality of the school that shapes their sense of school time, so that they find it difficult to establish a routine:

The present layout which requires us to supervise rooms across and down the hall is difficult from a supervisory position, as well as the fact that we are not able to close the classroom door to eliminate the noise from the hall. The noise level, coming from people walking and talking, cleaners doing their work, carts being moved and a myriad of other noises, is a constant source of distraction for teachers and students.

Not everyone experiences the lack of routine and constant change the same way. Holly says that it is far more exciting working in prison “than working in the community because of many factors. Things are always changing, every day is sort of a new day, sort of the unexpected, anything could happen. And that’s actually, I think one of the enjoyable things about working in corrections.

Another teacher, Samantha, contrasts the routine of the bell at eight and four in the traditional school, with her experience of time in the prison school at Midway. Time passes quickly for her because at her school because there are always a “lot of different things happening to make for a non-boring day.”

Most teachers come to know how prison operations and routines intersect with school operations. In the Prairie Region, very few evening courses or programs are offered because this is considered a dangerous time—there are less security staff and teaching staff present, so teachers hesitate to cross the temporal borders of the prison operation for reasons
of safety. When courses are offered in the evening, as they are at some schools, the teachers who offer courses are considered to be the most experienced and security-conscious of the staff. Evening programs have a special meaning that distinguishes them from day programs in regard to security issues.

Teachers experience the temporal intersections of the school and the prison as a source of practical conflict because it is challenging to establish more than a fleeting rapport with their students. Lara finds the travels of inmates in and out of class very frustrating because it means that teachers

... keep building classes, which are temporary. This creates a situation that leaves you feeling frustrated as any real, meaningful teaching is reduced to tutoring, with students working in a number of areas, rather than any focussed area. Many of our students need participation and close direction to stay focussed, which is hard to achieve with the constant shifting of classes.

The constant shifting of classes in the prison school can be attributed to the CSC Accelerated Release Program which sets targets for the rapid transfer or release of nonviolent, low risk inmates into the community under supervision as soon as possible. In her annual report, Mary, who works at the Women’s Institution, a minimum security institution, described the effects of this policy on her school operations. She began by saying that it has been

... another successful year. The enrollment has been steady and the school filled to capacity until the latter part of the year. The enrollment has declined slightly, due in large part to a decrease in the general population at the Institution and the fact that many of the women are on the Accelerated Release Program [ARP]. The students in the ARP spend approximately six months at the Institution before release into the community.

Being a school inside a prison negatively affects the time available to teach. In her report, Mary states that “there has been some improvement in the length of time in school for other students, in that they no longer remain in the Enhanced Security Unit for six weeks [for assessment] prior to coming to school, but can enroll earlier.”
The prison’s goals and objectives intrude elsewhere on the rhythms and cycles of the school. The routines of teaching are disrupted because teaching in prison is part of a larger, institutional, zero-sum game, where having students in one class means not having them elsewhere, in another program or work placement. Prison operations disrupt the teachers’ definition of their work and their location as a “school” because, from the perspective of prison staff it is, Gordon, says, “considered to be a work site, that the offender can be drawn from at any given time. At which time you have a stopping of the benefits [of education] and then that fellow must come back and reestablish his place in the classroom, reestablish his role in the culture of the classroom and in the learning pattern.” Without a doubt, most teachers understand the problem of time in schools as a result of the requirements of a prison to provide prisoners with rehabilitative programs, so that “Inmates who are registered in school at the time one of these programs are offered, are requested by CSC to drop out of school.”

Teachers in prison also give up the predictable sense of time that accompanies the traditional, typical school year marked by annual, holiday, monthly, weekly, six-day, duty day, teacher, report, and within-class cycles (Connelly & Clandinin, 1993). These cycles take on new meaning in prison. Christmas, for many prisoners, is not a joyous occasion but rather a lonely time, so that students/prisoners often ask for extra work to keep them busy over the holiday. Teachers know how difficult and lonely this time of year is, and they sometimes do something special to mark the time as different and special for their students.

Teachers often dread the end of holidays because starting back usually means a lot of extra work for them. While the school is closed for the holidays, students continue to work on assignments in their cells because there is little for them to do. Teachers describe how, after Christmas, students descend on teachers with demands for more work or for work handed in before the holidays or earlier that same day. Teachers know that it takes a good week or so for the school to calm down, and for them to reestablish whatever routines are possible. They know too, to be cautious about sharing the joys of their holidays with their students. In this sense then, being a school inside a prison shapes the teacher’s experience of public holiday rituals.

Aside from Christmas, and Inmate Justice Week, when prisoners remember those who have died in prison, school follows the rhythms of the prison so teachers are presented with
some of the problems pertaining to year round schooling. “Year-round education is a timely idea. It holds promise for all American schools because it reshapes conventional thinking about the school year: when to start, when to end, when to take vacations, and whether or not to lengthen it” (Ballinger, 1993, p. 30). Teachers soon realize they must be prepared to negotiate their holidays with others so the school is not understaffed. They are encouraged to take time off in small blocks and throughout the year whenever possible. Many teachers see the lack of a fixed summer schedule as positive, enjoying the fact that they can take holidays at different times of the year. Other teachers though, feel that the time that they were accustomed to in the public school has been taken away. Some feel that they lose money, since in their absence teachers are replaced by substitutes who are paid out of the same per diem rate charged by The Education Company, so that holidays mean to them that they are income-sharing with other teachers. Year-round schooling makes most teachers aware that their temporal experiences in prison set them apart from their colleagues in the public schools. Time contributes to their feelings of distance or separation from the teaching profession.

Many teachers understand the routines and temporal order imposed by the prison on the school as a matter of security. One teacher/administrator is fond of stating that “good programs make for good security;” teachers know that by providing year-round programs, the school keeps the prisoners occupied and “out of trouble.”

Teachers resolve some of the conflicts over time that appear on the borders between the school and the prison, determining what to teach according to the time served or left in the prisoner’s sentence. Specific curricular projects, such as the Community Integration Program, have been designed by teachers within the temporal structure of sentence administration; these programs are offered to inmates doing “short time” (six months or less). Because students come and go so quickly, instructional decisions must account for problems associated with duration so that “individualized programs make sense to many teachers.”

School programs are set within a “realistic” time frame because the student is always a potential traveller. Before developing students’ programs, Mary asks herself: “... how long are they going to stay? What are their needs, what can we do for them while they’re here? And we try to meet each individual need while they’re here.” The prison, she says,
with no intended irony, "doesn't give us a lot of time." Because there is so little time to spend with students, the assessment of student educational levels or the evaluation of their work is very important and must be addressed in the time available. The prison sets the routines for evaluating student performance and behaviours too. Samantha compares her experience of reporting schedules inside the prison with those on the outside:

It's definitely nice not to have to do report cards in November, and then again in March or April, but my goodness, look at the reports we have to do! We have that same stress all year long. Maybe not quite that high of a level, but almost, and then all year long. So it's different.

Confronted with the practical problem of having enough time to teach, educators must consider questions about planning and implementing a literacy program for prisoners constantly on the move within the prison, between various units, and between regions. Within regions, teachers know that inmates are "cascading" through the system to minimum security level prisons according to the time served, their behaviour in the prison, and their risk to society. Within institutions, students move from special, higher disciplinary and security units, into population units (where they are with other prisoners), and from there to prisons of lesser security. One teacher, assigned to maximum security students within the prison, knows that these students will be in the max unit "for short periods of time," so that "there is not any long term planning" of programs. Other teachers develop strategies that permit students to study what is of interest to them, or what they feel they most desperately need, because there is so little time. Prison educators seem to make frequent curricular decisions and program adjustments so that they often gain the practical knowledge that accompanies program planners.

Teachers know the weaknesses of many theory-driven projects that come from outside the prison, as they come to know the temporal order of prison operations. As a requirement of the 2001-2002 contract, The Education Company committed to the implementation of the Cognitive Enrichment Advantage (CEA) method across all the schools in the Prairies. This approach, developed by Dr. Catherine Greenberg (2000) is a revised and more extensive interpretation of Feuerstein’s earlier work on Instrumental Enrichment. The CEA Coordinator responsible for the implementation of the project has just e-mailed a staff
member (Sylvia) to inquire whether and when, Yvanna’s journal of her experiences with the method will be sent to her. Yvanna responds with the e-mail below.

I would like your thoughts on how to do CEA with a constantly shifting population. Maximum Security is essentially a cell studies program. Although I get students every day, each group is different. Students are expected to do their work as cell studies students and bring it to class for correction and help. I take groups of no more than six students a day and have them for a maximum of two hours. If I manage to get everyone's work looked at (to see if they really are doing it right), help any who are having difficulty and occasionally teach a few computer skills, I am lucky. Correcting is reserved for after school. The most I see any student is twice a week and since our population moves in and out of segregation, groups change constantly. Peter and I make a new school list every week and it often changes sometimes during the week. There are only a very few students (3-4 out of 38-40 students) who have remained out of segregation fairly consistently. Even at that, we frequently have discussions (We call them “chats”) in which we look at issues and concerns and try to make them see new ways of looking at things, or help them understand the other side of the story and look at options, etc.

Given the space-time continuum of the prison, teachers soon come to know the futility of any grand theories that ignore the realities of prison. Yvanna concludes her e-mail with a practical principle of instruction and curriculum: “... what I do is pertinent to the moment. I can't see how to teach formal lessons to this constantly shifting population and frankly don't intend to do so. Fire me any time.”

As the temporal order of the prison encroaches on the schedules of the school, teachers ultimately feel disrespected and subordinate to prison staff. Tom says

If I can add something, it seems like the people teaching the other programs, the CSC programs, I think they don’t place any importance at all in the school. Because I’ve got a GED exam coming up, and I get program educators, whatever you want to call them, phoning me up and saying ‘you
know, this person cannot miss a day of his program. What can you do? Can you fix it so that he takes his program in the morning? Because he cannot miss,’ You know? And this is just a casual day in the program. This is not a big exam from The City.

Tom is frustrated by the lack of flexibility shown to his program and to his students. Continuing his conversation we hear, too, how the problem of prison time/school time extends beyond the prison borders, to the temporal orders of the educational network in the community. Tom describes the problem this presents for “... the trades exam, there’s no flexibility in that. Because we actually have somebody coming in to administer that exam. So you can’t say he’ll write it in the morning instead of the afternoon. You can’t even say that. So a lot of people are like: ‘I have to pull out of the trades exam because I have a program that day, and I cannot miss.”’

Lara who works with Tom at Canyon adds to Tom’s comments, criticizing the programs of the CSC which appear to be routinized and unstoppable in their delivery. She derides the “canned little programs” that are “taken so seriously by the people who teach them, and by the institution.” She describes how the teachers work through the problem of time when she says, we “turn ourselves inside out. I mean, if the diploma exam people knew what I did with diploma exams to accommodate these programs! They would rip my ability to do the diploma exams away from me.” She describes how she alters the schedule of two diploma exams so that the “the guy doesn’t have to make the choice ... if the choice is between getting English 30 or getting out of prison--because if he screws up on that program, he won’t get out ... our advice to them is “your number one priority is to get out of prison.” She is upset too because she knows that “likely the guy probably won’t get it together on the street to go on writing English 30, you know?”

Teachers can sometimes work the temporal disjuncture between the prison and the school to their advantage. Lara concludes that, in regard to prison operations,

... there’s a decided lack of humour in the organization. There’s a ton of it in the school. And I think that’s why we don’t have problems with those inmates either. Because we don’t go to the authoritarian model. But it is being used all the time everywhere else. And we will turn cartwheels. And
the men know that, and they appreciate that. But again, it’s still important. You’re showing them that you don’t lose dignity either, by trying to accommodate impossible things and impossible people. It’s still good. And that’s a lesson in itself, you know? And you get to do them a favour sometimes. And doing a favour is always good.

Seeking creative resolutions and integrations to the problems of time, Lara resorts to humour in order to sustain and even enhance teacher-student relationships in the face of the relentless delivery of the “canned little programs” and the routines of the prison. Determined not to become completely engulfed in the inexorable schedules of prison, she responds with flexibility in scheduling, and her response permits her to establish an identity as a non-authoritarian person. Her solution to the problems of time suggests a principle of practice: flexibility is important as a strategy to “accommodate impossible things and impossible people” in prison. She is not alone in describing “flexibility” as a chief characteristic of the successful prison educator.

Despite her determination to be flexible in response to prison schedules and operations, Lara still fears that any “real, meaningful teaching” will be reduced “to tutoring” which for her is a question of identity. Tutoring for Lara is different from “real teaching.” Lara is discouraged as the time of prisons imposes itself on her teaching style. She describes teaching in prison as “this hit and miss, you know? Like it’s not connected” and adds: “that is something that is really missing in what we’re trying to do” and she proposes a more holistic approach so that there are “things that connect the English that you’re teaching, the history that you’re teaching” as this was the way she was taught in university where “all of it was tied together.” But in prison, because of the pressures of time, she responds to a student’s request for curriculum materials by “giving him a pile of stuff.”

Jena who is the manager at Canyon, agrees. All teachers can really hope to do is to “crack a window,” Jena says, by which she means, given so little time, the goals of her literacy program simply are to spark the students’ interests so that they can carry on alone:

... I was telling this little story about the guy who wanted to know about the Dark Ages, what I ended up telling him was how some of the literature connected. So I think what you’re doing is you’re cracking a window... We
can’t do a comprehensive thing. Those guys are in and out so fast. They’re there, they’re gone. I don’t think we can do that comprehensive thing. But what I think we can do is give some of them a taste for more.

For Suzette, who used to teach at the Women’s Institution, the skirmishes around the borders of time, and the compression of time (so that inmates, in their short stay, are supposed to enroll in the different rehabilitation programs, and go to school), raises ethical issues about the treatment of her students. The therapeutic programs that women at the prison are participating in elsewhere, in the prison, take a “tremendous amount of energy.” Students must cope with the

... emotional aspects of whatever they’re dealing with. Sometimes the body will react in physical ways. They need time to reflect on the program and the process on their own and you still want them to jump and do recreation and visits and programs and school and ... even school needs the time to be reflected upon.

She is critical of the program strategies of prison life, castigating the prison system because it fails to recognize the women’s need to

... reflect on what they’re learning. So the processes seem to be ... we’ve got a broken toy, we put it on the assembly line and we send them down and in X number of program hours they will be fixed. Well, I’m sorry, when you deal with people, you deal with trauma in a person’s life. It doesn’t go that way.

In addition to the competition for students’ time from rehabilitation programs, teachers must cope with the perforations in their routines and rhythms caused by parole dates, private family visits, rehabilitation programs, temporary absences, lock-downs, movement schedules and transfers. Teachers also experience the fragmentation caused by the continuous entry-exit format of many schools, which is further complicated with part-time, half-time, quarter-time, as well as distance education students.

The problems of time in prison, as experienced by teachers, can be understood as the practical conflict generated by the difference between allocated time and actual instructional time. Allocated time refers to the amount of time that students are scheduled to attend
1993). Instructional time is the actual time that students are receiving instruction while in school. While some may consider the difference between instrumental time and allocated time a function of classroom management, the greater the gap, the poorer the management (Anderson, 1993). In a prison context this is a different matter, because other routines infringe on the rhythms and practices of the schools. Debates over what to teach and how to teach it, how to manage their classrooms, how to build relationships with their students, how to work within the temporal orders of the prison and meet its demands are felt problems (Elbaz, 1983) that teachers must work through as they experience the practical problems of “time enough to teach” that appear as a result of the school’s location inside the prison.

In the next subsection, I continue my discussion of the milieu, examining another organizational context for the practical problems that teachers encounter—The Educational Company. What does it mean to work for a private-for-profit agency and to work for a private agency in publically funded institution where most staff are civil servants?

Privatization

The issue raised (union vs. contract) is quite divisive. As a contract teacher, I am merely a face on a significant issue (contracting out of union jobs), but it still affects how I relate with union staff. I have to watch my step because they are watching me like a hawk, waiting for me to make a mistake (George).

The Educational Company (TEC) constitutes another novel milieu with its own set of issues that contour a teacher’s experience and practical knowledge. Philip enjoys the work that he does for TEC as a contracted teacher. Nevertheless, he accepts a position with the CSC. In his resignation letter he writes that he “can narrow down the reasons for my acceptance of this new position [with the CSC] to basically one—the (significantly) higher rate of pay. I expect the two positions to be similar in many ways, and both well within my range of experiences and skills.” He wants to climb "back up the income ladder" and states that if he were “paid $10,000.00 more per year as a prison teacher, I would stay on.” The problem of working for a contractor is understood as one of “wage disparity according to the provincial teacher rate” and the lack of recognition of “any years of teaching experience in
school, or the amount of time that students are allotted for a particular subject (Anderson, 1993). Instructional time is the actual time that students are receiving instruction while in school. While some may consider the difference between instrumental time and allocated time a function of classroom management, the greater the gap, the poorer the management (Anderson, 1993). In a prison context this is a different matter, because other routines infringe on the rhythms and practices of the schools. Debates over what to teach and how to teach it, how to manage their classrooms, how to build relationships with their students, how to work within the temporal orders of the prison and meet its demands are felt problems (Elbaz, 1983) that teachers must work through as they experience the practical problems of "time enough to teach" that appear as a result of the school's location inside the prison.

In the next subsection, I continue my discussion of the milieu, examining another organizational context for the practical problems that teachers encounter—The Educational Company. What does it mean to work for a private-for-profit agency and to work for a private agency in an institution where most staff are civil servants? What do teachers come to know and experience as a result of this arrangement of milieus?

Privatization

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provincial teacher rate” and the lack of recognition of “any years of teaching experience in the regular school system.” His formulation of the problem calls upon distinctions between the private and public sectors in education and the financial rewards associated with the latter.

Coming to know what it means to work for TEC, Philip looks outward to the school boards; many others though, see the practical conflict in terms of their relations with their colleagues in the CSC. One teacher tells me how he overheard “a CSC guard say to an Education Company teacher: ‘Don’t try to beat the union, you’ll never win!’

The strained relationships between contract and non-contract teaching staff at the prison school where George teaches precipitated an inquiry by the Correctional Service and led to a report summarizing some of the problems evident at his school. The writer of the report—a CSC staff person—quotes a contract teacher who describes what he has heard in the school hallways:

This week I overheard a CSC employee ask another CSC employee who works in the school, ‘How goes the battle in the school?’ The employee looked to see if the statement was heard, closed the door and engaged in conversation with the other employee” (CSC Inquiry—not included in references to ensure anonymity of participants). He adds that the local correctional service teaching staff at the prison (there are two) engage in behaviours that “range from polite to openly hostile,” where incidents “combine to form a pattern of working in an unfriendly environment” for the contract staff (CSC Inquiry).

In this school, teachers claim that CSC case management officers refuse to return phone calls, or to relay information about students to contract staff. According to these teachers, contract staff are verbally abused by their CSC counterparts. Teachers feel there is “no moral support” for their work, and cite examples where students are pitted against contract teachers because apparently the students have been told by CSC staff to give teachers a hard time. Some of the resistance to contracted services was evident when The Education Company assumed responsibility for the contract at this school. The contract teachers were surprised to find that the “classrooms had no records or files on the students,” or “appropriate educational books and materials. Everything except the desk and chairs had been removed.” The CSC appeared to have no information on the students. According to
these teachers, they offered no staff orientation sessions, and provided no information on the academic program that had been offered by the public school board previously. The battle in this school, teachers and some sympathetic CSC staff say, is fought with the tactics of misinformation, obstructionism, sabotage, collusion and domination.

Contract teachers at this same school experience anger and frustration, believing there is a double standard because contract staff are told that their students must be in class on time, while those under the supervision of the CSC are free to wander in late.

At this school, supplies “are held under lock and key in a locked storage room” and remain inaccessible to contract teachers, who must “make out a formal request to get a pencil.” The staff meeting between contract and non-contract staff to discuss the problem of supplies turned into an “an attempt by CSC staff to ‘pick a fight’ with The Education Company.” “The reality is that is demeaning to go to CSC on a regular basis to ask for pencils, erasers, and notebooks for the students.” Along similar lines, four contract teaching staff must share an office the same size as one occupied by a single CSC teacher, so that “sometimes we have to go out in the hall to put on our own jackets. This indicates the attitude Corrections has for us.”

At this battleground, teachers mention how student graduations are questioned by CSC staff, and the quality of their teaching challenged. “Did you teach at a real school? Are you real teachers?” they are asked. Certificates of achievement forwarded by contract teachers for signature by the CSC education administrator are not signed because the administrator believes that they do not have any value coming from TEC and not the local school. The CSC administrator for the school does not bother learning the teachers’ names, constantly confusing one teacher’s name, in particular, with the name of a teacher who had left the year before.

Privatization appears to these teachers as a problem which illustrates what they know about the authority of contracted staff in the prison milieu. The staff feel “they lack authority in the institution,” even though they are responsible and accountable for “changing the culture” of the school and so feel “set up” by the CSC staff. Attempting to redefine the situation without the support of the CSC, teachers find, is not easy: “students are surprised and indignant to be expected to have to attend school regularly and arrive on time, and stay
awake, not sleep on the window ledge, and do school work. ” Without the support of the CSC staff, this makes the contracted teachers look like “bad guys” in front of the students. At this site, contract staff turnover is high and teachers cite the professional discrimination that teachers experience, that causes them stress-related illnesses, as a reason.

On the battleground between contract and CSC staff, teachers aware of the spatial orders of the prison (these are the same teachers who authored the memo about Barrier 22), impute motives to the use of carceral spaces inside the school. They question the CSC’s Chief of Education who made the decision to put the new, female, blond-haired teacher (by prison standards, a “target”) into the last classroom in the hallway, the classroom out of the sight lines of his office and a classroom where the only traffic would be the prisoners coming to class. This was a problem for the staff who felt that she should have been placed in the empty classroom near the office, at the entrance of the school, where she could be visible and where there was always foot traffic. She would have been much safer.

In regard to the practical knowledge of contract teachers working in prison, we have an extreme case of their experience of social distance from prison staff. Social distance is often expressed in terms of social stratification; it also refers to perceptions of approachability and aloofness in the relations between superordinate and subordinate groups. George comes to know his place in the system, as he says

Personally, many days I feel like I do not fit into the prison system. The practice of denoting my status as a contractor with a bright yellow stripe on my name tag almost makes me (and likely others in the same situation) an obvious pariah in the eyes of much of the union staff.

At other schools, teachers also feel the distance from their colleagues in corrections. Lara’s letter was sent to me in response to a question I sent to all staff about three years ago that asked them to describe their experiences working as a contractor within the prison system. The purpose of the request at the time was to get a better sense of how staff were feeling about The Education Company and their work in prison and what I might do about any of the issues they raised. It was not originally intended as data for this project.

She begins her letter with an excerpt from Tennessee Williams’ “The Catastrophe of Success” that speaks to her experience of professional exile and frustration:
Maids, waiters, bellhops, porters and so forth are the most embarrassing people in the world for they continually remind us of inequities, which we accept as the proper thing. The sight of an ancient woman, gasping and wheezing as she drags a heavy pail of water down a hotel corridor to mop up the mess of some drunken over-privileged guest, is one that sickens and weighs upon the heart and withers it with shame for this world in which it is not only tolerated but regarded as proof positive that the wheels of democracy are functioning as they should without interference from above or below.

She adds: “I feel like the old women in the corridor. There is no interference unless I choose to have my say about my situation—and I must have my say.” Pointedly, she has no voice.

Lara’s next paragraph describes her feelings of exclusion and her disappointment at not being welcome at the CSC Christmas party: “My first brush with the separateness of the position came when I tried to register my son to be part of the employee’s Christmas party. I was informed, in no uncertain terms, that “contract workers” did not need to bother coming. Even the security training sessions “which were intended to prepare us for work in a place where security was a main issue” did not “not bring us any closer to being part of the team. She notes, the

... next time the difference reared its head was in a conference that we attended. CSC workers were supplied with vehicles and issued advance money for their expenses. Even the gas mileage was twice what we were allotted. Yet, we all were going to the same place and all of us were expected to have the same credentials. The chasms since these early beginnings have continued to widen.

Some teachers appreciate the advantages provided by the less bureaucratic structure of a private organization. Agnes is hopeful about the “growth and experience opportunities” that working for a contractor might bring her. Speaking about The Education Company, she says that there may not be vertical mobility (an issue for some) but at least it may provide an opportunity for horizontal mobility, by providing the teacher with a “sense of feeling of professional development or extension of skills or other kinds of experiences.” Agnes hopes that TEC will have vision.
“Seen by many as a white horse . . . private companies rely on their business acumen, their flexibility, and their ability to employ a smaller, nonunion staff for lower wages and fewer benefits than civil servants receive” (Schichor, 1999, p. 227) to make the case that they can do the job. When entire jails are privatized, the power of correctional officers' unions is usually diminished or eliminated. Often there are differences in compensation and remuneration between the unionized and non-unionized staff with the later receiving lower pay and fewer benefits (Schichor, 1999, p. 243).

These teachers' ability to manage the definition of the situation, to make claims regarding their professionalism, is constantly being challenged by the fact that supplies are inaccessible, they share small offices, graduation certificates are not recognized, and the like. It is difficult for them (and presumably others) to create a school. This inability to have their claims honoured is attributable to the teachers’ contract status. It is difficult for them to manage and honour their claims to be a professional with their colleagues. They do not feel at home in prison given the wage disparities and a pay structure that does not remunerate them for their experience. Their social distance from the prison staff is experienced as they feel subordinate to their control (and competing definitions) of the situation. Typically their experience as employees for TEC in the prison setting contributes to their estrangement from the prison staff.

Privatization of services within a public servant milieu creates issues around insuring contract compliance, or the “steering” rather than “rowing” functions of the contracted service being offered (Schichor, 1999). In my experience as an administrator, this has been a crucial issue for TEC which is sometimes asked to steer (formulate and implement new projects), and other times to row (simply maintain the projects as directed by the CSC). Locally however, this confusion has meant an ongoing struggle between contract teachers and union staff in regard to who is supposed to run the show. Resolving this practical problem creates issues of professional identity for Pamela as we will see in the next subsection. We also see other examples of how the practical problems of being a school inside a prison intertwine with the issues of privatization.
Steering or Rowing?

You have already heard about my attempt to improve staffing conditions in the Prairie Region. In response to this request Pamela who works at Canyon, replied with a lengthy letter which begins with a description of an incident that took place on her first day of work, when an inmate told Mark, the CSC school supervisor that she “had said some unprofessional things about CSC staff.” She went to his office: “I asked what I was accused of saying and who was accusing me. He told me that the information was to remain confidential.” She writes:

Even the inmate who had started these vicious accusations was protected. In the entire 34 years I have worked I have never been accused of unprofessional conduct and here, on the first day of my employ with The Education Company I stood alone. This was defamation of my character and there was nothing I could do to stop this other than to inform Mark that if any further accusations were made I wanted to hear about them first-hand or not to be told at all. Was this the type of treatment I was to receive as a contractor working for CSC? This began my first day as ‘a contractor’ with The Education Company. This whole scenario would not have occurred between CSC personnel. At the very least, all information would have been disclosed, and a grievance procedure would be in place immediately, to allow for a process of fair and just treatment of all concerned.

Shortly after this incident, Pamela was faulted for her security protocol. (Notice how she knows what is “the matter”):

I was recently called out of my class and informed by Mark [the CSC administrator] that ‘every time I walk by your classroom, the lights are always out.’ This is not true. I quickly pointed out that two sets of lights had been turned off above the TV to allow students to view the program without a glare on the screen. If I were a CSC staff, I would have pursued this accusation further. As a contractor, there is no system in place that protects our interests. We are continually monitored by the CSC and treated like the ‘weak link’ in the organization.
In a third incident, some time later, she discovered that a news crew was about to film a documentary in the school, and when asked by the CSC administrator for volunteers to be interviewed, she declined: “Upon returning from lunch, Mark informed me that a reporter was waiting in the school to interview me. I restated my position. Again my feelings and opinions were of no concern to CSC, and as I felt that this request probably fell under ‘other duties as assigned’ [a term used in her contract with TEC], I consented.”

Pamela notes that there is a “double standard as it relates to leaving the workplace. If we attend a CSC meeting and the meeting finishes before 4:00 p.m. (their quitting time) we leave with CSC. If The Education Company has a meeting that finishes early, we must stay until 4:30 p.m. We have even been criticized for leaving work five minutes early.”

Privatization dislocates Pamela professionally; this is not only a matter of wages. It is perceived as an issue of her identity as she notes that she has a job, not a career.

Teachers’ salaries should be comparable to those of the local school district and administrative salaries should be comparable to those in similar positions with this institution. We are not asking to be paid more than our fair share. People working for the same organization are valued and respected according to the position they hold and the salary they earn. This is a fact of organizational behaviour and attitude. We know where we stand. Teaching here is not a career or vocation. It is merely a job.

A career is a term often used to “indicate general development and patterns in life, as well as occupations” (Stanley, 1997, p. 7). Under the contracting relationship, her sense of time and identity as “experience” is truncated; there is no reference to her professional past, except to its absence. (Strangers and travellers also experience this syncopated sense of time and their displacement within it, caught as they are, between time here and time there, in the home country, or elsewhere.) Like Philip, Pamela complains that her years of teaching experience are not recognized by The Educational Contractor: “experience is not recognized—nor is a second degree. I have been working for 34 years, which includes 17 years of teaching experience and seven years working with CSC. This was not to be rewarded.” In her letter she compares her salary to the salary her 18-year-old son earns picking rocks, she exclaims: “This has become a ghetto of underpaid women! . . . CSC knows a good deal when they see
Pamela feels that the “CSC sure struck a gold mine when they got us! The question is, how long will it take before this valuable resource is all but ‘used up’?”

Other serious issues arise around the contracted teachers’ ability to make meaningful decisions about their professional lives. “It is most stressful to see how little control we have in this environment and how little input we have into the decision-making processes that affect how we work.” Pamela describes a situation when the staff appeared to be steering, only to discover that they were in fact, just rowing.

Often near the CSC fiscal year-end (March 31), government departments have budget surpluses which they feel obliged to spend. At her school the teachers were informed of an enormous surplus ($780,000) in the prison operating budget, and they were encouraged to order supplies for the school for the upcoming year. “We all spent considerable time searching through catalogues, etc. to prepare our orders.” A week later, however, teachers are told that only $100,000 is available and they are asked to prioritize their orders. Again, considerable time and effort were expended by all. Several weeks later, we were informed that we only had a total of $2,000 for both the ABE I and ABE II programs for the entire year. We had already ordered the Math Spectrum workbooks and they alone cost $3,000. So much for our budget for the entire year! What a totally frustrating experience that was. What an abuse of The Education Company’s personnel!

Privatization also creates problems of contrast for Pamela and most teachers working in a public servant milieu. Contracted teachers spend more time with inmates than any other staff in prison.

There is no other work place in this institution that staff have as much exposure to inmates, as we do . . . We spend a minimum of six hours daily, five days a week (30 hours/week) working with very needy and dangerous people. In addition, this is the only work area that extends the hours of operation to 4:30 p.m. CSC walks out at 4:00 p.m. She calls upon the inside/outside distinction to make her point.

A teaching position in any public school or college would not require this much exposure to students, and considering the type of clientele we are
dealing with, the poor working conditions, and the low pay, it is not a wonder why the staff turnover is so high and the moral so low.

Strike actions present enormous relational difficulties for teachers, posing as they do general problems of social and occupational solidarity (or division). Strikes clearly separate management from union positions within an organization. Contract staff are neither; they are, as we know by now, marginal insiders (Mullen, 1997). Some teachers chose to cross the line with CSC escorts, while others wait in line, and some simply take personal leave to resolve the dilemma, and stay home. In her letter, Pamela expresses her anger at having to be on the line to support the strike action, and, at the same time, being criticized by those on the line for taking up space that really belonged to unionized staff. When she is ill for one of the afternoons during the strike, she is asked to find a replacement for herself by the CSC manager, and to take personal leave time to go to the doctor. Both of these requests seemed “ludicrous” to her because she did not see herself as part of the conflict.

Some of her feelings of exclusion that result from her employment conditions with TEC are tied to the status of education programs within the assortment of prison programs offered. Even though, Pamela says, a large percentage of incarcerated persons are illiterate and have low self-esteem, education “... is not considered an essential program for inmates. CSC programs such as Substance Abuse, Cognitive Skills, Relationships, etc. are, however considered essential programs. Is this why our services are not remunerated equally to those in similar CSC positions?”

Instructors who offer these CSC courses are highly paid, and teachers feel underworked because they are given “hours and hours of prep time” for the courses they offer, unlike the contract teacher who must prepare courses “on the fly.” She feels that the CSC does not respect the programs in school because Inmates, who are registered in school at the time one of these programs is offered, are requested by CSC to drop out of school. If their parole date or release date comes due at the time they are taking a program, they must stay and finish it. If they are in a school program they are free to come and go as they so wish.
Even when unionized staff positions become available in prison, as a contracted teacher her experience in corrections is ignored. She writes:

We all work in the same institution. If a competition for a CSC position becomes available, we often apply. One of the main reasons we are not accepted, is we do not have CSC experience. I fail to understand this line of reasoning. We are not considered equal, nor are we treated, respected or paid equally to other CSC staff. Equality in wage parity would be a giant step forward.

In another situation of rowing and steering, Myrna's describes how her position in a new security unit that was opening up at the prison was constantly redefined so that each week she prepared for the changing responsibilities and schedules—to have the job given to a CSC person at the last moment, leaving her without a job, because the position she had vacated was filled by another contract teacher. She cites a clause in her contract as she writes: “Duties as assigned, immediately came to mind. I was in a state of shock and disbelief. In the blink of an eye I became unemployed. Fortunately, the Teacher Coordinator came to a quick and effective solution, as she often has in the past. I had my old position back.” The arbitrary decision, made by the CSC manager, “adversely affected at least five contract staff. It was very difficult to pull ourselves above the abuse suffered in this case.” The next line in her letter reads like a summary of the issue of steering and rowing:

It is frightening to think of how little input we have into the decisions that are made by CSC surrounding our jobs here. Many a staff meeting will see us in endless discussions about things like, “do you think we should order the blue pens or the black ones with the shiny tops?” Worthwhile and significant operational policymaking is never discussed with us.

Privatization is taken up by Pamela as an issue of control over her professional life, her sense of career and the accumulation of professional years of experience, as well as issues regarding inequities in salary, benefits, and length of the work day. This situation contributes to her sense of alienation or estrangement from the situation (this is not teaching), the CSC staff, from TEC and her professional identity. There is the sense of exclusion, alienation, estrangement and abandonment as Pamela writes that on her first day of employment with
The Education Company, she “stood alone,” and states that “there was no system in place that protects our interests.” She is only able to find her professional ground in her relationships with other teachers and in the classroom:

ALL IS NOT LOST! There IS joy in my day! I have not lost my love of teaching. The rapists, murderers, thieves, drug pushers and paedophiles, that are my students, trust and respect me as their teacher and they work hard in their tasks of learning how to read and write. My satisfaction and pride come when I work with students and help them achieve their goals. I am committed to being the best teacher I can be. We as a staff have leaned on each other for support and encouragement and we have become closer as a result of these and other experiences. We derive our strength from each other. We are a team and a darn good one, at that!!

Pamela counts on the “team,” both students and teachers, to manage her definition of situation and self; these others help her to be a teacher; this alliance enables her to find herself within and the school—the system that she is looking for. With her team in place, she no longer stands alone, having turned down “other duties as assigned,” at least temporarily to “be” a teacher.

In the next section, I take up the problem of theory and practice for consideration under the commonplace of the milieu. Elbaz (1983) understands theory as practical knowledge in that theory shapes the teacher’s response to practical situations. It is, she says, conceptual knowledge that is called upon as teachers try to understand and act upon situations they encounter in the course of their day. She also suggests that teachers have an implicit if not explicit sense of the relation of theory to practice and that this understanding is part of their practical knowledge. The next two pieces explore how some teachers live out theories of equality and empowerment within a correctional setting, as they attempt to work through the implications of the Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women: Creating Choices (1990), trying to build relationships with students that will lead to their empowerment, in the next section on the problems of theory, practice and change.
Theory, Practice and Change

Mary and Collette's Story

How do teachers resolve problems that arise between theory and practice in prison? I examine the practical knowledge teachers hold and use regarding the milieu as they work through their knowledge of theory and the change process it supports in a prison setting. The practical problems presented by theories of change emerged during the course of the interview with Collette and Mary, who work at the Women's Institution. I noted how their story of change and empowerment in the women's prison brought forth their own personal experience and knowledge of social injustice, and their experiences of estrangement from society and from their own families.

The personal nature of Mary's knowledge of theory with change in mind came into play as she told her story about herself over dinner (when the tape recorder was turned off, so that I recorded my impressions in my field notes). Mary described how, at age 16, she had entered the Franciscan convent, not because of a calling, a "vocation" but because she was the middle child of five sisters who were the middle children of 15 siblings. Her middleness and the fact that her two older sisters and two younger sisters always "clumped" together meant that she was an outsider, and this self-image caused her to be the ever-compliant child to please her parents and the small community of 500 people where she lived. She admitted to herself that going to the convent was really the ultimate act of pleasing her family and the community. The experience of living in the convent for the next 15 years was not regretted, because it gave her an opportunity to get an education.

Mary became aware of racism for the first time as a nun sent to Kansas to work with the socially underprivileged. At first, she could not believe that Blacks (her words) were discriminated against only because of the colour of their skin. She thought that there must be something more, a better reason, but was shocked to discover that it really was the only one. At the time (1970s), she said that Black Americans were picketing the local store, because they were not allowed to shop there. She on the other hand, realized that she could go in, if she wanted to. Through this experience she discovered too, that the only way for a
Black person to “get out” of the community was to have a special talent for sports, or to commit crimes.

Her husband, an ex-priest, also experienced maltreatment by the Church which led to his own decision to laicize. (He received a response to his letters and permission to do so from Rome, twenty years later.) She feels these experiences shaped her life by making her aware of social justice issues which, in the interviews encompassed women’s issues, environmental issues, and the issues that surround her students—incarcerated women in a federal penitentiary.

Collette’s experiences were shaped differently, by her experience of being the somewhat eccentric outsider in her family who decided to work in a prison. It seems however that her idiosyncrasies are tolerated in her present family, where there appears to be obvious wealth. In some ways, the prison is her attempt to express herself professionally in a family that from her descriptions, already seems preformed, predictable and patriarchal.

During the interview, both appeared to be extremely respectful of each other’s opinions, giving one another the opportunity to speak, nodding heads in agreement while the other spoke. Mary’s conclusion about the interview process was that it surprised her how similar her values were to Collette’s. She was pleased to note the similarities too, in the ways they thought about teaching, women in general, and the women they taught.

Collette was particularly struck by Creating Choices, as it appeared to resonate with her belief in adult education and her past relationships with her father regarding a well-rounded education. Creating Choices documented the plight of women in Canadian Corrections and suggested remedies for their unfair treatment. Five new, innovative regional facilities were proposed for Federally sentenced women across Canada, founded on five key principles which were to signal a new rapport with incarcerated women based on the principles of empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, a supportive environment and a shared responsibility for offender care (Creating Choices, 1990, pp. 104-112). These principles are framed on the wall in Mary’s office.

The Creating Choices document resonated with the feminist concepts of voice, an ethic of care and a feminist ideal of community. Acknowledging the traumatic experiences of women, Creating Choices suggested that women offenders should be free to “seek out and
obtain required resources" rather than being subjected to a number of predetermined programs driven by the institution, in keeping with adult-education principles of self-directed learning. The Report was highly critical of the male-oriented, bureaucratic and hierarchical prison system that put paper before people and it attacked the conditions of incarceration at the outdated Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario. It argued instead, for small, community-centred and homelike institutions. Ultimately, the task force members were able to build a case that, quite simply, when it came to the treatment of women in corrections, the "system did not work" (Creating Choices, 1990, p. 23).

The Creating Choices document was, for Collette, a "justice paper. I saw it in terms of justice. And that's what really pulled me into it. Because I could see it as the way to go. It's the way to treat people in a just manner." For Mary and Collette, effecting change at their school calls upon their practical knowledge of the students as women, prisoners and adults, which in turn raises other practical issues for them. Even though Collette and Mary agree that educators and students are "equal," they also know that their students are victims of trauma, malnutrition and substance abuse so that students and teachers are afraid their "brains won't work, because of substance abuse." They devise a rule of practice for empowering their students

... depending on where they're at there, you know, we meet. And gradually, of course, we try to withdraw. Because the objective is to have them be independent learners as adults. And again, depending on their individual problems and emotional states, you know, we work with them where they're at.

Mary describes herself as "declared feminist" which she understands is "a person that believes men and women are equal and should be treated that way. And so as I look at these women and work with these women, I see them as equal to anybody, to men." In the classroom this means that she tries to help students feel and think they are equal. Bringing about change means, for Mary that "every chance I get, I'm bringing it in, you know. Well look who said this, you know. A man said this, or something like that. But I make them aware of the different situations in life where they are not equal."
Bringing about change on behalf of others presents practical problems of dependence and authority. In her relations with students, Mary tries to work through this problem by “dealing with them as equals by assisting them, like a helper, but not doing for them what they need done.” This is a non-hierarchical relationship so that the teacher is not a person ‘up here,’ dealing with people who are lower than you or who need your help. But people who need your guidance. Not your help where you do for, that kind of thing.” Empowering women means for this teacher, preparing the ground for the women’s success, by giving them the opportunities and resources they need before they leave the institution, so she spends much of her time going through things they might do on the street, and pointing them “in the direction of college or a facility so that their learning can be ongoing, if they choose” and making certain that they have registered there before leaving.

Bringing about change “naturally” calls into question the teachers’ practical knowledge of student evaluation. A new yardstick of student evaluation—dependence—is devised which is based on their knowledge of student behaviours in the program. Students are assessed by the number of questions they ask at the beginning of the literacy program, when they “want to be sure that every answer is correct” and by the number of questions later on in the program, when “they ask you less and less.”

Relating to students as equals for Collette means using her knowledge of classroom management and instructional techniques. She constructs a classroom environment for empowerment in prison by exchanging ideas through discussions with the students, admitting that some of the ideas they present in class have never occurred to her before, and changing some of her own past thinking. She also empowers students by making the classroom comfortable and nonthreatening so that her students “can be free to respond, by not being pushy but accepting, and by asking the students a lot of questions: ‘what do you think about that? Has that occurred to you before? Would you have an opinion on this?’”

Mary uses her knowledge of classroom instructional practices to think through the problem of change. She feels that discussions are the key to their empowerment, based on her knowledge that the women “are so open to any kind of discussion. They just ask questions and they just love discussions like this. So every once in a while, we just stop and we have a discussion, which Collette does too.”
Discussions, Collette says, help teachers understand where students “come from . . . what level they’re at in different areas, in politics, social life or whatever.” This enables teachers to do curriculum work that is “more rounded.” It also accounts for the fact that they do not “follow a curriculum exactly” and that “we don’t test each idea. Or we just take it where, as adults, where we see they need it to go.” These discussions fill in the gaps too, because often students “don’t have a lot of background to bring to the discussion, so they ask a lot of questions, and it goes wherever they want to take it.”

Hoping to empower and change lives, Mary and Collette draw upon their knowledge of students’ experiences with the law. One of the more heated discussions in the classrooms centred on the issue of aboriginal justice and the role of banishment in native cultures, and how the “white community” responded to the alternate sentencing process. The non-aboriginal students in the classroom at first did not understand the significance of banishment from the community as it was explained to them by one of the students. “And so the women were interested in discovering this from her, as to what that would mean. There were women in the class who were still able to say at the end of the discussion ‘well I don’t think it was right, I think he should have gotten more time, you know?’”

Collette and Mary also make use of their knowledge of compatible theories to support their interest in social justice and the empowerment of women. They incorporate the ideals of the Restorative Justice movement into their theory of literacy and notions of equality. Both Mary and Collette understand Restorative Justice as a way for prisoners to meet their victims and so confront the effects of their actions on another person. At the same time, Restorative Justice is an alternative for many of the women who are in prison and should not be, according to these teachers.

Bringing about the empowerment of women offenders through theory raises issues of crime and punishment for these teachers. The teachers cannot adopt a one-dimensional view of the student because they feel that the “perpetrator is also a victim”—they “victimize themselves.” So when it comes to bringing about change, there is a struggle on the part of teachers, to resolve the tension between the student as women/adult/victim and the student as criminal/victimizer.
For these teachers, Creating Choices is not just a theory, but a context for engaging them in working out the relations of victims, criminals, students and teachers, instructional practices and deliberations regarding subject matter that works—all in the interest in promoting teacher-student relations of support leading to empowered students. Theory as the context for their practice presents these teachers with numerous, alternative definitions of the situation and authorizes alternate and even competing identities for the prisoner.

The next segment is also about the efforts of one teacher to live up to theory-driven expectations of insuring a more humane environment for women in prison. Like some of the other vignettes, this one illustrates for the reader what Suzette knows about the prison, programs, students, herself, theory and how these come together as she is presented with the problem of effecting change in a women’s prison.

**Suzette’s Story**

To go from one system to another, it was just like . . . there was no real time to adjust to that. It was hard on the staff, it was hard on me as a teacher, it was hard on the women . . . I think that in a way the dream is wonderful, but how does it work and how do we translate that into something that is real? And some of these bridges were not built (Suzette).

Suzette, a Francophone, was experienced with regard to native culture because she had lived on a reserve for four years. She was well-qualified with degrees in adult education, and intercultural education. She is an outspoken innovator. Suzette was eager to start her new job at the Women’s Institution. She and I had attended a preliminary meeting with the Warden of the prison to discuss programs for the women. Before starting up the school, she had read and was inspired by the *Creating Choices* document. In a paper (1997) written for a presentation at one of the correctional education conferences, Suzette described her initial enthusiasm for the new correctional philosophy for women:

When the Women’s Institution was publicized, *Change* was the attraction; change of conditions, layout, structure and approach. Rehabilitation was on the mandate, but the approach was to be holistic, women-centred, and
empowering in a cooperative system, where the client was involved in planning and decision-making. I saw a new opportunity to implement the practices of Friere. A community in the making—a sense of sisterhood where women could do for women, according to their needs, providing mentoring for one another. What potential, what empowering promised held, both for clients and staff, and finally, a sense of freedom to facilitate new development in learning and healing. What a dream for all the women involved! (Reference withheld to protect participant's identity).

As Suzette said in her interview, “. . . there were definitely some very good ideas there . . .” and, elsewhere, “I was really excited about Creating Choices. After I read it, and after we met with [the Warden of the Women’s Institution] the very first time . . . I was so excited and that’s why I wanted to go there because I thought of empowerment—we can do all these things and everything . . .” She adds: “but where the conflict started occurring was when these beautiful ideas had to fit within the agenda and the schedule of the institution.”

Despite all the good intentions, the institution started having problems. At one point almost 2/3 of the inmates had escaped. Offender management had clearly become an issue, as the women offenders attempted suicides, slashed their bodies and with the murder of one of the inmates. The local press, sceptical of the “therapeutic” stand on crime at this institution, was having a field day. Suzette described the situation in her paper.

Pretty soon the tension grew. Administrators made arbitrary decisions over processes that they did not fully understand. Authority to finalize was not delegated. Verbal agreements never concretized. Energy was misdirected and everything had to be done ‘yesterday!’ I kept seeing the deadlines approaching yet so much still needed doing. We opened on schedule and everyone knows the results that followed. Violence occurred more frequently and escalated both physically and psychologically. Unpredictable and erratic flare ups were daily occurrences after a while . . . The whole system became more rigid and defensive in management, procedures, policies, and practices in order to survive public uproar and the scrutiny of the investigations.
Staff absenteeism is well documented in the Region. The rates for Women’s Institution could be seen as over and above any other institution. Stress levels disabled some staff. Fear crippled some others as incidents kept repeating themselves. Still others put on a cynical mask and just wrote off the incidents as natural to the environment.

The whole environment presented for me similar characteristics of a dysfunctional and abusive family. We had secrets, violence, isolation, denial, paranoia, division, broken promises and scape-goating... And all the time the cameras kept rolling... (Reference withheld to protect participant’s identity).

The problem of theory and practice is clearly a serious one with life and death implications. It is not merely an issue of ideas and how they are to be implemented. In this passage we can feel the intensity of the problem as it is played out in the school and the prison. Perhaps few teachers experience similar situations of significance.

**Education or Training?**

Part of the struggle to bring about change at the prison for women called upon Suzette’s belief that education was something other than training:

Well, [the] first inklings came in the Fall before even the women got there, when the staff were doing Standing Orders for the Institution. I was developing the Mission Statement for the educational centre. I remember taking the Mission Statement [of the Correctional Service of Canada] because I thought in order to do Standing Orders for education we need to have a Mission Statement. I had developed the first draft and I took it to the committee, the Program Advisory Committee... it was not what they wanted; well yeah, they could see some of it, but they wanted that certain word—training—in there, even though at that time the school could not do as such... training should have been a separate section, but they wanted the word training applied to the school in there and right there I thought if they’re that focussed on training, how much education do they really want because
the two are not necessarily the same thing? So that was the first inkling there that there was definitely a different perception of what education was going to be (Reference withheld to protect participant’s identity).

Instead of defining education as training, Suzette understood education as an opportunity for “people to work as a team.” Learning, she argued, “occurs with adults, by adults helping adults and sharing. And that’s the type of school I wanted to build” Instead, it appeared to her that the school they had in mind, was “a place to keep people busy,” where learning was “reduced to units and filling the blanks and you did not have the chance to engage in education for meaning.”

Elsewhere, she called upon her knowledge of contracting relationships within the prison to identify another roadblock to change:

The other thing was that the document [Creating Choices] talked about a team approach, a holistic approach. Education doesn’t appear in all the first drafts of the process of evaluation . . . [of offenders] by Case Management. It took forever before I got access to be able to talk to the people that were in there and be even involved in certain meetings; other meetings where I thought automatically, as one of the representatives of the department of the institution, I would have access to. I went to meetings and then I was told not to bother coming back. So there was exclusion in certain areas—and then I get the Standing Orders [to write]. As a private employee of a contractor, I should have never been involved in that part. I was, so . . . I went ahead and tried to give us the best school I could. I went ahead and tried to do that and yet I would get [long pause] frustrated, would then have to wait for months for a reply. I have one memo—it took three months to get a reply. The team leader replied in December . . . it was written the first week of September after I read the women-centred approach in the Creating Choices document and my initial request contained all questions about the school. I got the memo three months later. Well obviously it was completely outdated, and irrelevant as the school had opened already.
Later, we met with the Deputy-Warden to address the issue of her exclusion. I was trying to entrench her role in regular morning meetings with other correctional staff, thereby ensuring she was part of the “team” (and had a voice at the table) and recommended as much the same to the Deputy-Warden who agreed. By this time (the end of year one) however, Suzette had already become disillusioned . . .

Eventually it became apparent to her that her struggle around the definition of education was a losing battle as it is slowly defined by Suzette, in instrumental terms. She uses the metaphor of the assembly line to describe the conventional program attitudes of the Correctional Service in contrast to her belief that education should provide students with opportunities for reflection so they come to understand what the program means for their own lives. Speaking to an imaginary Other, presumably the Warden, she said says in the interview . . . ‘okay, you want to do programs to help the women--do you realize that when they do programs it takes first, a tremendous amount of energy to deal with the emotional aspects of whatever they’re dealing with. Sometimes the body will react in physical ways. They need time to reflect on the program and the process on their own and you want them to still jump and do recreation and visits and programs and school and . . . even school needs time to be reflected upon. If you haven’t been in it for a while, they need time to reflect on what you’re learning?’ So the processes seem to be . . . we’ve got a broken toy, we put it on the assembly line and we send them down and in x number of program hours they will be fixed. Well, I’m sorry, when you deal with people, with trauma in a person’s life, it doesn’t go that way.

Credibility?

To empower women, and because Suzette believed that educational programs offered by The Education Company were of questionable status in the community, she seeks permission from the CSC authorities to establish a private, accredited school sanctioned by the local ministry of education. Importing these programs from the “outside” would provide the women with a systemic “program of studies” and a “validation of their education” that indicated to them that schooling was
... going to be a serious endeavour, with the chance to use adult education principles to build on their goals—and it would be recognized. In the Creating Choices they really talk about the importance of accredited courses and that to me was very important given that in many institutions where the students had worked, the records had not been kept...

Suzette knows that in other prisons students would get a “few sheets to keep busy and nothing was ever recorded. . . . They were given . . . busy work; they never knew where it fitted in a program of studies, so they had nothing.”

Her attempt to establish a credible program to empower women addressed, she felt, issues regarding her credibility, perhaps the credibility of the correctional institution and maybe even the contracting company for which we both worked; “so the whole accreditation of the school meant that we could become a school within the department of education. We could have certificates recognizing the performance of the school. It had a double importance. It was as much as for the women as for us.” For Suzette, accreditation meant access to “other professional development,” to “teachers’ conferences” and to changes of government policy, all necessary “if we were going to be serious about education.” For some teachers, the outside has ontological priority in regard to their lives. For Suzette and many of the teachers, the outside also has epistemic authority in regard to curriculum and educational practice. The outside is particularly important for its contribution to the definition of her practice as “educational” on the inside.

Effecting change by gaining an accreditation status for the school presented Suzette with the problem of keeping together a cohort of studies that could be identified as a student body by the Ministry of Education, so that fitting together two systems—education and corrections—presented her with serious compliance issues. Suzette found that she “couldn’t even apply the rules of attendance” necessary to meet the requirements laid out by the Ministry of Education. As in the other schools, correctional programs and the employment needs of the institution resulted in competition for the limited number of inmate-students who often were pulled from the school to meet rehabilitation program quotas in the prison. She felt too, that there was limited senior management support for private school accreditation—the Deputy-Warden at the time apparently “didn’t see the relevance of it.” The
application for private school status was eventually “shelved” and the school remains unaccredited to this day.

**Blurred Boundaries**

Despite Suzette’s attempt to “create choices” for her students by ensuring they got “as much information as possible about the reality of getting an education” and by defining education as a “place where they could explore and then they could get what they needed,” she found the institutional priorities for offender management were becoming the primary concern. School was becoming another means to employ and supervise inmates. The basic prison norms and scripts in conducting the everyday business of relating to prisoners enveloped the school. Prepared or not, the women transferred to the Women’s Institution were enrolled in the school immediately, because the

... administrative goal was to keep them busy. Well, that’s very nice because it’s less trouble to keep them busy. But, by keeping one person busy in the school, CSC was then undermining the other twelve. These administrative practices were undermining the education process and then I asked myself, is the education process really valued? My answer to that is “no,” because what became important was ‘we need to know where these women are and they have to be occupied so we’ll put them in school.’

According to Suzette, the new prisoners/students arriving “didn’t know when to stop talking with people because they didn’t know what would be done... what people would do with the information. Would it show up on the reports somewhere?” She describes how she and other prison staff were trying to come to terms with the new penal philosophy and its theoretical definition of the situation which included new and confusing roles for everyone:

Well I remember that it was very disorienting for everybody because the lines were so blurred ... for the [CSC] primary worker where their role is now a combination of guard, counsellor, case manager. The designation combines the first three levels of the male correctional counterpart into one position. ...

... I asked the question in the school, when do I stop being the administrator to become the teacher, to become the counsellor, to become the librarian, to
become the CSC person giving assessment or providing reports or when do
I become the person that supervises the breaks with my radio? I mean all of
the roles become so blurred that I got caught and that's what happened.

There was, she recognized, a "conflict of interest" between the security dynamics of
the institution and the dream put forward in Creating Choices. The "role conflict" she says,
occurred as "we were trying to work these ideas and bring them in" but "we kept clashing
with security, against the boundary of the demands of the system for its own functioning."
Despite the dreams of empowerment embodied in the Creating Choices document, the
administration started to resist having school during normal "working hours:"

I remember that at one point they said: 'well, the women can't . . . we're not
going to have school during the day because the women have to be at work.
If they want education, they will have to go to school at night.' And I said,
'hold on here, you're going to put them to work all day and then they have to
go to school?' and they replied 'Well, I have to go to school at night if I want
courses, so why should it be different for them?'

At one point, she is concerned about having multilevel security inmates in her
classroom, because of the potential for disturbances and escapes that having maximum level
inmates in a minimum security environment represented to her. She is directed by the
administration not to let them escape, and when she continued to press for their transfer out
of class, was given a radio

. . . to wear at all times. So that every time somebody moved even to go to
the bathroom or something, I would have to call in. So the radio is appended
on my side, the radio becomes part of the classroom. It was a bit ridiculous
at that point. As a teacher, I just became a security function.

So in a very a telling statement she said "But you see how the whole philosophy of
the holistic, of teamwork, ended up becoming that I had no boundaries. So that's when
empowerment becomes one's prison." She realized that effecting change by altering her
practices in the school and the prison, redefining both by the application of theory, had
become nearly impossible. She began to concede to the prison guidelines:
It got to the point where we [Suzette and the Warden] both got aggravated and so in the next draft I put the few words that she wanted which had a lot to do with training . . . that’s when I realized that . . . I was trapping the women into something where I was serving the Correctional Service first, as opposed to being women-centred. That’s when I lost a lot of [my] illusions as to where we were going with this.

In the defining moment of this story, she described how she had been going back and forth to meet with the Warden who had asked her to prepare another draft of the Standing Orders for education. (Suzette notes how the earlier version had been drafted by “someone without an education background,” a document that was not in keeping, according to her, with the Mission Statement of the Correctional Service of Canada (1991), nor with the Creating Choices document.) The ensuing battle over the responsibility and control of the school’s mission statement and Standing Orders continued around the definition of education for meaning or as training until, “finally, after the sixth draft, I said, ‘okay, I’m not drafting anything anymore. I want a meeting to discuss what’s wrong with this. I had a meeting with the Warden which ended up with her taking the document, throwing it across the table where we were facing each other saying ‘you’ve been hired to teach!’”

Images of Change

Clandinin (1985) and Elbaz (1983) have made us aware how teacher images embody essential qualities of the teachers’ practical knowledge about the self, teaching, the situation in the classroom and subject matter. Images organize teacher practical knowledge in relevant dimensions of their practice. Suzette’s language is full of powerful images of the prison system: programs and education are considered part of an assembly line, education is defined as training or used as a kind of busy work and the prison is a no man’s land.

Suzette’s image of the prison as a dysfunctional and abusive family reveals her knowledge of the way that interactions become distorted and even disavowed in prison. Her image of the prison as a dysfunction family links the contradictory close experiences of intimacy (within the emotionally charged location of the family) with the colder, technological images of function. In western cultures at least, the family is a secluded private sphere
connoting a sense of place, values, individuality, mutual respect and love; it serves as a powerful source of meanings and motivations for social and personal identity. The images of the prison as the dysfunctional family shatters her hopes that the prison for women could be a more intimate place, a “community in the making” where “women could do for women” and reveals to Suzette the social distances between staff and inmates prescribed by the prison that transforms her role as a teacher into a guard or someone hired to teach.

Suzette’s second image of the prison and school as a community of women evokes a similar sense of intimacy and belonging, except on a broader scale. It also expresses Suzette’s moral sense of what prison and relationships in prison could be, where women can do for women. In theory, the ideal of community is an important critical term that “disputes traditional, patriarchal institutional structures by emphasizing the private sphere of intimacy over the public sphere, the feminine over the masculine, the aesthetic over the instrumental, and the relational over the competitive” (Young, 1990, p. 301). In practice, as Suzette tries to create a community of women, she becomes aware of the contradictions of women-centred reforms in prisons, where the “language of empowerment is used to legitimate both correctional and feminist strategies. The difficulty is that reformers and the state are working with different interpretations of empowerment” (Hannah-Moffat, 1995, p. 136). In Suzette’s words, “that’s when empowerment becomes a prison.”

As Suzette struggles with the relationship of theory and practice, she expresses her knowledge of the prison milieu, the place of the school within that milieu, and the relationships shaped by her employment with The Education Company. These overlapping milieus generate practical and epistemic problems around defining the physical and social location of the school, its practices, and Suzette’s identity in it, so that she finds herself in a “no-man’s land.”

The Problems with the Milieu: A Brief Summary

In this section, we begin to realize the influence of the milieu on the ways in which teachers come to know their professional world. The foreign nature of the prison for the teacher and perhaps for the reader, calls upon teachers to create a definition of the situation. This engages them in a process of appropriation whereby they both shape and are shaped by
prison practices. It is this process of coming to terms with the problematic situation posed by the milieu that I hoped to reveal in this section. Clearly, prison presents unique problems that result from the contacts between social actors who represent distinct but overlapping functional, social, interpersonal and epistemological locales within the prison.

In the next section, I consider the teacher's practical knowledge and experience of the learner. Usually teachers do not know what to expect of the student who is an adult and a criminal. Defining the identity of this Other is part of the process of coming to know what it means to teach in prison. As teachers negotiate the identities of their students, they also define themselves. These identities are fluid, causing confusion at times, and creating problematic relationships between teachers and students.
Problems with the Learner

The Problem of Student Identities

I was a bit afraid. I think at first because I didn’t know what to expect... I imagined maybe that they would be a little more hardened criminals. Then, when I first got here, I realized that the people here were just like the people that you run into anytime; young men who are like my son... or people you would meet or even someone in your own family. It’s not a big difference (Holly).

Most teachers are unfamiliar with the students they find in their prison classrooms. They ask: Just who are these students who are also prisoners? What do they know? Given who they are, what interactions with them are possible or desirable? And, given who they are, what can we hope to accomplish? These questions implicitly or explicitly shaped many of the conversations with the teachers I interviewed, and seemed to represent some of the key problem situations that teachers encounter when they teach in prison. Cathy struggles with the identities of her students as learner and criminal, experiencing the tension of nearness and farness from him. Note, too, how the identities of students affect the teachers’ experience of insides and outsides.

Sometimes I look up a student’s record just because I can’t imagine what they would have done to warrant a federal sentence. Their offenses are often sex-related. What they have done is sometimes so repulsive it is hard to face them and act like I don’t know. This is especially true when they don’t think that what they did was so bad. It is also hard for people outside to understand how we can work with these guys. They have a hard time understanding how different this world is from the one on the outside. It tends to isolate us from other teachers and from other people.

In order to make sense of who her students are, Agnes calls upon her knowledge of other milieu to ascribe identities and impute characteristics to them, so that their identities appear to be fixed by their positions within the realms of social service institutions. For Phillis, there is an inward movement between realms, from institutions of lesser to higher security,
where each realm is distinguished from the others by different expectations, behaviours, relationships, and identities that persons in trouble with the law can inhabit. She situates her students in the following manner:

Well, the young offenders . . . if I could track the young offenders in terms of the age grouping, when the young offenders are out and about within a public school system, there is one umbrella of expectations and behavioural expectations. The other realm, of course, is when the young offenders are incarcerated within the realm of a young offender’s institution which is then under the auspices of the public school board as well. And then of course they’re the young offenders who are housed at the Alberta Hospital who are the extreme. Now it’s interesting, because they’re there up to age 19. So they are the extreme in terms of being the disconnected and shattered souls. You draw an analogy because very often we have the offender here who’s that age . . . So in a sense, there is such a strong connection.

As Agnes travels (conceptually) inward, through the realms, there is a sense that the threat posed by the student becomes more and more extreme. The person becomes formless, an archetype of disorder becoming eventually, a disconnected and shattered soul.

Jena is able to come to terms with the identities of her students as prisoners by attributing nonthreatening and it seems, nonjudgmental reasons for their actions:

There are many reasons that our men end up in jail. Sometimes it is because they are young, impulsive and situations just happen to them. Sometimes they are motivated by easy money (the drug trade) and a youthful laziness to get things that they want . . . Often, however, the men in prison get there because they feel they have nothing to lose. We can and do nag the first two varieties, help them get through the experience with good positive reinforcement of better attitudes. We nurture the maturation process—keep them talking and thinking. But it is with the third group that we do our best work. Years ago, I instinctively said that I wanted to give them something to lose. As a result of this process (your PhD), I think I’ve fleshed that out to mean self-respect,
dignity, awareness of a much larger world, and the humanity of everyone in it.

Jena's comment portrays how teachers seem to provide depth to the stereotypical image of the prisoners, to explain their actions in such a way so as to take away the stigma associated with them. Learners as prisoners are youthful, lazy, impulsive, and feel they have nothing to lose. These characteristics do not seem to impute a sense of evil, or badness (the result of a moral judgement) to the identity of the student/prisoner. Gordon who works at The Stronghold, does much the same thing when he says that students/prisoners are "the most needy of society. And not in the sense that they have their hands held out, because of course, they have a certain level of pride and dignity as well." Jena's comments reveal too, her sense of purpose as a teacher. Given who these students are, she understands the literacy program, at least for some students, as an act of restoration of dignity, self-esteem, self-respect and their place in the world.

Some teachers resolve their issues with student identities as they come to know them as representatives of minority cultures, as immigrants, as aboriginal persons or as students who are socially disenfranchised. This is not simply a conceptual game to simply overcome differences, but one also based on the obvious diversity represented by the students in the classroom and prisons. Jena describes her classroom as somewhat of a melting pot "... you also have this amazing blend in your classroom at all times. Most of the time--and I think this is the sad truth--you are maybe the only light-skinned person in the room most of the time."

The fact that the student is from somewhere else is part of the enjoyment that Lara experiences in her classroom and it informs her sense of what a good literacy classroom should feel like.

And so you'll have this whole cultural group of people, and there's nothing nicer that can happen in the class when all these people begin to share. ... These guys, they were all from different cultures, and they were all in there just doing their math tables, you know? And in that sharing also comes the stories. And with the stories would come the understanding that the world is a lot bigger than Northtown, or Alberta. Because now you've got a Lebanese, you've got an African, you've got a Jamaican, you have a couple
natives, and they all come in with different points of view. But the oneness in the room is the literacy that they’re looking for.

The fact that many of these students come from afar also presents practical problems for teachers because much of what is happening in the classroom, in terms of identities and relationships, is part of a larger story unfolding around immigration policies and legal issues. Mary describes how T. Laun first came to the prison in January of 1997, for a drug-related crime. Ms. Laun was a Vietnamese “model student from the beginning: extremely motivated, self-directed, considerate, cooperative, well-liked by other students.” Over time, the teachers came to believe that “she was no longer a threat to Canadian society. Unfortunately, as her immigration problems loomed, the students became “saddened as all avenues seemed to close for T. Laun and her deportation seemed unavoidable.” These broader problems of immigration find their way back into the classroom, and impose another identity so that T.’s success is not enough to keep her in Canada. “As teachers we are constantly looking for change and rejoice in it. As teachers in prison, change is just not enough in the life of a student.”

Holly, who teaches at the Quarry, finds consolation in the “nativeness” of her students and the knowledge that both she and they are afraid. Holly eventually, was able to overcome her fear of her aboriginal students (not her fear of prisoners). She described how, as she learned more about their unassuming interactive style, how have much to give, and how rewarding working with them can be:

When I first get them in my class, they’re very quiet—they’re probably afraid of me as well. A lot of them, especially in my class haven’t had very many successes. And so, they don’t really expect to be doing well. It takes a long time to build rapport. But the first time they laugh or smile or tell a little joke is very rewarding.

Some teachers think of their students as persons representing all walks of life. As one teacher said, you can be sitting in a classroom, where your inmate-tutor is a doctor, or a former principal, or politician, and your student is a media star, or a carpenter, or an accountant.
One of the most common ways teachers seem able to overcome the stigma attached to learners as prisoners is to recognize the obvious adultness of them. While this observation may appear to be insignificant, in the prison the adult nature of the learner serves different purposes. Joyce who teaches with Holly at the Quarry, a minimum security institution, described how she has just “fired” the school librarian (an inmate/student) because he breached the security protocols of the school. As a result of her report, and those filed by other prison staff, the librarian is denied parole. In the interview I ask her if she is worried about what the inmate-student might do and she answered “I would say that this is a safe place to be. We do try to treat them [inmates] with respect and I do not think we treat them like ‘inmates.’ We treat them like adult students who are coming to school.”

Defining the prisoner as an adult/student is not without its problems either. Teachers must rethink their assumptions regarding life-stages, experience, educational intervention and learner development that shape much of the educational discourse (Popkewitz, 1997). The adult nature of the learner is questioned, as Collette wonders if she is being duped by the student. She feels

... the student could be, at this time in her life, doing better. And I’m not too sure whether I’m missing something as far as her capacity... should I be expecting this or not from her at this time...? So I check in with Mary. And I would say ‘okay: this is what I’m noticing. Or is this student just playing me in a particular way... you know?...there are emotional problems that make you think that you’re dealing with someone in junior high. But you are, at the same token, working with an adult who has spent maybe ten/fifteen years... chronologically getting to the point they are now, they’ve had all kinds of learning in the meantime that can be utilized, you know?

Coming to terms with the prisoner as adult/student, some teachers seem to experience a suspicious politics of identity. Mary, Collette’s colleague, wonders if she is being toyed with, because her students who are adults should be acting differently; they seem overly dependent on the teacher. Unsure, she develops an instructional practice governed by her sense of a developmental continuum, stating that teaching is about “individual progression,” discovering “where’re they’re at” and helping “them move forward as much as we can.”
Perhaps echoing some of the literature on the prisoner as learner, Jena defines the goals of her program and her own identity as a teacher as one who nurtures the student to compensate for their “delayed maturation.”

Samantha’s Staff Orientation Handbook for her school at Midway (a maximum security institution), conveys the tension too, between the student as adult and the student as prisoner. In the section of her handbook titled “Characteristics of Adult Learning at the School,” she acknowledges that adult students have life experience and know what they need to learn, but they are also “patients” in other programs at the psychiatric centre, so that Samantha warns the new teacher:

Our adult students are busy with programming and other activities. Don’t spend time teaching things they already know. Instead make connections between what they know and what they need to know. However, these patients may not know what they need to know, they may not be aware of the gaps in their skills. They may also be unprepared to go back to the basics. If this happens, respectfully explain the need to relearn certain skills that they may not have mastered. Provide a positive role model and positive examples of the benefits of supporting new learning with a strong foundation.

Prison teachers often qualify and limit the concept of experience that underpins commonsense notions of adulthood and development. Collette at the Women’s Institution, describes her students this way:

It’s obvious. Their experiences in the past haven’t been all that positive, so they’re putting away a lot of negative stuff in order for them to walk in that door. And they’re scared that they’re not going to be able to achieve and that they’re not going to be able to learn. And they’re scared that maybe some substance abuse will affect the brain, their brains won’t work . . . We hear all these things. And so depending on where they’re at there, you know, we meet. And gradually, of course, we try to withdraw. Because the objective is to have them be independent learners as adults. And again, depending on their individual problems and emotional states, you know, we work with them where they’re at.
Knowing that the adult nature of her students must not be taken-for-granted, Collette adopts an instructional strategy based on a principle of practice so that she begins with meeting students “where they’re at” so that she both recognizes and puts into question, their past experiences, hoping eventually, to withdraw her support, as students become, presumably, more autonomous. As adults who are also prisoners, Collette knows that the experiences in her students’ lives are often mis-educative opportunities that detract from the processes of growth and development. She would like to recognize the identities of her students, the experience they have, but a lot of this experience is not of much “use.”

Working out what appears to be the broader issues of adult/student/prisoner dependency and autonomy, students are often described as having gaps not only in their skills but in their lives. Teachers believe that most prisoners have lived transient lifestyles and this accounts for their lack of education and experience. “They go in and out of the school, here and there” and because of this, they have “gaps—you know, inexperience or something like that.” Gaps, for Holly refers to the way that students have not experienced life. The student-prisoner has missed out on good, positive experiences, and as a result, lacks confidence and is not yet capable of being an autonomous adult.

Pamela at Canyon, is pessimistic about her role as a teacher, believing that little can be done with students “because the gaps are so enormous.” Part of the blame for the gaps in the students’ knowledge and experience is laid at the doorstep of the traditional school. The “system” has somehow failed the student who has been getting the “messages all the way along the line, who the successful people were.” According to teachers, even students recognize their gaps, and consequently they value education “no matter how patchy their education was. Probably the patchier it is, the more they tend to value it, even though they may not be able to hang with it.”

The storylines of the learner/prisoner/adult/student cross many times in the course of the day, so that teachers seem able to question their practice in the light of these shifting identities. Mary at the Women’s Institute, must work through the identities of her students to formulate some rules of instructional practice. As she deliberates on who she has in her classroom, she calls on her knowledge of schooling practices inside and outside, and says,
... when I think of the person's life, I'm puzzled, in some ways, as to how much do you push them despite the problems that they have. I haven't answered this one for myself yet. Like when, let's say they're having a custody battle, but they're in school. And this custody battle is taking a lot of their energy and a lot of their thinking, and their concentration. So... like in the outside world, if they were in a course, they would still have to follow the course material, keep up with everybody else. We give them—I give them leeway (Collette does too), in terms of okay, we'll work with this. We'll work with you on it. We'll give you the time, we don't push you this hard. So I'm not sure that were doing them a favour. In terms of if they go out into the outside, go on...

Sometimes teachers are nearly overwhelmed by the adult nature of their students' problems which are aggravated it seems, in a prison setting, so that the adulthood of the prisoner seems to be accompanied by a sense of hyperbole. Jena says

Our teachers here, leave our workplace exhausted everyday. We have no serious behaviour problems, probably the most significant factor relating to burnout in the public system; instead we are dealing with enormous grown-up problems—relationship difficulties, divorce, family deaths, institutional problems, intimidation, gambling, suicides (two here last month), immigration problems, loss of children, fear of incarceration, fear of release. If all we did was teach, we'd have the energy to moonlight.

Teachers also realize that treating students as adults and working with them according to adult education principles is not always an easy task in a prison setting. Collette describes the problem of using her adult education principles so that the student can feel "relaxed and comfortable, so that they [feel] un-threatened, shall we say, so that they can be free to respond." But she knows there "may be certain pressures that are not visible" so students may not "feel free to speak for reasons that we won't know about." Despite her attempt to define the adult education classroom, and the learner as an adult, she realizes that, because of where she teaches, she has to be cautious: "So you know, we don't push. But we try to be very accepting."
In this section we have heard how teachers come to answer the questions they might have about their learners. Teachers engage in identity-work that subdues the differences between themselves and the student. Some definitional certainty comes from the facticity of their students’ lives as immigrants, natives, and members of ethnic minorities. The student is also clearly an adult but the recognition of this biological fact only offers limited definitional certainty. As adults, these students lack common social experiences, they are transients, disconnected and shattered souls, and they have enormous grown-up problems. Within this constellation of identities, teachers struggle to define their practice.

Given who the learners are, what relationships with them are possible and desirable? This is an important question that all teachers ask and that calls upon their knowledge of self, milieu and curricula for their deliberations. In the following section I begin with Jena’s story of Peter, which illustrates how one teacher negotiates her identities and relationships with a sex offender who has just been brutalized by his fellow inmates, to illustrate the problem of relational identities, the identities formed as persons enter into relations with others (Goffman, 1961).

I then examine the key relational issue of trust which I understand, as I listen to teachers, is a pivotal relational problem that must be addressed in prison, in part at least, because teachers are afraid of their students. I suspect that, as we pick up on what teachers are saying about fear and trust, we come to a better understanding of the section we have just read on student identities and the reasons why teachers “must” find an identity for their students that allow them to solve the practical problem of working with potentially dangerous people. As human beings, we want to be safe in the world and so too, do prison teachers. Assigning identities enables teachers to raise different claims regarding the definition of the prisoner. It is a process that enables them to teach and related to students rather than fear them, and be repulsed by them, because of the crimes they have committed.
The Learner and the Problems of Relationships

Relational Identities

Students may want or need more than you can provide. Remember that you are a teacher. Some patients will want or need a friend, a counsellor, or some other type of professional. Know your boundaries and assist patients in contracting the appropriate staff to help them with problems that are not educational in nature (Samantha).

There is very little doubt that, when it comes to teaching in prison, teachers like Jena, at Canyon, know that the “relationships between student and teachers are critical to the learning process.” The problem that teaching in prison presents, then, is what relationship to establish. Jena’s knowledge of her students, teaching style, and the purpose of prison education programs is brought into her understanding of the teacher-student relationship. Jena knows that her students

... will not respond to punitive attitudes unless they are so strong they will learn in spite of the teacher. This is a rare phenomenon among incarcerated populations. Trust is needed before the offenders will expose what they don’t know. Teachers need to be real professionals so that they can set aside abhorrence for the crime in order to help the student. I will stress that, to this extent, education is the vehicle for attitudinal change and not an end in itself. I believe that many teachers said the same thing when you interviewed them in connection with this project (Emphasis in original).

In the very early stages of data collection, I asked teachers for some stories about their professional lives in prison, things that happened that were important to them, reflections on their experiences and so on. Jena responded with her story of Peter, which is complete and unedited and reproduced below. Portions of her story, along with my interpretations, have been published elsewhere (Wright, 1998).

Two days ago, Peter got piped [beaten with a pipe]. Of course, it was because he is a sex offender, something to do with little girls, I heard. I never bothered to check his record. What’s the point? He was great in school, a
whiz when it came to computers. Pleasant, helpful, but unlike most sex offenders, unapologetic about his existence. Peter did not cower.

On Friday, I went to admin. seg (administration segregation) to see my regular clientele of rats, hounds, and skinners, cowerers all of them, except Peter. True to form, Peter had fought back. Still his face was bruised, his eyes black and blooded, a ‘C ’ shaped tear in his forehead, closed with thirty four stitches, he said. I really couldn’t bring myself to look. He told me about his assailants, five men who had covered their faces with white balaclavas, the legs of prison issue long johns. Unidentifiable.

I was there to offer Peter work. We could arrange for a computer and work projects so Peter would also not have to suffer financially. Was he interested? Was there time enough before a transfer to a safer prison could be arranged?

Peter said he wouldn’t take a transfer and that, in fact, he planned to go back into population. He said that he was not prepared to let the bullies, vigilante-cowards win. I was appalled. A part of me admired his courage and his determination. Another part of me reminded him that he had a wife, kids. For what, was he going to make a martyr of himself? Did he think it would make a difference, change things? Jesus, C.S.C. would love this guy. The integration of sex offenders into regular population targets the aggressors so that their victims are not forced into protective custody. That’s the theory anyway. So we argued, ethically and pragmatically, and I still don’t know what Peter will do.

Run of the mill sex offenders, at least those that I come across, are pathetic, low life creatures. They are easily identifiable, by demeanor, to staff and con. They are the fallout of despair. . . . It is easy to have compassion. But Peter, Peter can walk among us. Educated, articulate, likable, strictly moneymed middle class. His kid plays violin and I am terrified for mine. Still another part of me is not so unhappy that the boys got to Peter.
In theory, as teachers assign identities to their students, they assign identities to themselves as well. We learn who we are by learning the categories which include some people and exclude others, such as male/female, father/daughter, teacher/student and so on. There are storylines attached to each of these categories and there are positions for each of us in these storylines. We develop a sense of belonging to the world in certain ways. There is also a moral system that is attached to our categories and storylines and positions that separates those who belong from those who do not (Davies & Harre, 1990).

This story reveals the shiftiness of identity formation in the teacher-student relationship in prison, as Jena experiences the relational tensions associated with the competing, juxtaposed and contested identities of their students. In some parts of this narrative, the teacher and the student in this story seem miles apart. There are stark, critical, harsh images of the students that distance this teacher from her student. Notice the emotive force that accompanies the derisive naming of the offenders (rats, hounds, skinners)—"cowerers" all of them. Jena’s hidden terrors of teaching are heard: Jena fears for her own children, she cannot bear to look at Peter’s wound, and there is the danger posed by anonymous violence of the “unidentifiable” men in prison issue long johns.

But solving the practical problem of one’s relationship to this Other is not a simple matter. Tacitly at least, it seems that Jena experiences the dilemmas of “boundary work” (Pile & Thrift, 1995) with her students: on different occasions she mentions how “a part of her” was called into play, as she admired Peter’s courage, as she identified with him as a parent, and as she agreed with the harsh, retributive justice of the inmates in the penitentiary. Clearly, there is a dilemma here. After all, Peter is both an offender and a great student; he is a sex offender, but unlike others, he is courageous; Peter is a victimizer and a victim of unknown assailants; he is in limbo—currently in segregation, but about to be in population. Like Jena, he is a parent, his kids play violin, but there is a vast social distance that opens up based on that very same identity as she says “I am terrified for mine.”

Jena’s relationship with Peter is defined in part by her knowledge of the other prisoners and what she thinks of them. He is not a “run of the mill sex offender,” nor one of those “pathetic, low life creatures” that are “easily identifiable, by demeanor.” He is “educated, articulate, likable, strictly moneyed-class.” In theory and in practice, it seems that
these conflicting conceptual categories set the shifting boundaries for how Jena interacts with Peter, as she is moved by his identities to react in different ways. Many teachers seem to experience a similar “dance of identifications” (Goffman, 1961) that we appreciate in Jena’s story, and as they do, they define themselves and their relations with their students differently, assigning identities to themselves as mothers, sisters, social workers, counsellors and so forth.

Anna who works with Jena at Canyon, is also engaged in identity work. Anna’s dance begins as she describes how she models behaviours for her students, saying “I tell them all kinds of stuff. Because I figure, you know what, that’s modelling for them. That tells them what is a normal life. What do quote, unquote ‘normal’ people do, right?” In this same passage, in which she describes herself as a mom, who cooks and cleans, not someone who goes to all the bars in the area at night, she says: “And so you’re bringing in the “normalcy.” She adds: It’s really, I think, very much an important part of what you’re bringing into that place. So they can have something to compare with from their own experience. So when you’re teaching, you’re doing a lot more than numbers and writing . . . I feel like you’re counselling all day long.”

Establishing relationships with students by assigning (and hence reassigning identities) is taken up as an ethical problem for Jena. After reading the transcript of the focus group interview, Jena commented on the need for teachers to adopt an ethical stance in their relations with students. When I followed up on our conversation with questions regarding the ethical nature of teaching in prison, she responded with:

Ethics is the practice of goodness. The ethical treatment of offenders implies affording offenders the dignity they are entitled to because they are human beings. In our situation, ethical teaching means that we set aside other considerations and treat offenders as students rather than inmates. We manage the security issues with explanations and diplomacy. We never let the offenders feel that we are engaged in behaviours because we have the power, or because they are powerless.

Jena’s struggle with ethics, identifications and dis-identifications can be read, theoretically as an attempt to redefine the situation by negotiating a “third space” between her and her students. This is the social, dialogic and practical space found “in-between domains
of difference like race, class, gender.” It is an acceptance of working in the liminal spaces of relationships and identifications that belongs to the experiences of those on the “borders and frontiers, to migrants and diasporas, to the colonised, to political refugees and to the consequent re-figuring of notions of ‘home’ and ‘nation’” (Pile & Thrift, 1995, p.18).

Deliberating on the practical problems of coming to terms with their relationships to their prisoner/students, teachers reach conclusions about the significance and outcomes of their literacy programs. Returning the transcript of the focus group I had sent her, Jena had scribbled on the last page: “I cannot measure our impact beyond the prison but I know we make an enormous difference to the men who come to school while incarcerated. We can make angry men reasonable, desperately unhappy men smile.” Jena and many of the teachers recognize that they can have a substantial impact on the lives of students, particularly on their self-esteem, and they judge the quality of their relations with students and their successes accordingly. Jena says: “there’s even a strut, you know?” that students get, once they have been successful in school. Teachers see the growth and positive change in their students in the way they interact with them. “I can tell just by the way they act how far along they are in their program [and the] way they’ll treat me in the hallway, that they are farther along in education, and that they have self-esteem because of it.”

In the play of identities and relationships, it would be an oversight not to begin to document the relational problems of fear, trust and intimacy that teachers encounter in prison. Trust is a complicated social ritual. “The prevalence of tact, trust or ontological security is achieved through a bewildering range of skills which agents deploy in the production and reproduction of interaction” (Giddens, 1984, p. 78). Teachers work through the practical problems presented by the question: “How do we know that it is safe to work in prison?” This is a practical problem that reveals the dimensions of teachers’ practical knowledge in prison by calling on their knowledge of self, Other, milieu and their relational skills in building trust.

**Fear and Trust**

Nightmares last night about possible violence in the classroom. First time I’ve had that, maybe a reflection about what happened [the beating of inmate at the
maximum security prison, elsewhere]. I’ve felt uneasy, but not directly threatened here. I think we have to be careful about the situations we put ourselves in, but we can’t let it preoccupy our minds or we wouldn’t be able to stay here. We have to just take sensible precaution, e.g., desks visible from the hallway, interviewing alone, make sure that someone else knows where you are and what is going on (Cathy).

Cathy manages her issues of safety by using her knowledge of the milieu. She creates a physical space where she can feel safe. When it comes to being safe, however, teachers know that managing the physical environment to ensure their own safety is simply not enough. Teachers know that they must establish relationships with students if they are to work in prison.

I asked Marlene, who currently works at Hard Rock Prison, but who started at Quarry prison as a volunteer under Holly’s management, to comment on the transcript of our interview. Marlene replied in writing to me, saying that the kind of “interpersonal relations (kept within the parameters of professional conduct)” that teachers develop with their students is an important dimension to teaching in prisons. She added: “the trust between teacher and student is very important.” When Marlene speaks of trust, she considers the trust of the student for the teacher. She wrote, “it takes some time before the student realizes that the teacher is acting for his benefit or for the good of the class or the school. When a student realizes that a teacher wants what is best for him, he begins to trust his teacher.” But in her conversations it became clear to me that teachers must also learn to trust their students. The following narrative focusses on Marlene’s relational deployment of skills as she learns to manage trust in a prison setting.

Marlene began her teaching career as a volunteer at the Quarry chapel. Later, a member of her church shows her a picture of the school in prison, and as Marlene was completing her degree in teaching at the time, she suggested that Marlene apply. She did, progressing from a volunteer in the chapel, to a substitute teacher when I interviewed her and eventually to an indeterminate contract teacher. As a permanent teacher on staff, and looking back to the period when she was a volunteer, her conversation turned to the physical and relational places on the prison landscape. She knows now about the “space between”
prisoners and volunteers. "... You know how everybody has their space ... and I realize now, the men feel their space between volunteers is different from what it would be with a teacher ... they warm up to teachers not quite as fast as they would with a volunteer."

According to Marlene, inmates believe volunteers are "safe," they can be trusted. This space is negotiated between students and volunteers because of the perceptions, by both, of their respective locations on a continuum of insides and outsides. Marlene comes to know that her teacher-student relationships and identities are structured by her place in the prison. She knows that the farther away she appears to be from the functions of the prison, the closer in physical and social distance she is permitted to be to the prisoner, and from the perspective of the prisoner, the more she can be trusted.

Marlene knows the relationship rules that the prison milieu imposes. In the chapel, Marlene describes how she was permitted more behaviours suggesting intimacy than she would be allowed as a full-time teacher working in the school. In the chapel, a place where insides and outsides meet in the form of visitors and inmates, she recognizes that the inmate has entered her personal space and a "... couple of times I thought "back off from me." But then as a volunteer she knows that it was "okay" to lean over and listen to what the inmate was saying quietly to her, in confidential tones.

Visitors, volunteers and prisoners are able to locate themselves differently, physically and socially from teachers who work full-time inside the prison. As Marlene describes her transition from being a volunteer to a substitute teacher in the interview, she reflects back on her volunteer work in the Chapel and wonders how was perceived by the prison staff, because she was leaning over to listen to the prisoners there, and speaking in hushed tones with them, sitting beside them, and so on.

Now on the inside, as a substitute teacher, she begins to wonder what the prisoners think of her and what she should think of them, now that she is not just a volunteer. "When you are a volunteer— it is 100% trust, you know, you are trusting them. Whereas, when you are here for a pay check, well then it's, you know, you are a "nice" teacher or something." She knows now that she must attend to her presentation of self in her relations with students, so she is not giving out the wrong impression. In theory, she must become strategic about how she presents herself so as to properly define the situation (Goffman, 1970).
Working through the problem of trust in the relational waters of the prison is not without its own problems, as building trust presents issues of intimacy between teacher and student. For Marlene and for many teachers, the relational problem is to find the right distance: “Absolute distance and the abolition of all distance. What then is the right distance . . . ?” (Taubman, 1992, p. 224).

In prison schools, social and physical relations of nearness and farness intersect invariably with relations of desire, given that many teachers are women, and most students are men. In her story, Marlene enjoys the “special attention” she gets as a woman in prison, calling it a “treat.” But she knows that by being there her motives, from the prisoner’s perspective, are questionable.

Inmates constantly test the teacher who must learn to fend off their improper advances. Marlene, like many teachers, knows how to keep “within the parameters of professional conduct.” She accomplishes this identity-work by calling upon her other identities from the outside, to protect, and mask her identity so that she does not appear as a “nice teacher.” Marlene, who sees herself as a “sister” to many of the men, describes how she fends off the advances of one of the inmates who “I think, started to think differently, and I said, ‘Hey. I’m married.’ I always try and mention that too . . . because a prisoner is lonely and his wife dumped him and everything else. It is something you have to be sensitive to. You have to let them know that’s not why you are here. Because some of them think that.” Sometimes, she plays out a role where she is inept and this gives her some distance. “I just act dumb and pretend I don’t know what they are talking about. If they had any decency, then they would feel embarrassed and they wouldn’t do it again or else try to avoid it.” Teachers know how to use their age too, as a talisman to ward off the intentions of inmates. This is particularly true of Native Students who have “been brought up in the tradition of respecting people who are older.” In these examples we learn how Marlene develops rules of practice to manage her social relations with the prisoner-students. These rules are based on the principle of practice regarding professional conduct with students and they enable her to remain sufficiently approachable, to win their trust, and sufficiently aloof, to set professional boundaries.
Marlene comes to know that relations with prisoners-students are affected not only by her location in respect to the institution, but according to where the student is located relative to it. Inside prison, students who appear distant or aloof when they are close by, are much more approachable when they have left the prison. Marlene describes how she is "floored" when a student calls her from the halfway house in the community because he was talking, talking and talking—because he had been out for awhile I guess, but he still felt that, I think, a lot of them feel a real closeness to the school which is something that happens sometimes on the outside and then I said ‘you really shocked me because you did not talk to me that much the whole year that I knew you.’ He would just give me a nod and that was it. But it was, I guess, being institutionalized . . .”

One of the core assumptions that teachers hold regarding trust and relationships has to do with the security level of the institution. The higher the institutional security level of the institution, the less inmates can be trusted and conversely, the lower the security level the more they can be trusted. This is not completely “logical” in the denotative sense, because often it is the same prisoner; yesterday the inmate who could not be trusted in the maximum security institution can walk around today, in a minimum prison without fences. It is logical if we understand that teachers and prison staff assign different statuses to prisoners, depending on their distance from the outside.

As a dimension of the teacher’s logic of trust (Cintron, 1997), maximum security institutions are understood as being farther away from the community than minimum security institutions which are socially closer to the outside, so “you have to treat them [students] like they’re almost on the street, and they have to ACT as if they are there too.” Students in a minimum security become less like different Others because “they hold the door for you, there is less swearing and just better contact.” This inward movement into higher security level institutions, and repositioning of prisoners as they appear to be assigned different identities can be heard in Agnes’s descriptions of the “realms” and the expectations, behaviours and social relations prescribed in each of them.

There are times, it seems, despite the identity and relational efforts of teachers, breaches appear. Finding creative resolutions to the issues of trust and relationship is not
easy, given the crimes of some prisoner/students. The social or relational space between student and teacher, prisoner and teacher, opens up as Marlene relates how she was driving one of the inmates to the Sunday school picnic one day, in her role as a volunteer, and she becomes nauseated when she learns that he has committed sex crimes.

And that, almost made me sick to my stomach, I did not throw up, I felt well ... for the rest of the day, I thought well, I knew that when I came here that there are a lot of people here for sex crimes, but now I know somebody. Another time a guy sat down beside me in the chapel, he says “I’m in on sexual assault.” I just wanted to get up and walk away, but I thought, well, this is part–this healing process–is to tell somebody, okay, I’m listening, then I thought, well are you going to say anymore? What am I supposed to say? (Laughing). You can’t say, that’s nice, or that’s awful and then he went on talking about something else and then I found out, he was all right. ... 

Marlene resolves some of the practical conflicts that surface because of the identities of the learners and her interactions with them by managing the physical spaces of prison. (We head how Cathy alleviates her fears by moving her desk, making certain she is visible from the hallway, and so on). Marlene describes her first experiences in the classroom and how she is afraid of the students, so that she asks herself “Am I going to get hit or something?” She describes how a student she did not know, “just gave me a look of hatred;” he “hated my guts for some reason, I don’t know why.” Given this very real and threatening practical problem, Marlene keeps her distance. “... well the other day Lenny was not in the best of moods ... he just wanted to be left alone, so I thought okay, well the last thing he wanted was somebody hanging over him.” Learning to give another distance is as much for the student as it is for the teacher. For students with violent pasts, teachers must learn “not to aggravate” them because “it might cause him to do something, well for my sake, but also for them because if they get mad and do something, then they get moved over ... [to maximum security].”

Marlene’s prison classroom management skills come from, she says, her experiences as a waitress in a busy truck stop. “When I was a kid I worked in a truck drivers’ stop. That was my first job and you learn a lot about space, people and how to react to people and I
think of all the education things I’ve had, as far as dealing with people, it was probably the
best, in waitressing you learn a lot.” The waitress, after all, is often the person who controls
the situation, moving customers along, shaping the social and physical dynamic of the
restaurant and controlling the definition of the situation (Goffman, 1969).

Marlene writes on the transcript of her interview that it is important to mention to
you, the reader, how inmates, “really everyone, wants and needs to be respected for who they
are right now. I guess the proper term is unconditional love.” She adds: “If we look for
something special in each of our students, we’ll find it and hopefully nurture it.” By coming
to know and perhaps understand and trust the prisoner and herself within the context of the
prison, Marlene comes to know more about herself. She becomes wiser or more accepting
of others. The knowledge about managing relationships gained from her travel, or passage
to prison is almost spiritual

... one thing I found here ... you have to really back off and not be—I’ve
learned how to be a quiet gentle spirit. I thought, well, I would have to be
dead first before that happens, but as soon as I came here, it was the only
way, because you have to be very sensitive about their ego, you know, being
in jail—they can’t read, they can’t write. . . .

Marlene seems to have worked through some of the practical problems in regard to
her relationship with her students coming to a creative resolution of the problems surrounding
the prisoners’ identities, and her work with them in the relational spaces of the prison. She
assuages her own fears as she recognizes the prisoner as someone deserving of respect. In her
encounters with Others, she finds out the sex offender like others, is “all right.” In the end,
she also knows she must present herself as a professional, which she does, knowing that the
different regions in the prison have different rules of interaction that must be followed. She
knows too, because the male students are also lonely prisoners, how to fend off their
advances and subdue their definition of her as a “nice teacher” so that she is able to sustain
a relationship with them that defines the situation and her actions within the “parameters of
professional conduct.” Marlene’s story perhaps confirms what Bersheid’s (1985) noted:

... it is difficult to exaggerate the role other people play in determining what
each individual ‘knows’ about his or her world. To an extent far greater than
most of us realize what we know about our physical environment, our social environment, and ourselves is determined, either directly or indirectly, within our relationships with other people (p. 60).

In the next section I continue with my discussion of the relational problems and knowledge that teachers hold and use in regard to the learner as prisoner. The next segment illustrates what they know about relationships of gender in a prison setting.

**Gender**

You have to be very judicious about what kind of persona you present. You have to make sure that your classroom at all times. . . . You have to create it to be the way you want it to be, and you have to earn that respect. And I think a lot of them don't understand. Even the fact that you come in there to begin with is sometimes mistaken . . . for a woman it's a difficult route to tread through there. I don't know if you found that too, Jena, at the beginning. You have to be careful. Once you set that tone, you get an amazing support from them, and then . . . they become very loyal to you (Lara).

Gender, as one might imagine, plays an important role in the relational practical problems that teachers face in prison. Tom, Lara, and Jena, who teach in an all male prison, experience their relationships with the students differently as a result of the shaping influences of gender. Tom finds the freedom to be himself and to be one of the guys. He feels close to his students, because he does not have to watch his language and behaviour as he might in a mixed class. Tom had apparently been reprimanded because of his behaviour in an all-girl Christian School. Apparently he had responded in a joking manner to one of his student’s comments that his fly was down, with “it was a good thing he was wearing underwear that day.” This remark he says, would not be inappropriate in prison. Jena disagrees. “as a woman in there, it’s the opposite—you have to be extremely careful about what kinds of vibes you give off. Sometimes these guys don’t read things very well, and it’s amazing. So, on that level, Tom may be fine, but we’re not.”
Revealing what she knows about gender relations in prisons, Jena says that she has the best luck when she hires the “older women who went back to school after they got their kids kind of raised and in school.” These are “wonderful people for this environment, because they had age on their side.” They are also recent graduates, so according to Jena, they do not “have a whole lot of preconceived teaching ideas.” The success of these older teachers as mothers “is a really common thread” at her school. Perhaps it is because they find it easier to manage their distances with the students, who see them as mother figures, not as available women.

Some experienced teachers know so much about relational distances that they are able to flirt with prisoners; flirts are able to be both aloof and approachable simultaneously in a relationship—that is their attraction (Simmel, 1964). Flirting is a form of relational play that enables Anna to express some “freedom” from her role as a teacher (Goffman, 1961), without being harmed:

And I find that the guys will often try to hit on you in a certain way. And that they’ll sort of joke about it. I have this one guy now that just showers me with compliments every day. You know? And it’s like “Anna, you know, they should rewrite the alphabet and put you (u) and I next to each other” and that kind of stuff! I always just make a big joke out of it and say ‘oh, he’s good, he’s good. This guy is good—listen and learn gentlemen, listen and learn!’ You just play with it all the time. And I always make sure that they know how old I am. And I say stuff like ‘on my 40th birthday . . . ‘ and they go on about ‘you’re 40 years old’ and like ‘yeah I am, seriously old now.’ And stuff like that, so that they understand what my parameters are. And I joke about it and I’ll say oh yeah—I have this one guy who’s way out of line, but you know, I can take a little craziness because I like to be crazy. And he said to me this summer once, ‘Anna, if you do that for me, I will suck your toes!’ And I said ‘oh yeah, that would be a new experience, but I don’t think we have to go that far.’ This Fall he said to me—he wanted something—and said ‘I’ll give you a foot massage.’ And I said ‘yeah, yeah, promises, promises.’ And then you know, a few minutes later—I just play with these
guys; it’s kinda fun for me—then I’ll say (especially because the new guys can’t believe the conversation sometimes), and I’ll say ‘Jerry, you must not be as fond of me as you were this summer.’ He goes ‘why’s that?’ I go ‘because this summer you were willing to lick my toes, and now it’s just a foot massage.’ And then the others gasp—what? But we just laugh about it and joke about everything. But they know that there’s no rude language. The minute I hear a word I say ‘language.’ And then the guy will say—even if the guy doesn’t catch it, the other guys will say ‘yeah, you’re not supposed to swear man.’ And if they go into a conversation, ‘I remember that chick, you know, da, da da da’ I say ‘we don’t need to hear that here. Way too much information.’ So I find that you can set your parameters by joking, by telling them your age, or maybe by referring to my husband, referring to my children. Not by name, but you know? My little boy told me this today and stuff.

From this passage, we see how Anna’s gender fits in-between the relational borders, somewhere between the “parameters” that are shored up by this teacher’s age, marital status, and identity as a mother—identities on the outside—and the other extreme which is hinted at when the “others gasp.” Despite the suggestions of intimacy in this conversation, students are also told her age, and told off, when they use improper language. The students are also told by Anna that this is a job, thereby setting the professional terms of social engagement.

[The classroom seems] . . . like a friendly place for them where they can tell their stories. Which some of them do. And they can talk about anything they want, which we often do. But they know that this is who you are, this is your job. You know, I make no bones about I’d quit this job in a day if I win the lottery and that sort of thing. And that’s where it ends. And they like that because they get a taste of outside, I think, from you, when you talk about stuff with them. Or when you tell them oh yeah, I went to Calgary this weekend and I did this and this.

In this passage we see how Anna’s identity is shaped by her ability to move between the inside and the outside and how this positively affects her relationships with students, who enjoy the experience of the outside that they get from being with her in the classroom.
In the next section, I look at the problem of relationships where intimacy is the issue. As we have seen in the past, what teachers have to say about relationships speaks to their knowledge of the prison and its rules.

**Intimacy**

At six o’clock, Darlene [a teacher] went to the office for some papers. The library door was locked, the office door was locked, and Karen [another teacher] and Peter [an inmate-student] were inside. They were sitting fairly close together and Peter was crying. Darlene went into the office. Peter said ‘Excuse me Darlene, I’m crying,’ but Darlene continued on and sent them on home. On Wednesday, Darlene spoke to Karen re: the incident with Peter, and told her that inmates can manipulate etc. and that Karen was not the right person to help Peter with his problems (Holly).

What happens when teachers get too close to students? What does too close mean and what is to be done about it? In the excerpt from Holly’s report, above, we have a sense of the problems teachers face when the relations between teacher and student are inappropriate. The rules that are applied call upon the teachers’ knowledge of the milieu and the student. Marlene knows some of these rules; she has learned not to sit too close to a prisoner, not to speak in hushed tones, and so on. Holly cites numerous other infractions that have to do with Karen’s misuse of time and space such as, spending too much time with one inmate, staying behind to talk, going over a report with an inmate in the parole board room (which is outside the territory of the school). In the noteworthy situation described in the report above, Karen is too close physically and apparently emotionally. Karen is reprimanded by her Teacher Coordinator for staying late after class with a student. “The night before, on Monday night, Karen left at 4:45, and I left at 6:30 P.M. When Bill picked me up I noticed Karen still squatting next to her car in the parking lot, speaking to Peter [the inmate].” We have already heard that the evening is a dangerous time, one of uncertainty and risk for teachers.

Holly addresses the problem: “I told her that she [Karen] is responsible for setting the boundaries, as a teacher, and not the inmate,” and “Told Karen that I would arrange for Anatomy of a Set-Up.” She also cites Karen’s misuse of specific forms of address, which
indicate relationships of familiarity, as an infraction. "Mentioned to Karen Re: Tuesday P.M. when I heard her say ‘Bye Jo-Jo’" to our computer tutor, Joe. I told her a nickname was not an appropriate way for her to address him. I could see by her response that she felt that I was ridiculous, not pushy.”

That Karen is too close to Peter is evident to Holly because Karen breaks the rules when it comes to the legally prescribed contacts between prisoners and the outside world. Holly is upset when she finds out that an old girlfriend of Peter’s has called from Istanbul and talked to Karen, who put Peter on the phone. “I told her that this was a violation of CSC security.”

Just as teachers come to understand the behaviours associated with different regions in the prison, as Marlene does, in the chapel and the school for example, so too, do they know how to manage their identities in the transitions between regions. At one Teacher Coordinator’s request, I held a conversation with a teacher who would go to her classroom in the morning before joining the staff in the staff lounge. She would leave her nap sack there too, and this became a concern for staff and for me, as her indirect supervisor, because it she raised the question “what’s she bringing in?” By reversing the order of movement from the public spaces of the teachers’ lounge to the back regions of the school (her classroom), her behaviour became suspicious, particularly when she began to stay in her classroom, talking with the students, instead of showing up at the staff lounge during the many breaks between classes. Staff were concerned that she was not making herself available to share information about the students and the school, which made her more vulnerable to inmates’ influence. She was eventually dismissed for her highly suspicious behaviour. One month later, she was on the inmate’s visiting list so that the Teacher Coordinator felt vindicated by her decision.

Elbaz used the expression “tension of consciousness” to refer to an agent’s level of interest or attentiveness, the teachers’ need to be aware of many phenomena simultaneously. To cite Elbaz (1983) again, “... calling into question matters usually taken for granted will have the effect of altering the teacher’s awareness, changing the forms of spontaneity available to her and her self-experience, and possibly even influencing the social and temporal dimensions of her experience”(p. 20). Karen’s response to the innuendo and rumours circulating in the prison, and her response to the Coordinator’s advice and admonishments
was “I’m outgoing, bubbly, vivacious, and I won’t change the way I act.” In other words, she could not see the point of giving up the image of herself as spontaneous and outgoing.

Teachers must learn the institutional policy and know the rules about how to manage intimacy properly if they are to be considered “security conscious.” The teachers’ ontological sense of the prison, (its spatial order, and the teachers’ experiences of it), the knowledge of the prison milieu, and the social orientation of teachers’ practical knowledge are tightly bound in their knowledge of the human ecology of the prison. “Human ecology . . . seeks to emphasize not so much geography as space. In society, we not only live together, but at the same time we live apart, and human relations can always be reckoned, with more or less accuracy, in terms of distance” (Park, 1925/1967, p. 56).

After a number of counselling sessions with Karen, we decided to let her go. As the Coordinator and I sat with her, I found myself saying that we had made our decision, not because we believed she was guilty. It was because of her close association with Peter that she was at risk from other inmates, who might think she was vulnerable, and accessible because of the favouritism she seemed to be showing toward him. We dismissed her because her behaviours presented a risk to herself, to other inmates, who might fight for her favours, and to the good order of the institution. We were admonishing her for not adopting the prescribed patterns of interaction with students by patrolling her personal boundaries properly.

I could never have imagined there would be so much to say in regard to relationships between teachers and students in prison. I would like to continue in the same vein, because there are other important aspects of interactions between teachers and students to examine. Privacy is a relational issue; it is about creating the proper distance from another to recognize their distinctness as human beings. Grief and privacy are related in curious ways, as when he “turned away so that I wouldn’t see him cry.” In grief one often needs to find a room of one’s own. We know from Jena that students in prisons have enormous grown-up problems. This story represents, as do the other stories, a segment of some teachers’ lives that may help other teachers to understand the realities of teaching in prison. In the following story, Mary and Collette mobilize their knowledge of the milieu to try and support a student in crisis. It reveals much about their knowledge of how the prison functions.
People in Crisis and the Issue of Privacy

And I do feel, you know, like both of us have had enough experience with women and with people who are in crisis, to be able to recognize when this is needed. And sometimes it is absolutely needed. And it’s very painful to try and help somebody . . . and maybe the chaplain isn’t there, you’re pushed for time. You know, it’s not convenient for you to be talking to them right now. You do the best you can. It would be so nice if somewhere in the institution there would be a place where they can go when they’re in crisis (Collette).

This segment may be read as a critique of bureaucracy, and how it fails to address the needs of prisoners/students. But it is also about helping and caring for students who experience profound existential problems in prison and about the difficulties of socially constructing personal spaces for them so they might resolve the crisis brought on by the grown-up problems that Jena described earlier. In the introductory passage, Collette says that it “is very painful to try and help somebody” in prison. Why would this be the case and what does it say about the teachers knowledge of crisis, support networks, and prison functions?

Collette and Mary feel they have had enough experience with women to recognize persons in crisis. They see it in their faces, and “their eyes—vacant.” They also see it in their classroom as the student is trying not to cry. They know it is a crisis if, when they do cry, there are “deep sobs. Deep, deep sobs. They just cannot get their breath.” Certainly to share the deep grief of another is painful.

But part of the problem for them with the person in crisis is finding privacy in a system where few private spaces exist. “But we try to find a place where they can be private.” Privacy is a relational issue and an issue of identity. It is an “essential part of the complex social practice by means of which the social group recognizes—and communicates to the individual—that his existence is his own” (MacMillian, 1995, p. 12). Privacy is a condition of personhood. It

. . . helps us keep at least some control over how we appear to the world.

. . . Few people can function without a private life. . . . A hidden microphone, or a telephoto lens that captures their intimate contacts with others, is a
violent theft of what is central to their well-being. Even lovers need to retain
a certain privacy from each other; to be unable to have secrets is to be bereft
of a self (Grayling, 2001, p. 196).

Collette and Mary used to be able to send the student to the Chapel, but it is now
locked because prisoners were gathering there unsupervised in the morning. They feel that
they can help, sometimes, if they have time to listen: “Sometimes we do, and sometimes we
don’t.” These teachers try to resolve the crisis by suggesting students take a couple of days
off, but this means that they will be left alone in their units. So when there is a crisis, they
often “try to accommodate it for a while” by keeping students in school if they are “willing
to make some kind of an effort, you know, even just look through books that interest them,
that type of thing, then learning is taking place.”

Collette might go to Mary and say “so and so seems to be quite upset.” And she’ll
say “well send them in.” Or she’ll say “I’ve got to get this done.” If Mary is not in her office,
then Collette might go in there with the student. “But if I’m working in there, then Collette
will go around the corner in the hallway.” Sometimes they ask students in crisis if they would
just like to “go to the bathroom for a few minutes” so that they can “pull themselves”
together. They suggest to others that “maybe some cold water on your face will help you
deal with this right now. So they’ll go off and they’ll come back and they’ll be fine.” For
these students then, nothing more needs to be done. Collette might take some students
elsewhere—

... if nobody’s in the library, then I’ll go there. And again, I can’t be very
long away, because I’m supposed to be in charge of this class. So I don’t like
to be cooped up somewhere, where I can’t observe what’s going on. So
sometimes if the room across the hall is open, that’s just ace. Because I can
face the classroom while talking to the student, you know?

Collette and Mary feel that the institution is of little help when it comes to resolving
the crisis. “Nobody has ever said to us, that I know of, if you have a student in crisis, send us
here, here, or here—we can take them. The chaplain will take our women if they’re in crisis
and they’re willing to see him. That is, if the Chaplin is there to see them.” The institution is
supposed to have a system of peer support, but that “isn’t always viable. It’s not like the
chaplain, who's got his office there. You go in, you shut the door and they’re right with somebody who is focussed right on them, right now.” Getting the peer support person from the institution means finding the duty officer. “To set up peer support, we have to call a duty office and they get the peer support person. Well, if you can’t find the duty officer, you’re stuck right there,” Mary says.

Through these passages we can feel how difficult it is for teachers as they try to find “a place where they can go when they’re in crisis.” They come to know that the student in crisis in prison is “out of place.” Heidegger’s (1993) description of the state of being which he describes as unheimlica, “unhousedness” or “not-at-homeness” seems to be unspoken but an appropriate way to speak of their experiences of the prison as a non-supportive milieu.

In other ways, in other schools, teachers recognize the need to respect students’ personal, social and physical spaces, so as to permit them some control over their activities. Just as the students prevents the teacher from knowing more about them, teachers may purposely avoid knowing more about their students’ criminal pasts, believing that it will affect how they teach, but also out of respect for the private lives of their students. Teachers know, and make provisions in the classroom for students who are often fiercely possessive about their little cubicle or desk; they recognize the students’ needs for privacy. Teachers know too, that students often prefer to work alone on their school work, in their cubicle at their pace, calling on the teacher when they need help, so that issues of privacy in prison thread their way through the literacy program in terms of routines and subject matter, and teacher-student interactions.

In the next section, I examine the problems of choosing a subject matter that teachers feel is appropriate for their schools and classrooms. Deciding what to teach in prison is a practical problem that often comes about because of the isolation of the prison from society and from traditional public school boards. Teachers find freedom, in non-accredited schools, from the prescriptions of school boards and the demands of ministry personnel. In accredited prison schools, rarely, if ever, do representatives from the departments of education darken the prison hallways. The local management of the contract is both a blessing and a curse, as the schools operate and develop their practices in conjunction with the personalities and whims of local CSC personnel. Sometimes there is great latitude given to TEC because of the
issues of steering and rowing. Teachers must make curricular decisions based on what they imagine adults require, particularly those at the lower grade levels (below grade eight), where the teachers are given latitude in the materials they provide to the students. The teachers’ curricular decisions are complicated too, by the relatively undefined structure of adult education in Canada.

The Subject Matter

What to Teach?

I think that there’s a recognition from all the members of this staff that no educational endeavour can be disconnected from experiences, can be disconnected from the whole of knowledge. But I think also, it has to be recognized that our students themselves are disconnected. And to further isolate academic subjects and compartmentalize them just lends credence to their own feelings of isolation. The holistic approach not only allows them to draw connections between different subject areas or different areas of education such as academics and cognet [Cognet Enrichment Advantage] and values. But it also allows them to see connections that they have to society or to life, and to remain part of this culture. And I think that’s very, very important. What we do is not so much imparting knowledge, but to allow them to gain understanding and vision of their own place (Gordon).

Gordon’s comment should not be misunderstood. Teachers are not free to chose whatever they like to teach. In fact, many of their curricular decisions are, as we shall see, the result of images that they hold of the student and their understanding of the prison milieu. In other words, their deliberations regarding the subject matter return us to the other commonplaces of education.

Perhaps the most common image of the student that comes into play is the image of the student/prisoner as disconnected person, so that for many teachers the “only” response is an integrated form of curriculum and a holistic approach to its delivery. Addressing both
the shattered selves of their students and the world not lived, many teachers provide a curriculum that is as broad a possible—one that most closely approximates life itself, where the curriculum is tacitly understood as an act of re-connection and of restoration of the student within the world. Gordon, who works at Stronghold, says as much when he discusses how the curriculum outcomes should be to “allow them to gain understanding and vision of their own place.”

Understanding the curriculum as an act of re-connection takes into consideration the teachers’ understanding of the narrow prison world of the prisoner/student. Mary and Collette used the term “broadening” to describe their program, where for them, there are no limits to broadening. Their year-end report provides many examples of broadening, such as promoting pilot projects with other agencies such as the Elizabeth Fry and John Howard Society, inviting the author of No Crystal Stair, Mairuth Sarsfield to come in and speak to students about women and writing; building partnerships with the local library to provide students with discarded books, and developing contacts with local museums so they can share educational materials. The objective of this “curriculum” is to involve students in learning activities, through the curricular materials provided, that keep them in touch with the outside world.

Knowing her students, Agnes who works with Gordon at Stronghold, resolves some of her curricular questions by locating the student at the heart of her thinking about her literacy program, so the literacy program becomes an act of restoration. Identifying her students as disconnected, isolated, lost souls, she envisions the literacy program as a means of re-presenting the world to them and creating a place for the students in that world. Agnes says it well when she defines literacy “in the sense of not only the reading and writing, but literacy in the sense of presence. In the sense of comprehension, in the sense of being, that sense of literacy is not just taking pen to paper. And that it encompasses all aspects of a discipline.”

Being in jail, Lara says, means students are faced with the “meaning of life.” Prison is a trying place and one that raises profound existential issues. Describing the effects of incarceration on her students, Lara says that “there was total agreement in the class. They had all thought about doing suicide.” She decides to acknowledge through the curriculum where the students are both physically and existentially.
But like I said, if you’re going to jail for ten years, you might think about it too. So they want to know their place in the world, they want to sort out the world, they want to figure out, you know, their spiritual side, if it makes sense, and they want to pick your brain for that, and then they want to figure out why things are the way they are in the world. Like this whole colonialism thing and you know, the Jamaican guys want to talk about why all these people ended up on the islands and that kind of stuff.

The other teachers in the focus group at Canyon Prison agree that students “want to make their world make some sense” and that students often “can’t make those connections” even though they are trying “to find their place in the world.” They believe students enjoy history and geography because these subjects help students find their place in the world. Tom says “the type of book that’s mostly in demand in my classroom, and it was in your class as well, was the atlas.” To which Anna replies: “Yeah, they love atlases . . . I felt that the person was trying to figure out where he fit.”

Geography and history not only locate but relocate and reconnect the student to the outside world. History and geography help students to get out of jail. These subjects offer students a

... sense of escapism or something. Like, they’re in a little tiny area, and I guess they’re dreaming of: if I could go anywhere, let me look at the atlas. And history, gee, if I could live at any time . . . because they don’t like the time they’re living in and they don’t like place that they’re living in, obviously.

For some students, the curriculum forges imaginary connections with worlds and lives not lived on the outside.

Decisions about what to teach appear to embody a principle of practice that focuses on the spontaneous encounters between teacher and student in the classroom. Lara uses “huge conversations” as curriculum and as a means of sharing experiences with the students. Many teachers believe in the value of the informal conversation as learning content that occurs in the classroom. Jena describes how the curricula in her school comes about:

And I think that’s what’s so appealing about school. I had one of your guys come the other day and he said to me—and there’s a million stories like
this—and he said ‘Jena, what do you know about the dark ages?’ So you know, what I ended up doing was spending an hour giving him kind of a mini-history of everything that I remembered about the history of western Europe. We got into colonialism, imperialism. We ended up talking about the fall; the crash of the stock market in 1929, the depression and you know? It was an hour. And he was a sponge! He was so silent through that.

In the curricular materials some teachers design, tacitly they are making a place for the student in the world. As a result of the students’ lack of knowledge in social studies, Mary and Collette describe in their year-end report, how they have designed a short-term social studies course titled: Social Studies: An Introduction to Your World. This adult-oriented curriculum is very basic. The first page begins with: “I live in the city of blank in the Province of blank in the country of blank on the planet blank.” This fill-in-the-blank page is followed by an atlas showing all the continents, a section titled “The Earth and the Sun,” with a diagram of the revolution of the earth around the sun, “More About Climate,” “People of the World” accompanied by population and religions of the world atlas. The remaining pages give some basic information on Canada, its regions, time zones, vegetation and animals, the coats of arms of the provinces, and the branches of government, and so on. The test questions at the end of this mini-course include questions such as: 1. name the nine planets; 2. Name the countries of North America; 3. Name Canada’s 10 provinces; 4. Name Canada’s three territories; and so on in simple questions of location and connection. Many students cannot even show you where they live on a map, these teachers say.

Some very practical problems are “solved” by holistic and integrated approaches to curriculum development and implementation. Holistic approaches enable teachers to respond to the multi-level classrooms, where “totalities,” represented by the graded classroom, are elusive. This is perhaps the rationale behind the curricular decisions that Sarah makes. She uses Individual Education Plans to relate better to the disconnected lives of her students, and to recognize their experiences. She shapes her curricula around thematic units, she says, to illustrate the connections between subject areas and between these areas and the interests and lives of the students. She hybridizes the curricula provided by the Ministry of Education to meet the needs of adults who must learn much in a short time, given that they are always on
the move. Like other teachers, she makes curricular decisions on the spot, using any material at hand to develop the lesson. She sometimes uses the Skill Sets prepared by The Education Company from Ministry of Education guidelines, so she can work individually with students in multilevel classrooms on different topics that provide them with the required skills but not the content prescribed by the Ministry. These individualized approaches “basically allow the offender to demonstrate so many benchmarks of learning.”

At the heart of many curricular decisions by prison teachers, in response to the questions about what to teach, is the intent to provide materials that have “meaning for them,” that answer the “whys for them” and that allow teachers to find “those connections, those little sparks that are happening.” Many of the teachers seem to favour what O’Sullivan (1993) described as the “personal growth” as opposed to the “human capital” paradigm of literacy and what Giroux (1983) described as interactional approaches to education, which “espouse a view of meaning that is primarily psychological and person-centred. In this perspective, meaning is situated in a concern for personal growth, inner happiness, and interpersonal relations which affirm the dignity and autonomy of the self” (p. 216).

Given the significance of teacher-student relationships in prison, curricular choices are often based on the likes/dislikes of prisoners whenever possible. We hear how teachers seem comfortable with constructive classrooms where “the emphasis is on the quality of the interaction between teacher and student as they attempt to build their knowledge of the world” (Arlin, 1990, p. 82). These are classrooms where teachers and students “are given time to create and coordinate relationships and, in the process, to develop more powerful concepts of themselves and their world (Arlin, 1990, p. 83).

How does a holistic curriculum fit into what teachers know about prisons as well as students? That is, how do teachers make curricular decisions that reflect their needs or the needs of the institution, for order, safety and predictability? The next segment examines the curricular theorizing of a group of teachers at a maximum security institution and how it reaches conclusions about what and how to teach there.
The Management of Behaviours

Even public education is correctional in nature. It’s behavioural in nature. Here it’s a little more pronounced. But it’s a part of our role to work in a correctional environment as service providers. As human service providers. And a major component of that work is correctional in nature. Yes, we are here to impart academic skills, but to no lesser a degree are we here to work the successful re-introduction of this individual to society. So of course the correctional side of things is paramount and equal to our academic endeavours with these students. So really, you can’t draw that line (Gordon).

As we know, teachers make curricular decisions regarding what to teach because of whom they teach, but what about where they teach? Do the shades of the prison house close in upon their curricular concepts and if so, how?

Gordon, who teaches at Stronghold along with Agnes and Sarah, clearly feels that prison teachers have a role in the rehabilitation of inmates. The other teachers at this site feel the same way. It is necessary to “Document!” and, “keep extensive logs!” (Emphasis in original quote.) Excerpts from these documents these teachers say, are recorded in the centralized Offender Management System, contributing to the inmates’ correctional plans designed for the management of their rehabilitation and their sentence. These teachers seem to take pride in the realization that since they have been “basically recording every bit of conversation” with their students in the logs which “have become valued in the correctional environment almost ahead of the academic progress.”

A holistic evaluation of the students accompanies the holistic curricula they offer in the school. Their evaluation of students is considered an opportunity for them to draw on their “knowledge of human behaviour” to record the behavioural changes, attitudes, skills, values, and “all of those components” of their students. Their reports are based on much “more than any standardized test.” This intensive and extensive exchange of information with the correctional staff is considered to be “back to the holistic approach” in education. This holistic approach and to curricula and evaluation entitles them to be

... part of the whole institution. And so we share information, knowledge constantly. So we know so much about each offender. The staff will even
seek us out and say over lunch or en route or however—it can be most informally: ‘Oh, so and so and so...’ In fact, I think we’ve reached a position where we are fairly protected (Agnes).

A holistic approach is adopted for their own safety, in an school where the daily routines and students are unpredictable. Sarah says

... it’s different every day... You don’t know what they’re going to be like when they walk in the door. You don’t know if they’ve been denied their statutory release or; there’s a lot of different things going on in their life that they don’t have control over. And so they come with that baggage, just like any student would.

Their definition of good prison teachers is anchored in the concept of the holistic approach. Teachers who work in prison must be good communicators, so that everyone can share information about the inmate; innovative, because the institution and its policies and inmates appear to change every day; curious and interested in research and “targeting effective interventions, and;” a “master of the skills of the interpersonal, at all levels.” Finally, teachers must be able to resist the dangers of attraction and close personal involvement that accompanies the experience of working with students who are disconnected and shattered. Agnes identifies the need for teachers to be “very strong and well anchored” and “a very strong member of the community at large.”

At the junction of curriculum and teacher identities, the teacher must also understand course content—especially the four core subject areas taught in prison (English, Math, Social Studies and Science), be quick-witted or have a sense of humour, and “be able to read a situation and react.” As part of the holistic approach, the teacher must be a “master of multiple subject areas and multiple disciplines.” They must have “breadth and latitude in their understanding.” In addition to these skills and characteristics, teachers have to be “master[s] at bringing their emotions and their intelligence together.”

And at the juncture of the curriculum and student identities, because students are imaged as “shattered souls,” they need teachers with knowledge “that is eclectic,” that includes everything from a knowledge of “learning disabilities, to mental illness, to physical
traumas, to addictions.” This knowledge base is required for an integrated approach to their students’ problems and for a holistic curriculum.

In this discussion by a group of teachers at a maximum security institution, we see how teachers come to have a practical knowledge regarding what and how to teach because it seems, of where they teach. The curricular and instructional practices, locally and specifically, contribute to the reproduction of institutional relations of surveillance and control through the co-production of student/inmate dossiers (Foucault, 1995). Perhaps for some teachers, the holistic curriculum may the natural outcome of teaching students “who live and are kept in the same building they’re taught in,” that is, who must lead their lives in a total institution.

In the next section I single out the commonplace of the teacher for further study. It may seem surprising to the reader, after the effort already expended on the knowledge and experience of teachers, to single out the commonplace of the teacher for preferential examination. To my mind, this has lead to a unintended reductionist approach to this study of teachers’ practical knowledge. In the next section I hope to return some of the disembodied voices of the teachers to their rightful owners.

This section is not merely a rehearsal of themes and ideas already covered though there is some of that. The two teachers I selected for more in-depth study shed considerable light on the knowledge and experience of prison teachers in general. The approach adopted in the previous sections continues in this undertaking which is that teachers are responding to the strangeness of their situation and making sense of it across the commonplaces of education. In the stories below, these commonplaces are still regarded as places of departures for these teachers. However in the interest of a more holistic approach to the teacher, the problems are merely noted in the teacher’s story as it unfolds. By now the reader is familiar with my argument that teachers are not isolated thinkers. They acquire a knowledge about something, and the “something” is the very real educational situation requiring their deliberations.

In the first segment below, I adopt a more holistic approach to the study of practical knowledge by focussing on the images Holly holds regarding prison literacy. Knowledge, experience, affect, morality and emotion coalesce in the images teachers use to describe their
practices. Images not only reflect past experience, they exert a teleological influence so that they shape future experiences—they transform and organize perceptual information leading the teacher toward the realization of the image/practice. Images and connections between images help us anticipate teachers’ responses to different experiences, knowledge, curricular reform, and so on (Clandinin, 1986; Elbaz, 1983). In effect, images are a “central construct for understanding teachers’ personal practical knowledge and for linking such knowledge to past experiences and to ongoing practical expressions” (Clandinin, 1986, p.19). The images Holly uses are grounded in the everyday practical problems of teaching in prison, and they encompass her sense of the self, school, students, curriculum and the purposes of the literacy program.

The Teacher: Holly’s Story

Holly has been in the position of Teacher Coordinator with The Education Company at Quarry for approximately six years. She has worked in the prison for more than ten years. Over the past three years her administrative duties have grown, causing her to give up teaching a lower level Adult Basic Education class (grade 0-5.5). Holly is a highly efficient, competent and caring teacher according to her colleagues, the students and the prison staff. The school she administers has been the subject of numerous positive stories in the local press; it has also received two prestigious national awards for literacy excellence from Canada Post.

In her school there are signs of student activity and success everywhere. The walls are covered with copies of literacy certificates from the local Ministry of Education, GED certificates, and certificates of accomplishment. On these same walls, there are displays of appreciation from the students for the teachers. There are clock mechanisms mounted in the centre of old school books, leatherwork, poems and so on that speak to the general feeling of cooperation and activity in the school.

As a result of a serious and chronic illness, Holly suffered through multiple hip replacements, shoulder operations, and cancer. Her arthritic condition is so intense that she
often fractures a toe or finger, or breaks an ankle performing simple tasks such as getting out of bed in the morning. There is a feeling on the part of the staff at this institution that while she is not indispensable, she almost is. In the following section, I focus on Holly’s images of the prison schoolhouse.

**What to Teach?: “It’s Just the Whole Gamut of Human Life”**

“We try to relate everything to something in their life whether you’re returning into the community and your relationship with your children and your spouses. I think even becoming responsible fathers. It’s just the whole gamut of human life.”

In Holly’s conversations guiding images appear that speak to the webs of relationships in her teaching practice. Holly’s image of the literacy program is inspired by its relation to whole gamut of human life. This image is inclusive and expansive, encompassing the vastness of life itself. It is an important image that enables Holly to formulate a principle of practice which reflects her belief that everything in the program must relate to something in her students’ lives. It is an image that promotes a program that meets the students’ needs. It has to do with relationships; it speaks to the identities of students/prisoners as fathers and husbands and the kind of husband/father they might be; it is related to the reintegration of prisoners into the community.

With the gamut of life as a primary image, Holly is able to understand and evaluate her student’s needs. Considered against this implicit standard of the vastness of life and experience and relationships, they do not measure up, because they “have gaps, you know, inexperince,” and so they “are a little more needy than the average person . . .”

The image has moral implications as it is used to judge what is good for her students. She believes in the expanded curricular activities offered in the school and feels that her school would have suffered if she had been trained in corrections. This school would have . . . more traditional looking classrooms. We probably would be doing just a lot of book work instead of, a lot of things we do are hands on, life skills kind of things . . . I don’t think it would be as holistic, I think, if I could use that term. I think that, of course again this is my lack experience in
corrections but, if we look at more of the history of corrections... we have
to ask is it punishment or rehabilitation or whatever?

This image helps Holly to develop and justify the broad curriculum adopted in the
school. If students seem to be lacking in the experiences offered by life itself, then the
program design puts students in touch with life by filling in their experiential gaps. Holly's
program retraces and re-presents some of the formative experiences missing from their past.
In her school, teachers help students (adult, male, prisoners) celebrate Halloween by carving
pumpkins, baking bread, building picnic tables and igloos and contributing to a popular cook
book based on their favourite home-cooked meals. In an interview with a church member
printed in the church bulletin, she is asked about the gardening projects at the school. She
replies:

I think it’s the next best thing to having pets [sic]. I think it’s that whole
nurturing process. I find that many students have never had the opportunity
to have a garden. And, just looking at the whole picture—a seed sprouting,
nurturing and growing. It’s a wonderful experience—working in the soil with
our hands and also working the ground, I’ve noticed... Being able to
experience that whole cycle of nature, we’ve found to be good experience.

Gardening also ties in well with education; it’s hands on work
(science). We build up the garden with other projects—measuring, graphing,
and planning ahead, all tie in with the gardening.

In an ironic twist of fate, she notes, the garden is doing much better, now that the
hundred-year old tree that sat in the middle of it, was ripped out by its roots by a tornado.
Though she had longed to have the sunlight on the garden, she could not see cutting down
the tree. In fact, now that the garden is so successful, the school is able to send boxes of
vegetables to a local charity food bank in the community. This helps students feel connected
to the outside world, Holly says. Through all these activities, Holly adds, she makes up for
their gaps in experience that she associates with normal growth and development.

The “gamut of life” image shapes her understanding of the subject matter so as to
include relationships as well. Students, with the assistance of the teacher, can learn to build
positive relationships with themselves through self-esteem, as well as positive relations with
others: teachers, case management workers, the prisoners’ families and the community. True to her image of schooling as all-inclusive, as a mirror to life itself, she even uses problem situations that teachers and students encounter in the course of the day in prison as the content of her lessons:

... if someone is having a problem with the Case Manager, we try to use that as an opportunity to either help with ... positive ways of interacting. If the student is not succeeding with that relationship, you know, how can he address it? Who can help him? Sometimes somebody else in the institution, maybe somebody from Psychology ... could be drawn in as well.

Drawn by her image of the literacy program, she orients the curricula to teaching students positive and negative ways of interacting and reacting and showing them the consequences of behaviour, steering the students through these treacherous relational waters by asking questions such as “... is this the problem, what could we do? Could I help? How could we resolve this? Is this an effective way of dealing with this?”

The gamut of life appears in her sense that life in its fullest is not in the prison but on the outside. Holly understands literacy as a means of passage to all that the world has to offer. Because of the vastness of life itself out there, the program can only hope to prepare the student for the journey.

And I think again the goal is to, hopefully, send students out better prepared to meet real life in many different ways. Whether it’s people skill, job skills, basic reading skills. Also I think it’s our job to raise people’s self confidence you know, so that they feel they can succeed. And I think it’s really more important to motivate them to want to learn than to actually teach them things. I think if you can awaken that desire to want to learn or know things then, you know, you give them some skills to help them find the answers to that. And I think that’s really the key.

The image of the whole gamut of life sets Holly up for what seems to be the impossible task of selecting appropriate content for the program. In the passage just quoted she devises an instructional principle of practice, deciding that the program will be process-based. This resolves some of the problems associated with what to teach. Holly believes that
the literacy program is successful if students can learn how to learn, and become “someone who is sort of able, you know, investigates things on their own and feels confident enough that they could try something.” Learning how to learn entrusts students with the experiences associated with life and experience. The content of the curriculum should be “good learning experiences” that enable students to meet the demands of the real world on the outside.

As it is impossible to know and teach the whole gamut of human life, not only is it better to teach them how to know it, but to motivate them to want to know it. Holly expresses a practical principle of “student relevance” in conversations about how to teach. Describing one of the many interviews she conducts with one of the new students in the school, Holly recreates her conversation with him: “we don’t want you to . . . necessarily have to learn certain things that you will never need but if you know that because you’ve worked as a carpenter for example, you want to go back to that, then math maybe is really a part of it. So we can concentrate a lot on that.”

Her identities are oriented too, by this image. In the following passage we sense her definition of self as an expression of her desire for wholeness and interconnections:

As the Coordinator, I kind of see my job as basically almost like public relations. I mean I think it’s my job to be there when the teachers have . . . concerns. . . . If there are any issues that come up that should be addressed by . . . CSC . . . I feel that I’m the diplomat in that case, that I can be there to support people and I think also to help give direction to the school—not necessarily my own—although that’s one of the bonuses that you can sort of have some input. But basically to find out what all the teachers are feeling and always sticking to our goals and the objectives. . . . I also think it is my role to be there for students. I use the word counselling . . . in a different sense . . . as just another person to speak to if it were . . . a situation with another student or even a teacher or as a mediator sometimes. For example if a teacher is having some difficulty with a student, often I can either speak to them myself or the three of us sit down so that I lend support to both, to teachers and to students. I think it’s also my job to sort of take the final responsibility. If something is not working well, I think that I’m responsible
for it and it is my duty as well. I also think it is my job to make sure that things we are doing are also not only meeting the school objectives but also fitting into the bigger CSC picture. And I think as just a human being I think it is also my responsibility to, you know, help offenders, to be a role model or give them guidance and directions where they will be able to succeed on the street. You know, maybe they don’t have a lot of skills and either people skills or work habits and that kind of thing. I sort of, see myself as basically, sort of a go-between everyone, you know and I sort of pull it all together, that’s how I see it.

In this interview segment, Holly sees herself as a person who navigates and sustains relationships between people on the professional landscape. As a ‘counsellor,’ ‘mediator,’ ‘go-between,’ ‘PR person,’ ‘fixer-upper,’ and ‘someone who pulls it all together,’ and inclusively, ‘just a human being.’ Her identity is shaped by her sense of the interconnectedness of life itself. This is why Holly is particularly content in her role as the Coordinator for the school, because it gives her the opportunity to be the person at its centre and “expand” the school program in “certain directions.” We know that she appreciates that she is “not coming from the corrections background” but “just as a human being from society” so that this expansion of the literacy program “just seems right that this is the direction we should be going.” In this way, her image nourishes both her identity and role in the school.

The inclusiveness of this image provides Holly with a moral compass for her practice. There is a sense from her that since everyone is part of this gamut of life, there are obligations that each has to the other. Morality, after all, rests in the relationships between people (Lyons, 1990). Holly believes that teachers must treat students “with respect and in a professional manner just like we would someone else on the street.” Teachers have to “be very accountable to students,” consistent, and encouraging. Trust will unfold in the teacher-student relationship if this happens.

Images that illuminate the personal and emotional contents of a teacher’s practice are often bound emotionally and practically to other images. A second governing image of her practice is “a bigger plan.” I just asked her about her religious beliefs, knowing that she started teaching in prison because she saw the notice in the church bulletin asking for
volunteers at the prison where she now teaches, and knowing too, how ill she has been over the year. Note how her personal story soon turns into a conversation about her relationship to the school, the students, the curricula and the bigger plan:

... I’ve found this last winter for me was one of the more difficult times because I’m a little more tired you know... Even last week, I was having real difficult times and so you know, where I am on Monday night?—I go down to my brother’s house to pick up this incubator thing, and it seems so silly. And so I go into the closet, take these students into the dark closet, single file. So there I am, I’m looking at this egg, and you know what, you wouldn’t believe what that gave me. I thought, you know this really is a marvellous plan. You know, in the morning you’re scrambling this thing and look at it.

It sounds so silly but you know... it just gave me a lift somehow. I think there is a bigger plan here and this is only a chicken egg and I think I’m more important than a chicken. And that’s not to say that in my life there have been times, like when you talk about faith. I mean, there are a lot of times when you try to figure it out... I know for me it’s been really important. I don’t know I suppose people call that a crutch and that’s okay because it works.

Finally, the image has political and social implications. Because of the interconnections of human beings, there does not seem to be a critical edge to Holly’s sense of her prison practices. She, her students and the prison staff are all part of a common objective, which she sees as helping prisoners so they are ready for the street. When it comes to her role as a teacher, she describes how she learns to fit into the situation in prison, saying

If you fit into the situation in the correct way, then it’s a positive experience for you. I think it’s more than just teaching. I think it’s that whole and again it sounds so hokey, for the betterment of society.

Holly’s Image of the School and Community as Family

If you believe that people around you, they do care, that you can make a difference and all of those things. I mean you’re not going to go and steal
from those people, you know what I mean, it's that whole thing. If you see
yourself as a part of this family or whatever you want to call it, and I think
you'll act that way too.

The whole gamut of life is such an inclusive image that other images, particularly
images of relationships—are easily subsumed under its expansive quality, solving the practical
problem about how to relate to these students who are also prisoners. A closely related, but
perhaps subordinate image to “the gamut of life” and “a bigger plan,” is one of the school and
community as a family. Holly made this comment just after she discussed how education is
about relationships—the teacher relating to the lives of her students, the students returning to
the community and rejoining their families and restarting relationships with their wives and
children.

This image of the school and community as a family is related to her belief in the
bigger plan, so that, in her prayers for her children, she makes room for her students: “I even
pray for my kids every day and I also pray for my students.” Her students are a part of her
“whole life,” which is important for them, because they are people, she feels, who have never
experienced being a part of something such as a community or family, before. Her beliefs
reflect the nested (Lyons, 1990) and interconnected nature of her knowing where her life, the
lives of her students and her sense of what it means to teach in prison intertwine.

This image of the school and community as a family also appears to shape Holly’s
interactions with her staff. When Holly and I decided to dismiss a teacher (Karen), Holly was
very upset by the decision, saying that she felt so bad for the teacher, who was the same age
as her daughter, and whom she confessed, she thought of as a daughter.

The image of the school as family, though with clearly delineated boundaries about
what can and cannot be disclosed, links her personal with her professional life in other ways.
In the school, Holly sees herself as a mother to her students: “I think maybe my age is a plus
too because a lot of the younger students—I see them more like say my children, you know
they are more that age,” and later she says that the relationship is, even though she “hates to
use the word, maternal.” The image of school and community as family appears in the
classroom when she uses the examples of reading to her children, when they were young, to
describe its importance as a means of connecting fathers with their children. The literacy
program is shaped by this image and sense of familial closeness and connectedness. These elements are a moving force in the gamut of life, and in the bigger plan.

Her relationships with the prison are defined too, by a sense of connection that is fed by this image. Holly comments on the fact that the school is now located in the main institution rather than in the old Warden’s house: “now that the school is right in the building here, we share the same physical space with programs, there’s actually a fair bit of interaction between program facilitators and teachers and so on. I think that’s the way it should be.” Often in the conversation, Holly describes the importance of “fitting in” to the prison system. This is not seen negatively, as it was Joyce, by another staff member I quoted earlier.

This governing image of close familial relationships shapes her sense of caring for her students, and treating them as “someone who has worth and all that.” And again, the image of the family creeps into this discussion on caring. “It’s kind of . . . it’s nothing really, that you can really define, but . . . it’s like in foster homes. Students can tell, like if you’re genuinely interested in helping or whatever . . .” Throughout her discussion there is a sense of hope and possibility for her students.

In the next section, I look at one more image which speaks to Holly’s personal philosophy of hope and her belief that students can grow, develop and change—turn things around. This image is the emotive force behind the images discussed up to this point.

**Learner Identities: “You can always start to turn that around”**

Even in situations that require her to use discipline, Holly is concerned that the problems are resolved in such a way that everyone feels “comfortable with the way things were left.” The images discussed previously play into the larger debate regarding the purposes of prisons, for inevitably, teachers must come to terms with the punishment of persons.

If you are going to treat people as if they are forever criminals that’s what your going to get. I think if you treat people like, yes you were that way—yes you can change it, yes you can be successful. Then they will be that. I really believe that and that’s just from my own child rearing experience or whatever. I think people live up to what your expecting. People who even committed
horrific crimes and if we treat them like animals how could we ever expect them to act differently? So I think if people are in the institution, they have been assessed, these are the consequences and this is what you must do, to pay the price for whatever it was. So it’s certainly not up to us [teachers] to add to that . . . I think that, on a personal level for everyone to know that every human being has good qualities and yes they have made a mistake, but that doesn’t mean that you have to be caught up in that. You have a choice and you can change; it’s tough, but you know, you can always start to turn that around.

The image that one can always turn things around is the positive emotional force that bridges other images—the gamut of life, the notion of the school as family, the teacher as maternal figure—to shape Holly’s sense of the school as a place of hope and possibility, where change is possible. In many passages, Holly expresses her optimism and enthusiasm for her work and what it can do. For example, she defines herself as a ‘fixer-upper.’ She feels that teaching is a “very encouraging kind of work or profession.” She believes that the literacy program should instill a sense of belief, and confidence, and self-esteem in her students. Despite the fact that her students are in jail, she believes that “going to school is a real opportunity for people” because they are offered a chance for an education and experiences that they have not had before. The literacy program is shaped by principles of practice that empower the student by becoming self-directed, and self-paced, because she would “never want to hold people back” as they take on their own responsibility for turning things around.

As a teacher, she feels that if you’re going to “make an impact you have to be honest and you have to stick to what you say you are going to do” so that there is moral obligation attached to this image, too. “Turning things around” accounts for her “very high expectations” for her students and also for herself as a teacher. “. . . on the street you can get away with less. But it’s really just my personal belief, but I think in corrections you can’t.” Success is measured in terms of students learning to “investigate things on their own” and feeling confident enough to try something. This is tied to turning things around, as students “feel that they can learn, that even though they’ve made mistakes that they have good opinions, they were valuable. I think it’s more that, than even education.”
In this same positive spirit, students can even learn much from negative situations as they are being disciplined. Instead of simply dictating to the student what he must do, she turns it into a positive educational experience, as an “opportunity to apply principles they’ve learned in the program and also as an example of how to address the situation like this properly.” These situations provide her and her students with a “real life activity” and a “real hands-on experience.” These situations are educative; students learn about reactions that are “totally inappropriate” and they get advice about succeeding in their relationships with others.

Holly’s subdued disciplinary practices are based on her assumption that reversals in student behaviours are always possible, so that, as a teacher, there are moral overtones regarding what is acceptable behaviour on her part. Holly believes that if you react to a student’s misbehaviour in a certain way, in the “extreme,” then “you can’t salvage the situation.” Situations must be approached with prudence if things are to be turned around.

Unfortunately, she feels that the institution seems to function in such a way as to amplify or magnify the problem situations, so that discipline is exacted in such a way as to make it difficult to restore positive relationships through the reversals and transformations of the students’ experiences and lives. In one example Holly describes how, even though the teachers and students may feel that they “handled the situation in the right way,” the prison authorities saw it differently, so that what she “felt we had handled correctly kind of turned into something more.” In her opinion, “the story kind of grew.” She is bothered by this, because the inmate is being considered for a transfer to a high medium security institution, even though she and the other teachers believe they have taken care of the situation and everyone has learned “how to address situations properly.” She is also concerned because the institutionally prescribed ways of handling the situation escalate the conflict, limiting the opportunity to turn things around.

As I was putting away this file, having completed this section, I came across a short interview with Holly conducted by her colleague, a member of her church, and a volunteer at the school. Reading through the interview, I was struck by the ubiquity of this positive image. When Holly is asked whether, in the prison school, she had experienced much success, she says:
Yes, we’ve seen a lot of success; however, there is also the revolving door. But, I don’t think that’s any reason to give up. We continue to do the best that we can. I’ve heard from inmates: they’ve totally been able to turn around, just because one person cared about them. For example, a volunteer from the chapel, cared just a little bit—had helped the inmate to turn around. He had been there and given him a bit of encouragement because the inmate had really never had that in his whole life. I think most of us on the outside have all kinds of relationships where we can get some positive feedback, some reinforcement, somebody to say, “Let me know if I can help.” Many of the inmates are people who often don’t have anyone.

Like many teachers that we have heard from in this essay, relationships between teachers and students pose a practical problem for the teacher. In many of the conversations there is an underlying concern by teachers for their students. In the next segment of this dissertation I take up the practical relational problem of caring for Holly, and illustrate its possibilities in situations where the cared for are being punished. Caring is a common theme in the conversations of prison teachers. It is an important relational practice that must be socially constructed behind the prison walls.

Caring But Not Excusing

... I think we can be caring but not excusing ... I care what happens to them ... whatever they’ve done. It’s not that you ignore that, we are still responsible for our actions but, it’s not my place to beat you over that head with a stick ... yes you did it ... You have to make those changes ... I think you can do both (Holly).

As Holly’s story unfolded, I heard her struggle to make a place for herself and her students within the troubled terrain of the prison, where different personalities, objectives, and issues fill her professional landscape, and require her attention. What is lost in my telling of her story is the carefulness of her speech, the quiet calmness that speaks to the depth of her concern for others. She spoke quietly of the importance of caring which is a difficult relational issue because it invokes responsibility of one person for another. In prison, this is
a complicated matter, since one must care for someone who has done wrong and by caring, one may be seen as condoning the actions of the one for whom you care.

As part of the follow-up to an international symposium on correctional education, I sent transcripts of the focus group discussions by prison educators, administrators and academics from the symposium to Holly for analysis (she has retired now, and has her own consulting company). In our telephone conversation, she said that she and the focus group participants were very much alike, because they frequently spoke of the importance of caring in prison education. I realized that throughout my earlier interview with her, she had spoken often about care. We agreed that I would send a follow-up set of questions (the outcome of my reading of Noddings, 1981/1999) on the topic. I asked Holly what she meant by care. She wrote back saying that, by her definition, it was “showing concern for the individual student, believing in him, feeling responsibility for his success, and helping him to develop a sense of self-worth and achieve his goals.” I asked for examples of caring from her own experience, so that I could better understand how care might appear in action, and she responded with the following lengthy passage:

The caring of the teachers involved them in more than just the education part of the students’ lives. For example, one of the classes at the institution grew flowers in their garden project, with the intention of creating floral bouquets and distributing them to local senior citizens. While this objective was achieved, the project also gave the teacher the opportunity to really bring caring home to one of her students. The student’s mother was dying of cancer, and he had a pass to visit her. The teacher suggested that he pick some flowers from the school garden and take them to her in a hospital. Upon his return, the student appeared to be deeply moved by his mother’s response to the flowers. This significantly impacted the student because his teacher had cared enough to help ease his pain in this difficult time.

The annual Christmas party at school also illustrates the ‘caring’ aspect of teachers in the classroom. Traditionally, teachers plan a party for the students at Christmas; this is probably the loneliest time in an inmate's experience. Teachers cover the cost of Christmas oranges, baking, etc.
Snacks would also include baking from staff and volunteers, demonstrating the time and effort that is given so freely. Students have always been thankful for the time and money teachers donate, knowing this really is not an expectation of a teacher's job description. Teacher generosity and 'caring' have modelled positive human traits; inmates have responded by raising funds for local food banks, children's wish foundation, 'giving back' to the community.

While I could go on and on about 'caring' in the school, I would like to mention one last example. One of the students at the school was getting married in the institution chapel, and very little had been done in the way of planning extras for the occasion. The teachers at the school demonstrated the caring that they display in their daily work with the students. Silk flowers, streamers, balloons, and a decorating crew of students were donated by the school; a wedding cake from the teachers completed the effect. These 'caring actions,' transcending the learning environment, gave the inmate a clear message that his life was worthwhile, as evidenced by the gratitude of the couple.

"How do you think the aspect of caring effects the teacher/student relationship?" I asked. And she replied:

The effects of 'caring' in a student-teacher relationship are immeasurable; I think it helps the student rise to the teacher's expectations for him. It builds confidence and self-worth in students who generally have no self-esteem, who generally have had their worthlessness re-enforced in many areas of their lives. 'Caring' builds rapport and trust, giving inmates the freedom to be themselves. A safe environment where students can try new things without fear of making a mistake, or being ridiculed, is conducive to creativity and personal growth. A positive nurturing environment is the basis for a classroom where there is hope in the future; hope that encourages inmates to believe in themselves, to set goals and believe that they can achieve academically and change the direction of their lives.
‘Caring’ demands openness and honesty; for the teachers’ part there is an expectation of integrity and accountability. In a prison school, caring is paramount. Adults who have had negative life experiences, and who are also possibly learning-impaired, recognize the value of educational pursuits but are very apprehensive about wading into the waters of the classroom. As the literacy classroom explores every aspect of daily living, the skills and attitudes the student learns demand an element of caring. When an inmate student is shown respect and consideration, he is likely to respond in kind. As citizens we value empathic and caring responses of society to the plight of the poor and homeless, the abused, the struggles of teen single parents, the jobless and so on. These characteristics can only be passed on through modelling and experience. To truly teach effectively, caring must be the foundation.

A graphic effect of ‘caring’ in a teacher/student relationship was witnessed following a tragic event in the life of an inmate at The Prison Education Centre. This person, who had virtually no literacy skills, lacked confidence in himself, and displayed a fear of the whole incarceration process, developed a trusting relationship with me, his teacher. Slowly, he learned to believe in his self-worth and learned to believe that staff were concerned about him and his rehabilitation.

The depth of his trust in his teacher was revealed when his brother was killed during the Christmas break. Even though he was eligible for a pass to attend the funeral, my student did not even discuss this tragedy with his case-manager, but waited for me to return to classes. He placed his faith in me, believing only I could be trusted to help in this very difficult situation. Valuable processing time had passed while the school was closed, but I was able to accelerate the necessary paperwork, for a pass, with his case-worker, and he did make it to the funeral. He placed his trust in me because I had ‘cared’; I had shown him that he was a worthwhile person. Although a great deal of extra effort was required to obtain a pass, and he might not have made
it to the funeral because of the delay, this is a dramatic example of the power of a caring relationship between teacher and student.

And finally, I asked what a school would be like where teachers do not care.

Personally, I feel a school without caring teachers could not possibly be successful. The ‘heart’ would be missing from such a place. Caring is the foundation of a school environment. Without nurturing and caring, the school would be quiet and unproductive. Students would not believe in their ability to achieve and would soon be discouraged, revisiting the failures of earlier school experiences. There would be no ‘buzz of activity’ where students are interacting with each other, and the feel of the school would be cold. Teacher-student relationships would only be addressing the curriculum at hand, without encouragement to learn concepts and apply them to daily life. The school environment would not foster personal growth. Teachers would work to rule and display no special interest in the student. The classrooms would be empty at breaks, and, at the end of the day, no students would engage in consultation with teachers; no teacher would address issues or care how the inmate is handling his programs, or how the school could help him to apply the principles he is learning.

In these interview segments, I am reminded of Heidegger’s notion of dwelling which he traces from the Old High German word for “building, *baum*, which means to dwell. Dwelling signifies to remain, to stay in place” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 348). The Gothic *wunian* is closely related in meaning to *baum*. It shares with *baum* the idea of remaining in one place but it includes references as to how this remaining in place is experienced. *Wunian* also means to be at peace, sharing a similar etymology as *friede* meaning to be free, and to preserve from harm and danger. “To be free actually means to spare. The sparing itself consists not only in the fact that we do not harm the one whom we spare. Real sparing is something positive and takes place when we leave something beforehand in its own essence” (Heidegger, 1993, p. 351). Heidegger adds: “The fundamental character of dwelling is this sparing” (p. 351). Dwelling is not only about freedom, sparing, but finding a place: the ‘belonging of men’s
being with one another” (p. 351), gathering, cultivating, preserving. It is also infused with a sense of “making room for,” in the dual sense of “admitting and installing” (p. 356).

Care is the “absolute environment that will nurture, protect, and guide and set the individual on a course that will meet his goals,” Care is the heart of the school, without it, it would be cold. Care is the essential ingredient of Holly’s practical knowledge, and her practice. In our earlier interview, it was apparent that Holly was trying to find practical ways in the school to spare, gather, make room for, and create in the student a sense of belonging, in the school (as a family) and in the world. The school is a safe place (like the home, perhaps) where students can take their first steps.

Caring is a principle of her practice. Without care, there is no school, no education, there is no dwelling; the school is silent and unproductive, the students are disconnected, the educational life would disappear. Caring nurtures professional plenitude, so that education and teachers go beyond their roles as teachers in their programs, which make up the textures and rhythms of life. Some of the rules of practice that reinforce the principle of care include developing practices that mark special occasions such as Christmas, weddings, and being there to help their students through the tragic situations in their students. Caring teachers go beyond, showing concern for their students, feeling responsibility for their success, and becoming involved in their lives so that the purely educative relationship is exceeded.

Caring demands openness and honesty from the teacher. It seems inevitable then, that one of the more important rules of practice that Holly develops has to do with achieving the right distance. “Are there limits to caring?” I ask. Holly responded to my question with:

Caring in prisons should be restricted to appropriate staff-inmate relationships. Prison policies set definite parameters for staff to be caring and effective without blurring the lines of propriety. Teachers, who spend more time daily with inmates than any other staff, need to be diligent in preserving relationships that remain appropriate. Caring should be demonstrated as equal for all students and not become personal or selective. Teachers can maintain positive, caring relationships with students and still adhere to personal, private boundaries. Interest in the student and his goals should be open and forthright, avoiding delving into the inmate's private life and personal
relationships. Teachers also need caution in sharing their personal information. As inmates are generally very needy people, caring can be misinterpreted. Basic kindness can be seen as a special and personal interest.

Monitoring relationships of care between teachers and students becomes a very important part of Holly's practical knowledge. This passage is replete with rules of practice that call upon and at the same time set boundaries around relationships with prisoners. In this passage the rules of interaction pertain to social and personal norms of appropriateness or propriety, and notions of integral, private selves defined by informational closure and disclosure. These interactional principles of practice are prescribed by prison policies that set "definite parameters" for relationships. In terms of practice, Holly makes certain that her relationships with all students are seen by them as equal. She is cautious about sharing personal information, so that in effect, the prisoner is clearly told that, despite the caring, there is nothing personal. Caring is about achieving the right distance between conducting oneself according to institutionally and socially prescribed roles and safeguarding the welfare of the student.

When teachers do not seem to be able to find this space between them and their students, their professionalism is questioned. Caring can cause conflicts for those teachers who "do not set strict boundaries in their working relationships with students." As long as teachers are "conscious of, and alert to, their developing relationship with a student, problems can be avoided. Inappropriateness is identified by Holly, when a teacher spends too much time listening to a student before he went to his parole hearing, which meant that she was "drawn into a discussion of his personal life." These "discussions belonged in sessions with a psychologist." Holly seems to understand the relational difficulties involved in order to achieve the right distance: "Although I worked with the teacher to put the situation into perspective, she was not willing to take the necessary steps to avoid what was becoming a potentially dangerous situation. Immaturity and lack of experience, and an unwillingness to be counselled, seriously affected the career of a very promising teacher; what began as caring, ultimately resulted in an unfortunate dismissal."

In the next narrative, I offer interview segments from my conversations with Samantha, a highly self-reflective teacher, who is quite concerned about the problem of
identity—just who she is as a prison teacher. For this reason, her story deserves its place in a section on the prison teacher, though the other commonplaces of education are also considered in her story. I also highlight the aesthetic dimensions of Samantha’s prison experience and indicate how this experience affects her sense of self. Samantha’s conversation on self and identity lead into the discussion, in Chapter Five, of the borderland knowledge of prison teachers and how teacher practical knowledge appears to be defined by the tensions between various social, operational, pedagogical and interpersonal zones of difference.

The Teacher: Samantha’s Story

Samantha and I had many conversations during the course of this research. I conducted four separate interviews with her and sent her the transcripts which she returned to me with her comments. I also sent her a preliminary interpretation of the data, which she felt appropriately expressed how she experienced prison teaching and what she knew about it. Sometimes, she elaborated on the connections I was making, writing her comments on my interpretations. Samantha also sent me term papers she submitted as part of her requirements for a Master’s degree in Adult Education. I incorporated some of these insights into this narrative. We corresponded frequently via e-mail and often in our conversations over the telephone, we drifted away from the business of The Educational Company and the problems in the field, to our theoretical work. Samantha has been my most trustworthy insider. She paid close attention to the interpretive process, probably because of her interest in the field of prison education and because of her own studies as a graduate student.

Samantha is 43 years old. In the introductory stages of our first interview, her descriptions of her life seemed to strike up a narrative of continuity, place and identity. She described herself as someone who “hasn’t moved too far from home” and who has “lived in the area all my life.” She is even apologetic about her “very narrow world view—Prairie view!” (emphasis in original). Even though in her province a lot of people seem to come and go, and “come back again,” she says that she has never gone, though she has thought about
it. She has been married for 26 years and noting that I have too, she says that “we should all pat ourselves on the back” for having been successful in our relationships for so long. As the story of her life unfolds, I appreciated it as a narrative of place and continuity and how her story of her life seemed to contrast with the narratives of discontinuity and displacement when she spoke of her professional life in prison.

Samantha’s mother was a teacher, so she “grew up” with her mom teaching. After school, there would always be “kids sort of hanging around” the class after school, when she went to see her. Her mother was “married to teaching... That was how she was brought up. That was how she related to all the kids in the neighbourhood. It was natural for her to be doing that. And as I saw that, I probably learned it. That was just the way it was, the way to be.” Samantha admitted that “teaching... is just sort of part of my experience.” From her narrative about teaching I understood the very personal orientation of her practical knowledge (Elbaz, 1983).

The practical question of identity appeared in the early stages of the first interview. As in the other interpretive segments pertaining to the practical knowledge of teachers, I examine the practical conflicts regarding the issue of identity that Samantha experiences deeply, ontologically and existentially, it seems, and for which she must find creative integrations and resolutions in order to continue her work as a teacher in prison. Samantha’s practical problems with her sense of self and identity are examined in the context of her sensory and aesthetic appreciation of the prison as milieu.

**Who am I in this Situation?**

I am talking about dynamic security. How we make sure we keep ourselves safe from minute to minute... Because security is important... we walk in the door and we’re aware of where everybody is and exactly what they’re doing. And we try and keep that state for the whole day. And it’s usually a tradeoff. Everybody can’t be doing it every minute. But hopefully if we keep it uppermost in our mind, somebody is doing it this minute (Samantha).
Examining what Samantha has to say about her prison experience, I am working from the assumption that there is an ontological “body” of practical knowledge relating to the “mode of being in, or having a world” that is “comprised of sensory experiences, bodily interactions, moods, feelings and spatio-temporal orientations” (Johnson, 1989, p. 362-363). Let me give an example. In one of my journals written when I was a prison teacher in Quebec in the early 1980s, I compared teaching in one maximum security prison (with its sea-green walls), to an imaginary experience of being deeply under water, my body compressing as I went deeper and deeper into the prison, my breathing becoming more laboured. Later, when I took up scuba diving, and experienced the pressure of underwater diving, I realized the appropriateness of my description. When I included this analogy in an earlier draft of this paper that I sent to Samantha, she wrote back, saying “it speaks to me also.” She adds that the prison is “where nothing is as it appears;” it is “a suspended reality” where both “gravity and identities” are suspended.

How does working in a total institution feel to Samantha and what does it do to her sense of self? Continuing with her description of dynamic security, (security achieved through the active intervention of staff, as opposed to static security, achieved by the architecture of power), she describes how “dynamic security” is experienced by her.

I guess your antennae are up. So you’re aware of the vibration in the next room, you know? . . . . Or you know, because you have eyes in the back of your head, that someone is standing back there. You should check out what he’s doing; You’re totally aware. All of your senses are aware of all your surroundings. Every square inch of your surroundings. So that would mean, for example, that you don’t necessarily walk out the door at the end of the day without thinking to go back and check to make sure that the other door is locked . . . Or you don’t just head off to the washroom without telling someone that you’re going there. Or you don’t disappear or various things. You don’t sit with your back to the room for a lot of time when there’s no one to watch your back. Things like that. And it’s not like; I’m not talking major security incidents, I’m talking about even just to make sure that things
are operating smoothly amongst your students. It's not just you, because it's your students as well.

I reply that I've almost lost that "sixth sense" she seems to be describing and she says: "Yeah. And that's what it is. A sixth, and then a seventh and eighth." Most of us experience this world as given, taken-for-granted. Calling into question the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life will have the effect of "altering the teacher's awareness, changing the forms of spontaneity available to her and her self-experience, and possibly even influencing the social and temporal dimensions of her experience" (Elbaz, 1983, p. 20). The aesthetic dimensions of Samantha's practical knowledge are expressed in a manner reminiscent of the experience associated with the sublime. The subliminal experience, characterized by a purity of sensation and substance as well as a heightened sense of awareness that "elevates" the person's experience "far above the ordinary" (Oxford, 1982) is hinted at throughout Samantha's description of what security and prison means to her.

What does the experience of the subliminal do to one's sense of self? We are given a hint in Poe's classic subliminal tale, Descent into the Maelstrom, where he describes a character's fear about losing his balance, shaken as he is by the physical and emotional heights of the crag on which he finds himself. Caught in the fury of the winds and terrified by his friend who has carelessly and nonchalantly thrown himself down on the edge of it, some fifteen or sixteen hundred feet above ground, he struggles "in vain" to divest himself "of the idea that the very foundations of the mountain were in danger from the fury of the winds. It was long before I could reason myself into sufficient courage to sit up and look out into the distance" (Poe, 1998, p. 244).

To complicate the matter of Samantha's identity somewhat, Gidden's description of the effects of ontological security apply here too. Giddens (1984) believes we are ontologically secure when we have confidence or "trust that the natural and social world are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity" (Giddens, 1984, p. 375). When we are ontologically insecure, then the parameters of self and social identity are questioned.

Returning now to Samantha's story, we hear she questions whether the classroom dangers are real or imagined: "And it's a fine line between understanding or going with that,
and feeling that you’re perhaps paranoid. There’s a fine line there. Really fine.” (To overcome her feelings of paranoia she talks to other teachers, which “probably should happen twenty times a day . . . just so that everything is out in the open.”)

What happens to one’s sense of self and social identity if one feels this way about a place of work? The insecurity brought about by Samantha’s professional world in prison grates the existential parameters of self and social identity. How does Samantha see herself and what social identity does the prison bestow on her? Samantha experiences the contradictions between self and system intensely because the system of “thou shalt nots” is “magnified” in the prison, so that ontologically speaking, she feels threatened by a system that erodes her sense of whom she is.

Samantha sees the system as too far to the politically conservative “Right,” when she is “left to middle” so that she is “searching for where I can feel comfortable in that process . . . somewhere between the way corrections likes things done one way, and all the other ways there is to do it . . . and where can I find my ground?” This is because she is “pulled different ways by different things. I can’t find my ground towards the right, towards the one right way to do things in certain cases.” Samantha’s image of the prison as “predictable, stifling” and controlling conflicts with what seems to be a deeper, more constant image of herself as a “person who saw all the many different shades of gray, I guess. I always had difficulty saying something was either/or. That’s been so reinforced, I have a hard time saying anything is ever either/or to this point.” Clearly working within a correctional system presents a significant practical problem, one that she has to “work around” or “work with it, or through it.” As the Coordinator of the school she is also responsible for the security of her staff and the students. But she is uncomfortable about her role as a security guard in her school, so that she recognizes that her comments are “really odd coming from me. Because that would be a control issue in a way. And I don’t like that side of the system. But I do like being safe.”

In the tensions experienced between insides and outsides, the outside world does not help to give her a social identity (the status of a real teacher). Samantha finds it hard to explain to those on the outside, because “they don’t see . . . if you’re in the community and you’re at arms’ length of anything having to do with the prison, you don’t necessarily see the people inside the prison as people.” On the inside, the system limits her ability to “de-
systematize" even though she does have an image of the school, as others do, as an "oasis away from the confusion and control."

Finding an identity for herself in the community is difficult for her. In the interview Samantha feels some kinship with the social worker and systems that work with people in difficulty, on the other hand, she distances herself from social workers because though they might work with those involved in the justice system, they do not work within it. She is not a social worker, nor a counsellor. When students approach her with her problems, anywhere from "two to six, or eight times a day we may have to say to a student, "I’ll put you in touch with someone that . . . " In her list of dis-identifiers, she feels that she is unlike teachers working in the public system because they do not teach students who are mostly "on the margins." In her search for an identity, she admits that there are some inner city schools that are filled with marginal peoples, and so she is able to identify with them, at least partially. Clearly though, she does not seem to belong to any of these worlds which take up the ethical responsibility of caring for others.

The inside and outside tensions between the school and the prison, the prison and society permeate Samantha’s awareness that there is a distance to be found between her social identity and her sense of self, so that much of her identity-work in prison is about a quest for balance. Samantha experiences the secure environment of the prison professionally as a "two-sided coin." Teachers feel "definitely constrained and yet freed in another way," they are freed because they “have less of a social view upon us. So in some ways, that gives us more freedom to try and be successful.” But teachers are also constrained by the "rules and procedures" of the prison and by a society that demands that “prisoners somehow get through some kind of a prison stay so that they can be successful once they are released and so they demand that the prison system ‘fix’ the student.” But she says, “the more closely they tie themselves with that process, the more likely they are to feel less success.” So, she says: "I’m caught between what I’m required to do and what I think is best for the student." In the tension between self and social identity, she struggles to find a balance; the need for balance is an important theme in her conversation.

. . . so then I have to come at systems or at organized settings with an idea trying to justify how I can accept them and I feel it’s the same for students in
that they are having difficulty trying to find that balance also, because they’re being told how to live their lives. How do they become comfortable, when they’re not comfortable with that idea . . . that this is the way it is; how can we live in the way it is? One of the things that I feel the school can do is, along with all the academics and everything is . . . help the students learn how to function in that environment that is foreign, it’s a foreign environment to them and to us as teachers.

There is some relief from the tensions between self and her social identity in the rewards she receives from being a teacher on the inside. These rewards (that appeal to her “true” sense of self) originate in her practical knowledge and subliminal experience of her students who are the same as the students on the outside, except that their problems are simply more “concentrated” because of the “baggage they bring” to the school. Students on the inside are not different emotionally from those on the outside, it is just a “difference of concentrations” and the fact that there is a “higher percentage of individuals in the classroom” who experience “traumatic events in their lives” that makes them different.

It is this “difference of degree” on the inside that affects the rewards teachers get from teaching students on the inside because these students “not only understand more clearly, but are so much more . . . I don’t want to say thankful, because that’s not what I mean. But they value it so much more even than an adult on the outside . . . So that’s the bonus. That’s what we get from it.” Teachers are not just helping students she says, later in the interview, they are “helping them a lot.”

On the other hand, because of where she teaches, there is no sense of continuity in her relations with her students, given the total nature of the prison, because when the students leave the school for the community, or when they are transferred to another prison, they leave the teacher behind. She feels this lack of feedback, and wonders what she is

... gaining in terms of what am I getting back from my students? I’m not getting any of the contact that most teachers have with their students later. Like year after year. Even the next year . . . the contact stops. Not only that, but it’s best for our students if the contact does stop. When they do get out, the last thing in the world they need to be doing is [to be] living their life back
inside by remembering all the people who worked with them. That said, it’s still really difficult not getting that feedback.

Given her sense of self as someone who sees grays and as someone who is left to middle, what happens then, in her practice? Samantha is both freed and constrained by the location of her practice. She is freed from many of the community norms that govern her profession, and from the problems that other students bring to classrooms on the outside. She feels constrained by all the rules and regulations of the prison. She is relatively unfettered by the curricular prescriptions from the Ministry of Education because the school is isolated from the community. So the question for her becomes,

What to teach in prison—exactly the question. THE question! (emphasis in original). Should you be teaching functional skills so that they have them on the outside? Should we be teaching . . . I don’t want to say thinking skills, but different ways of knowing, and letting them chose then which way of knowing is appropriate for themselves. And with that, if you’re learning different ways of knowing, you’re bound to be involved in activities that will increase your functional skills.

Samantha is able to strike a fleeting balance by “. . . working within the system and using the system—not to our ends, but to the students’ ends.” She says that she believes in the value of an academic education, so that “even if we were just giving skills in a functional academic program, there has to be some benefit to the student. There has to be. There’s no way to get around that. As long as the student is a willing student.” There is a convergence of purposes possible here between her sense of who she is and what is being asked of her, because by offering an academic program she’s “doing exactly what the system is asking us to do.” Considering this problem, Samantha chooses to go the . . . student’s way . . . I ask them if they have a burning desire to increase their level of functioning quickly. Say for example, they’re getting out in three months and they still don’t know how to balance their checkbook, or various things. I try and go with what they want or what they need. What they perceive as their needs.
She adds that she works “differently with each student” depending on the interests of the student, and she has “the luxury of being able to do that because of the individualized program that we’re following in our Centre.”

Imagining herself as someone who sees gray, Samantha insures that her students, at some point in the day, consider topics that go beyond the purely functional, so that, no matter what they are studying individually. The students are “pulled together to do some kind of thinking activity” that does not have a right answer, and where the discussion and debate are the essences of the activity.

Given who Samantha is trying to be, how closely tied to the prison goals and a rehabilitative curriculum should teachers be? When it comes to incorporating a rehabilitative agenda or a civic education specifically addressing moral and values education, she locates herself again, in-between. She says that she “sits on the fence with that one” because teaching a “very prescriptive” content leads to “forcing people into one right answer.” Samantha starts with what she feels is a “sound practice or process” and then she tries to “justify” it according to “what we are supposed to be doing.” “So I think you can find a seam in anything. If you pick it apart enough, you’ll find a seam or the margins.”

Given who she is trying to be, how does Samantha carry out her responsibility to report? When it comes to adopting the evaluation schema used by the Correctional Service, she is resistant because the evaluation criteria in the treatment programs are so rigid. According to the CSC, there is “only one right answer.” She knows what the Service expects from the student, but its “doesn’t match with the student.” She cites one example of the student participating in the Cognitive Skills program who must answer the questions using a “problem-solving formula” that was so “abstract for him that he was going to struggle and become so frustrated.” And so she says, “I had to find a way that CSC would agree with—to answer those questions. And I know a student exactly like that.”

She develops circumventing strategies to maintain her sense of her true self. She tries to find her ground through balance in her reporting, so that if the students “didn’t agree with something really strongly and wholeheartedly, if it’s something that I may be able to leave out without neglecting my responsibilities, than I would probably leave it out.” However, if there
is question that prison staff must have answered, then she is obliged to include it in the report. If the student

... disagreed with it, I guess what we would do is we would end up debating it. And... hopefully they would come in the end to say well maybe you're partly right. Or I'd say I can see your point. But I'd still be including it in the report. And I would also include their disagreement.

Still, given her sensitivity to the environment, (her subliminal experience of it), she worries about reporting on her student’s performance, because the “teacher’s power is extreme” prison, it is a “huge responsibility,” “immense,” because it can “make or break” a parole hearing. Because she is given the responsibility, partially at least, for a “person’s freedom—it’s frightening.” She adds: “So I guess our power is sometimes overwhelming, and if we’re not aware of what that power is, it’s even more frightening.”

In the end, deliberating questions about her socially ascribed identity and her sense of self (the apparent distance between them), Samantha experiences personal dilemmas associated with “trying to find a balanced place to operate from, somewhere in-between. Sort of choosing a certain place along that continuum as being most comfortable. And it’s not exactly the place where it would be easiest to operate from.” At the heart of her identity-work and central to the tensions and dilemmas she experiences, are ethical considerations about the nature and use of power and her determinations regarding the andragogic good. When I made this suggestion to her after reading the transcript of one of the interviews again, she emphatically responded with the email below, in which she defines what she means by the good as a personal philosophy based on social justice.

Of course... isn’t it funny how YOUR research and writing seems to, in some way, simplify or illuminate the hidden yet (deceptively) obvious... I guess we are, in a way, attempting to construct and define our own identity, and our practice, by linking our philosophy of Correctional Education to that pedagogic ‘good.’ (It seems that teachers, maybe even particularly correctional educators, most often share a social philosophy based on just practices... ???)
Struggling for a definition of self in the face of the ethical issues raised because she teaches in prison, Samantha appears close to the figure of the teacher-as-existential stranger, who "is simply more attuned than others" and "must confront his freedom along with the alien freedoms of his students . . ." (Greene, 1973, p. 287). She recognizes her freedom as an ethical issue when it comes to reporting, curricular decisions, and the methods she uses in class—the entire edifice of education, none of which she takes for granted. She recognizes too, her responsibility because she knows that one of the most important distinctions between students on the inside and those on the outside is that "all of the students inside have one problem: they don’t have any freedom." Teaching in prison, Samantha becomes the existential stranger who is presented with moral issues of choice and action.

As Samantha travels, she encounters herself and what it means to be a person and a teacher in a prison. Faced with the ontological insecurity of her classroom, experienced subliminally, both self and identity are temporarily set free. A year and a half later, Samantha is still working through the issues of self and social identity which at the time of the previous interview, she admits, was an uncomfortable place to be. Returning my the preliminary interpretation of our interview she writes that she now feels comfortable with the loss of her ‘solid’ identity, and “no longer feels the loss of her location, her home, she instead is comfortable drifting towards her next home.” Samantha feels now that achieving balance, the right distance between systems and students, between social identity and self, may be unachievable, nor perhaps is it ideal.

‘Being somewhere in-between’ opens up a whole new dimension for viewing the layers of complexity within our experience and their interconnections—so the ‘tension’ becomes a positive ‘grounding’ in the activity of learning from and about that experience. For me, identity has now become known not as a static, but as a fluid dynamic development of the moment, and experience has become an agent of change.

I have enjoyed this on-going conversation with Samantha, particularly because it has helped me understand that the lives of the researched extend far beyond the transcript in both time and complexity. A life revealed through a transcript is merely a blurred snapshot of a moment. As part of this on-going dialogue, approximately two years after the initial
interviews, Samantha responded to a staff writing contest at her institution (which she won), that asked staff to write about their work at the prison and what it meant to them. I reproduce her essay in full, as a conclusion to this section and as the preamble to the general discussion of the data in Chapter Five.

What Makes My Work Meaningful to Me?

As a teacher, I believe that members of my profession strive to ensure that the learning experience is meaningful for their students. But how many teachers have the opportunity to practice in an environment, defined by the negative, that allows them to fully appreciate the benefits they gain from their teaching practice? Over the past six years at [this institution], I have learned much about adult education and adult education in prison, as well as about society and its institutions. Yet I have learned a great deal more about myself—the educator and the person.

My involvement in correctional education has allowed me to gain fuller understanding of the importance of literacy and education within our society. Illiteracy rates among the adult population in federal prisons are estimated to be anywhere from two to five times higher that for the general population on the 'outside.' As an educator, I have been forced to consider: What are the societal implications of these startling statistics? In my quest to encourage students to be lifelong learners within the 'just and caring community' of this prison classroom, my belief in the promise of education as a tool for success has been strengthened as I watch those students gain hope, confidence, self-esteem, and educational empowerment. I have been allowed to glimpse the power of education as an agent of personal and societal change. A teaching practice from within a prison is indeed a pedagogy of possibility! (emphasis in original).

However, my greatest reward and challenge over the past few years, both personally and as a correctional educator, has been my immersion in the
project of questioning and re-defining my identity. Correctional education shares many attributes with adult education in the community. But there are also multi-layered differences. Because of those differences, my experiences as a correctional educator have led me to work through successive stages of imbalance, discomfort, dislocation, tension, reflection, and relocation. The process of change is a remarkably educative experience. It has been a difficult and gratifying journey, one that allows me to now feel a comfort of location and identity within this borderland, this classroom that is located somewhere in the complexity between assistance and control. Just as my teaching experience at the Institution has facilitated the process of introspection within me, I imagine the treatment experience at [this institution] to be a similarly transforming, yet meaningfully different experience for my students.

In the end, we come to appreciate Samantha’s cognitive style, a term Elbaz (1983) uses to denote how teachers balance the cognitive and affective variables in their work. A teacher’s style is “ultimately a generalization from many actions to a single manner of acting” (p. 148). The term, she writes, is “an equivalent for the notion of practical knowledge in use” (p. 147). Like Sarah, the subject of Elbaz’s study, Samantha’s cognitive style is similar to that of the artist who uses “tension creatively to further her own understanding and growth” (Elbaz, 1983, p. 156). In many ways, so do all the teachers whose stories we have heard.

In the next section, I pull together many of the issues raised and provide an overview of the nature of prison teacher practical knowledge. Again, I emphasize the problems teachers encounter in prison, the ways they come to define these problems, and the creative resolutions they seek to them. Their knowledge is located within these deliberative situations.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion: Frictions in the Machine

Prison Teachers as Strangers

The prison teachers’ practical knowledge is knowledge gained from concrete and particular situations with respect to identified frictions and failures in the machine. These situations of practical conflict appear across the four commonplaces of teaching identified by Schwab as the milieu, the learner, the subject matter, and the teacher. These problems arise because of physical and operational features of a school within a prison, because students happen to be convicted criminals and because teachers are often unprepared contract staff employed by a private agency to work within a public institution where the education of inmates is not the priority. They arise too, because prison teachers appear to be cut off from the community which is unaware or unappreciative of the work they do behind bars.

Dislocated professionally and physically from their home world, teachers are presented with novel problems requiring deliberation and resolution. Eventually they are able to formulate some principles and rules of practice, and develop images that carry them through the day. This is not to say that these conflicts are resolved once and for all. Teachers in prison, as strangers, seemed destined to alternate between sentiments and practices that attach to different physical, normative and functional locations, always trying to achieve the right distance. As strangers they struggle to define the situation within each of the commonplaces of learning; these struggles preoccupy them because the situation is always under siege by other demanding and defining contexts.

The Problem of the Learner and the Relational Mean

In regard to the learner, teachers wonder “Just who are my students and what can I hope to teach them? Also, what relationship can and am I permitted to have with them?” Determining the identities of Others has implications for the shaping of teacher identities, curricular choices, program objectives, in short, their institutional practices. Practical problems surface in the relational waters of the prison. In the relationship between teaches and
students, determining the proper relational “mean cannot be given both a general and precise formulation. The extremes, however, can; and in terms of these, the teacher may locate the mean himself” (Schwab, 1954, p. 67). How is it that teachers locate this mean?

Teachers recognize and ascribe different identities to their students, and as they do so, they appear to enact different relational distances with them as learners, adults, spouses, parents, victims, immigrants, transients, aboriginals, and exuberant youths. They also attribute the causes of their behaviour to their identities as misled human beings who have made mistakes, or who have nothing to lose. Despite this identity work, the students are also prisoners, paedophiles, rapists, and murderers and/or unpredictable, dangerous and disconnected souls. To locate the mean, teachers enact this constellation of other identities into their social constructions of Other to support a definition of their activity as schooling. As Jena says, teachers, as professionals, must learn to set aside the abhorrent crimes of their students as prisoners, and work with the prisoners as students.

Teachers find it difficult to establish this distance once and for all; even ascribing identities to prisoners that recognize their adulthood is not without contradictions. Prisoners are adults/learners who are both the same and different from other adults/learners. Chronologically, these students do not fit the stereotype—sometimes they are like kids in junior high; they have not had usual adult experiences; they have gaps in their experience; they are disconnected and shattered souls; they have led transitory lives; their past experience (and their ability to learn) is hazed with the effects of substance abuse. These are adults with enormous grown-up problems that are magnified in prison.

The right distance between teacher and student is not only a matter of principle or choice, but built into the institutional rules of practice regarding what to say, when, with whom, the uses of space and so on. In Holly’s story of care, she says, the prison sets the limits for caring; in her school, she sets the limits of care. Some teachers like Karen, who appear to care too much, are dismissed.

In their quest for the right distance between teachers and students, teachers paint images of the classroom and school that point to closer relational possibilities than those elsewhere in prison. Samantha describes her classroom as a just and caring community within the prison. Jena says that the school is a place where angry men smile. Suzette, caught
between the tensions of theory and practice, promotes feminist images of community and relational closeness in her conversation. In Holly’s school vast normative and relational distances are overcome in her inclusive imagery of the school and the community as family, and in the shared humanity of teachers and students. These are images of intimacy, warmth and closeness. Teachers describe the school as a refuge, sanctuary, and as locales of care, support, re-connection, and experience. Schools are places where students are restored, mended, encouraged to experience hope, self-esteem and confidence and to think of themselves differently, as other identities are negotiated.

The Relational Mean and the Gendered Nature of Prison Education

Perhaps there is so much relationship talk in these conversations because most of the volunteers for this study are women and this kind of talk expresses, to some degree, their gendered ways of knowing their professional world inside. Women tend to “step into, not back from situations, to see and respond to others in their own particular situations and contexts rather than to challenge them” (Lyons, 1990, p.169). They are often connected knowers, “people who look for connections between events, considering motives, intentions and believability” rather than separate knowers, who approach their task with “traditionally known, objective, rule-seeking ways of evaluating, proving, and disproving truth” (Lyons, 1990, p. 170).

Maybe too, their relationship talk and their general concern for others can be read as the gendered effects of the position women occupy in society:

What we have generalized here for women’s subjectivity may be true for the subjectivity of all subordinates. One, their experience of role-taking is complicated by their intense awareness that they must learn the expectations of an Other who by virtue of differences in power is alien. Two, they must relate not to a generalized other but to many generalized others, many subcultures, both the subculture of the powerful and the various subcultures of the less empowered and the dis-empowered. Three, they do not experience themselves as purposive social actors who can chart their own course through life—although they may be constantly told that they can do so, especially within
the American ethos. And finally, and most pervasively, they live daily with a bifurcated consciousness, a sense of the line of fault between their own lived experiences and what the dominant culture tells them is social reality (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988, p. 321).

Certainly there is much to be said regarding how that practical knowledge of female teachers interviewed is strafed by the gendered positions they occupy in society. In the stories from the inside that we have heard, we see how Samantha, Suzette and Anna, and others, live out the experiences of a bifurcated consciousness. We know that much of the identity work that Holly is involved in (as fixer-upper, go-between, public relations person), reflects her manner of relating to many generalized others—both the “subculture of the powerful and the various subcultures of the less empowered.”

As the go-between in systems of hierarchy and power, women teachers seem to play (unintentionally I suspect) an important role in diminishing tensions in the prison. This role may be traced to the assumption that women typically show concern for a “variety of interests, their own and others, and as acts above all of cooperation and not mastery” (p. 321). Women tend to partake in “role merging” or “role balancing” rather than role conflict because they “may be socialized to experience that life-world as a place in which one balances a variety of actor’s interests” (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988, p. 320).

Conceivably too, the relationship talk of teachers makes good sense as a natural response to the threat that prisoners, in numbers and strength, present to teachers. We know that when it comes to prison operations, teachers are outsiders. Teachers are often left alone with prisoners and they often teach in secluded places within the prison’s physical plant, so that good relationships are an important means of self-protection. Often what teachers have for their own immediate protection is the agreed-upon definition of the school as a different place in the prison. According to this negotiated definition, inmates and teachers are entreated to respond to each another with respect, compassion, and care and where prisoners can also be adults/students similar to those on the street, so that the normative and educative scripts from elsewhere—outside—are transposed to the prison schoolhouse.

In the distance between teacher and student, trust is a relational mean, and it is a very sought-after and negotiated relational commodity. Its preservation requires the teachers’
constant attention; teachers know that it undergirds the prison education program. The reward for such attention to relational detail may be ontological security as teachers gain a sense of predictability and safety in their world. And the reward for the student may be that the world that teachers are willing to share opens up for them.

The Problems of Milieu: Insides and Outsides

What do teachers know about the milieu and the social structure of community where the school is located? Much of their knowledge is constituted by the sense of being in-between different physical, normative, social, relational, operational and educative places on the professional landscape, so that teachers never seem to be at home. Their knowledge speaks to unsettled experiences and unresolved tensions found in the borders formed by insides and outsides. Finding the right distance between insides and outsides is a practical problem requiring creative resolutions of the tensions caused by these different places and the definitions of the situations they impose.

In a school within a prison, teachers find their epistemic authority is sorely challenged (as students are pulled from their programs, or as they struggle to define what education means, as in Suzette's story), so that they must struggle to be heard, though their voices are often silenced. They are "the invisible old ladies" with the mops in the corridors of the institution. In their stories of milieus, teachers must work out the frictions in their relationships and school operations with their colleagues in the prison system. Teachers must learn to "do cartwheels," or cry out in frustration as "other duties are assigned," all the while knowing that outside the school (inside the prison), teachers cannot take it for granted that others in the prison will understand. Their identities and epistemic authority are eroded too, as is their sense of professionalism, by the organizational milieu of a contractor working inside a prison. Anna feels that she "stands alone" with no system to protect her. Teachers resent their exclusion. On the other hand, they use their distance to advantage as they purposely appropriate the spaces of prison and define them as their own, trying to create a school which is a positive place, in contrast to the prison which is imaged as a harsh and negative one.

The ongoing tension between the school and the prison is never resolved. Highly charged events in the prison spill over into school. The operational reality of a school within
a prison means that teachers must "at the drop of a hat, change course." The frictions in the machine create a sense of contingency and lack of control on the part of teachers, who realize that security is priority one. In the borders of time formed at the juncture of prison and school operations, teachers learn to ride the waves and rhythms of the prison and create programs that are individualized, process-oriented, relationship-based, where planning in many cases, is short-term.

In the borders of space formed at the frontiers of schools and prisons, teachers must learn and comply with the rules regarding movement and the control of space. Some teachers patrol the borders of the school for incoming unwanted or unauthorized goods and people. This is a practical problem for teachers that has implications for their safety, health, and classroom management. It is a definitional problem as teachers appear to resent and resist their definition as guards and gatekeepers—at least outside the territories of the school as they define it, spatially, socially, professionally.

What to Teach?

The subject matter is another commonplace of education that requires the teachers' deliberations. In the relations between school/prison and the outside, the literacy program is oriented to sentence administration and the inmates' probable departure to another prison, and eventually, to the community. To bring together these worlds is a practical problem for teachers. They create programs that are the product of their local efforts and also governed in some respects by the epistemological authority of distant centres of practice. To bring these worlds together, teachers monitor the field of knowledge and practice of their profession outside the prison borders, trying to mimic the accreditation procedures, professional development activities, and the curricular work of Ministries of Education, so that the inside is more like the outside. This contributes to their definition of the activities inside as educational.

To prepare their students for life on the outside, teachers often try to mimic life inside through holistic approaches and integrated curricula. Thus the literacy program exerts centripetal and centrifugal forces on the prison, pulling the outside in and pushing the inside out. Sometimes though, importing practices across the vast operational distances between
institutions is simply too difficult. In her struggle for school accreditation, Suzette noted that she could not even follow the prescriptions for attendance set out by the Ministry of Education regarding attendance in her school because her students were always called away to CSC programs.

Nevertheless, professional travelling to the “inside” has its advantages when it comes to the curricular work of teachers. As a two-sided coin, teachers are both freed and constrained by the foreign environment of the prison. Secluded as they are from public scrutiny, and recognizing that the security of the prison comes first, empowers these teachers with curricular decision-making authority, so that they are able to sculpt their programs to suit their personal philosophies, and to meet what they perceive to be the needs of the students, the prison and the community. Teachers find creative solutions in regard to their deliberations on the subject matter and the experiences they hope to offer students through the program. Their curricular choices reflect their belief that the literacy program should offer students positive experiences, help them build self-esteem, and enable them to understand and appreciate themselves, the world on the outside, and their place in that world. In this way, the curriculum for prison teachers is an ontological effort. The theme of literacy as re-connection (of the student to the real world), and restoration (finding places for them to be themselves again), is common.

This is not to say that the prison house is far away. In some schools, the curriculum and the operational needs of the institution as well as the concerns of the staff for their own safety mix well, so that teachers enact the rituals of surveillance and control, and thus, become active contributors to the purposes of the prison.

The subject matter, in many of the classrooms, seems to evolve naturally from the conversations of teachers and students, as they tell and share stories about their lives. In this way, teachers intuitively and consciously emphasize the curricular experience over the planned curriculum. The “curriculum” appears as a construction by teachers and students in the classroom, and teachers seem pleased when this occurs.
Who am I?: Professional Identities in the Borderlands

In regard to the commonplace of the teacher, always it seems, there are professional identity questions to be addressed when it comes to working in prison. In the spirit of the Creating Choices document Suzette had a vision of her school founded on ideals of community, holistic programming, feminist theory and relations of care. She becomes disillusioned and confused as theory grates against practice. In this conflict, she experienced conflicts resulting from her role as a guard, a teacher, and a contractor. The prison appears to polarize identities for other teachers as well. Samantha’s story is about the faultlines she experiences between her definition of self as someone working in the grey areas of the political spectrum and the security and control functions for which she is responsible.

Identities appear to be formed too, in the tensions between insides and outsides, so that some, like Holly, see themselves as go betweens, or diplomats who pull it all together. Ontologically and politically, professionally, and personally, teachers must try to resolve who they are and what they do in the face of distant prison authorities and in the light of sceptical community members who ask teachers why they are teaching in prison and what they can hope to gain. Teacher and student identities are interconnected and unsettled it seems, as teachers feel both close and far from their students, as in Jena’s story of Peter. And always, in this play of identities, there is the prison which prescribes what relationships and identities are possible.

It would seem that most teachers, to a greater or lesser extent, experience a professional dislocation when they go to prison. In this state of (dis)location,

... new and multiple identities can emerge from a multiplicity of locations.

... (dis)location signifies that location and dislocation are simultaneous moments always found together, a positioning with simultaneously one and many positions (Edwards & Usher, 1997, p. 255).

The literacy practice of teachers and the knowledge they hold and use comes from their dislocations, so that at best, they appear to live in the borderlands between insides and outsides, between us and them. Social, psychological and spiritual and physical borderlands are “present wherever two or more cultures edge each other” (Anzaldua, 1987, preface).
Borderlands are where a second and subordinate cultural group “grates against the first and bleeds” (Stanley, 1997, p.1). Anzaldúa writes:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants . . . the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half-dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the ‘normal’ (Anzaldúa, 1987, p.3; emphasis in original).

In these bordered places where “different practices, attitudes, values and so on, bleed and blend from different places,” border dwellers come to know the “legal and illegal practices of crossing and communication” (Clifford, 1997, p. 246). Every day, teachers travel physically and metaphorically from the outside to the inside where each “world has different people, places, rules, punishments, rewards and incentives” (Montross and Montross (1997, p. 179). For prison teachers, these binaries call upon and depend upon the other for their meanings. The narrative structure that appears in their stories resembles the travelogue. Their practical knowledge it that gained through travel; it is a conversation about the journey, hardships, potential danger, the romance, growth and awareness, the existential experience, and the encounters one has with potentially threatening Others in novel, even exotic places. The knowledge that teachers gain is found in their stories about leaving home, and being between places, about distances.

Teacher practical knowledge and experience engender “a condition of decentredness” (Edwards & Usher, 1997, p. 255). Their practical knowledge comes from their defining or mapping the andragogical terrain, the noting, experiencing, negotiating, marking, dissolving, ignoring and crossing, different relational, operational, normative, temporal, pedagogical and spatial borders, where borders signify domains of difference (Stanley, 1997). The practical knowledge of teachers that they hold and use across the commonplaces of a milieu, of self, of their students and of the subject matter, “depends, for all practical purposes, totally on its relation to, its difference from, its constitutive other” (Grossberg, 1994, p. 13). The
professional knowledge of teachers is shaped by their experiences and practical problems that comes from living in-between domains of difference, in the borderlands:

Borderlands signify that there is also a territory *between*, on the borders of—precisely a state and a space of liminality, the in-between. Borderlands are a kind of space, social as much as physical or geographical, which are co-inhabited by people of different cultures, classes, ethnicities, religions, languages, as well as sexualities and genders and politics. A borderland is a contested zone . . . (Stanley, 1997, p. 2; emphasis in original).

**Borderland Cultures of Teaching**

If this is indeed the case, then in regard to the relationship of teacher practical knowledge and teaching cultures referred to earlier (Feiman-Nemser, et. al., 1986), we can perhaps begin to identify a prison teaching culture as a borderland culture, and as such it is an elusive culture shaped by and shaping teacher practical knowledge in response to the “ambivalent and contradictory processes of everyday life (Yon, 2000, p.123). This view of culture “as emergent and continually in the making rather than foreclosed” (p.123) seems to apply, given what we have heard from teachers. It is this in-betweeness that seems to structure the practical knowledge and culture of teaching in prisons. I have made a similar suggestion elsewhere:

This, it seems to me, is the ‘place’ of correctional education, the view from somewhere that our practice offers located as it is at the juncture of state, education and society. It is a curious place of cultural, social, political and educational mutations and hybridizations. If this is true, then the issues surrounding the lack of professional and epistemological . . . authority that plagues correctional education [and prison educators, I might add] should be reconsidered from the perspective, not what correctional education ‘is’ but what it ‘does,’ as a (sub)culture of translation and mutation. The teacher’s voices head in this essay point to the connections and unexpected openings (translations and hybridizations) that appear within the practice of correctional education. For teachers, the question of identity is de-centred . . . as we move
away from descriptions of essential characteristics and skills into subject positions realized through creative connections with others. (Wright, 2001b, p.38).

**Teacher Practical Knowledge and Institutional Context**

In the snapshots of the prison teachers’ lives that I have offered, I have examined how schooling is imaged, and imagined, defined and presented, always with the suggestion (coming from the teachers) that the problems that they encounter are never quite over. I realize now that I have approached the subject of teacher practical knowledge with a sense of its tentative and contingent nature, and in this way, I have acknowledged Elbaz’s (1983) concern regarding approaches to teacher practical knowledge.

The aim is to develop a method of studying teachers (and of conceiving their role and work) that takes account of both cognitive and affective considerations; that reflects their orientation to action and to experience, without ignoring the stable and invariant features of their work and knowledge; and that acknowledges the importance of theory while firmly situated in practice (p. 23).

This study respects the assumption that teacher knowledge is knowledge oriented to action and experience, in the form of practical conflicts that must be resolved. I hope too, that this study has addressed, in part at least, the issues regarding the “formation of teacher knowledge” by way of the “consideration of the stream of social/institutional contexts that shape teachers’ knowledge and expression” (Butt, Raymond & Yamagishi, 1988, p. 103).

From this essay we have a sense of how teachers’ knowledge is shaped by the prison context, (particularly when we read about the teachers’ handling of the rule-breakers, for example). There are hints that teachers sit in the staffrooms gazing perhaps, at other teachers, watching closely their behaviours and imputing motives to them. In many ways too, this has been a study of the interaction between knowledge and a “framework of particular contexts”—the “intrapersonal (existential), interpersonal, cultural (collective), practical, professional, institutional and societal contexts” (Butt et. al., p. 121)—that shape the teachers’ knowledge.
Recognizing that teacher knowledge is constituted by the tensions between domains of difference, we can now speak briefly to the problem of practical knowledge, social reproduction, and the public sphere, that sphere of social interaction that brackets as much as possible, the imperatives of the state and economy and where the purpose for coming together is to deliberate upon practical questions regarding how things are and what they might be. Teachers clearly try to shape and are shaped by the prison, and there is much evidence in this study to suggest that both occur. Nevertheless, given the encompassing tendencies of the total institution, it is possible to argue that schools are also sites of hope and possibility because they resist, through their practices, these tendencies. School offers opportunities for prisoners to define themselves differently; they permit students some liberty from their stigmatized selves. The individualized approach to curricula and to instruction and to relationships with students, counters institutional practices where persons are assessed and codified for the administrative machinery, in an institution where the control and surveillance of groups as “batches” (Goffman, 1970) is the norm. The centripetal and centrifugal forces of the curricula temper too, the encompassing tendencies of the total institution.

On the other hand, much can be said about the powerlessness of prison teachers to bring about substantial political or organizational change in prison through the creation of critical discursive spaces where not only opinion can be formed, but where decisions leading to positive democratic change can be instituted. There is little evidence to suggest that teachers are effective change agents in this regard. This has much to do with the need to be safe by following institutional procedures, the position that teachers occupy within the prison hierarchy, the purposes of prisons, the teachers’ status as contracted labourers, the organizational confusion over who rows and steers, the status of education relative to other programs in prison, in society, and the place of women in these systems of hierarchy and power. At best, perhaps schools create possibilities for the formation of weak publics where thoughtful and meaningful dialogue can appear, as in the school at the prison for women.

That is not to say that teachers cannot be more actively involved in these struggles to democratize their setting. Prison teachers come to know much about the practices of difference and even to develop some of their own, to preserve their definitions of the
situation. Their knowledge harbours the critical potential of a border pedagogy which can speak to the

... important questions of how representations and practices that name, marginalize, and define difference as the devalued Other are actively learned, interiorized, challenged, or transformed. In addition such a pedagogy needs to address how an understanding of these differences can be used in order to change the prevailing relations of power that sustain them” (Giroux, 1997, p. 156).

Recommendations For Further Research

‘Something for Curriculum Professors to Do’ . . . is designed to provide a basis for teacher’s recognition of themselves as masters of special lore and competence, and constituting, in short, a profession by providing them, via journals, meetings and visitations, with a sense of intellectual community ...(Schwab, 1983, p. 265).

This research has shared insights into the practical knowledge and experience of prison teachers thereby contributing to a neglected history of practice. Hopefully this research will help prospective prison educators along the way, sensitizing them to the issues that may confront and confound them when they pass through the prison gates. Clearly, what teachers come to know and appreciate about their practice proceeds from the practical conflicts they experience in the commonplaces of teaching identified by Schwab. How they come to define themselves through these practices has been very much the focus of this research, which clearly illustrates the significance of context in the formation of teacher practical knowledge. Studies of practical knowledge and the relation of knowledge to context have been lacking in the literature, as have studies of the practical knowledge of prison teachers.

Teachers spend much of their time coming to terms with teaching situations for which they are unprepared. Professional training for these educators would help these educators work through some of the conflicts I have described before they pass through the prison
gates. Acknowledging this to be the case, I conclude with some suggestions for further research and for professional development activities for prospective prison teachers grounded in some of the practical issues raised in this dissertation.

Before proceeding with this task, it must be said that making the conceptual shift from research results based on specific and narrow research studies such as this one, to prescriptions regarding teacher preparation programs is not without its problems (Floden & Klinzing, 1990). This study is narrowly defined by prison teachers, who for the most part, are married women with their families almost grown, who teach in the federal penitentiaries in western Canada, and who are employed by a private-for-profit contractor. On the other hand, the study is somewhat representative of prison teachers in other parts of Canada, given that many other teachers are under similar contractual arrangements in the federal prison system. Nevertheless, generalizing these findings must be attempted with much caution.

With regard to the milieu, it is important to help novices and experienced prison teachers understand the highly complex organizational environment of a school within a prison. It would seem that the school is a somewhat resistant subculture in relation to the dominant prison culture. Further research should be conducted to locate, compare and contrast the dominant and subordinate cultures in prison and to determine the values and practices that divide and link them to the school. An examination of organizational change processes would be helpful, too. If organizations consist of cultures and subcultures, and the prison school is the location for a peculiar form of border culture, then some of the literature drawn from cultural studies and even neo-colonialist studies would be helpful to understand cultural relations between the school and the prison. In this regard, prospective prison teachers would benefit from some of the common literature on the functions of formal organizations.

Prison teachers spend many hours, often in isolated locations, with prisoners/students who often have severe emotional and behavioural problems. It seems that many prison teachers develop successful interpersonal ways of knowing that enable them to work with students in difficult environments. Student-teacher relationships in prison, and elsewhere, warrant good descriptions and further systematic research. Certainly a professional development program for prison teachers should include theories of interpersonal
communication with a focus on how relationships are formed, sustained, and dissolved, how conflicts arise, the stages of intimacy, relational turning points, and so on. General theories of social competence may provide a fruitful avenue for further discussion of the prison teachers’ knowledge. Furthermore, case studies in conflict resolution would be useful. Teachers must be able to resolve conflicts between students, teachers and prison personnel, while remaining respectful of all parties involved. Teachers must be able to de-escalate tensions in the schismatic prison environment consisting of hostile subcultures.

Because of where and who they teach, teachers are invariably engaged in a moral conversation. What to teach, what to report, and to who, presents teachers with perplexing moral and practical situations. There is a moral gap in the educational conversation in general (Garrison & Rud, 1995), and this is particularly true in the discussions of prison literacy programs. Questions pertaining to the pedagogic good, within broader inquiries into issues of justice and democracy would situate prison literacy practices in the mainstream discourses of practical philosophy. Some teachers are already engaged in a moral conversation about the ideals of community and social justice. Others are concerned with relations of care, privacy and trust. Case studies of ethics in the workplace would be helpful here.

Given that teaching is a gendered profession in favour of women, the dilemmas of knowing and the moral dilemmas of teaching that surface in prison because of gendered ways of knowing and relating would be worthy of investigation. The moral and epistemological debates between advocates of Kohlberg and Gillian would help this discussion along and provide some insight into the relationships that concern prison teachers.

Critical questions arise from this research, about the role that teachers play in the normalizing discourse of the prison, and the propagation of intervention strategies associated with the therapeutic state. Since much of the work that teachers seem to do in prison is relational work, grounded in the daily interactions, more attention should be paid to these encounters. Sample conversations between teachers and students would reveal more about the relational dynamics of teachers and students and how the system is reproduced in these speech situations.

Resolving just who the student is and how to relate to him or her is not easy. There is a vast literature in the field of criminology that speaks to the nature of the “criminal mind”
and the prisoner’s characteristics. Teachers should read this literature and compare what is
being said from a clinical perspective to what the inmates say about themselves in their own
published works, in their essays and poetry, style of dress, and forms of body art they
develop, and so on. These contributions may help teachers to better understand the learner.

As prison schools seem to be collections of travellers from different social strata,
provinces and even countries, theories of inter-cultural contact, communication, and the
broader relations of colonialism might help teachers locate their practices within the extensive
issues of multiculturalism, globalization and racism and attune them to the processes of
accommodation, assimilation and resistance that these processes generate. Certainly, students
themselves want to know more about their place in the world so these topics could become
part of a critically-focussed prison curriculum.

We know that prison teachers, perhaps because of their seclusion, have some luxury
when it comes to choosing curricula and instructional methods. Since the prisoner-student is
a potential wanderer, and because teachers have them for such a short time, examples of
curriculum and instruction that recognize short-term contact with students would be helpful.
Here, discussions of Individualized Education Programs, modularized curricula, prior
learning assessments and process-based learning, would be helpful. Adult education theory
and practice should be mined too, for its rich insights into the curricular experiences of
teachers working with adults that might be suitable in a prison setting.

A professional development program should probably provide teachers with
opportunities to reflect on the dynamics of identity-formation. At the moment, feminist
theory is rightfully preoccupied with the politics of knowledge, identity and location and
would probably sensitize teachers to some of the identity issues they will experience in prison.
Future research should look at how identities are constructed at the grass roots level, in the
training provided to contract staff by the Correctional Service of Canada, and in the
conversations between teachers, guards, case management and others. It would be
fascinating to record the conversations between seasoned and novice teachers and study what
is said at these times from the perspective of teacher socialization.

In this regard, more field research in the “natural” environment of the prison is needed.
We still know very little, in fact, about the realities of the classroom and the practices situated
there, and the kind of knowledge that surfaces in the realities of these encounters between teachers and students. Sample dialogues from the field would enlighten us as to what is actually happening between real teachers and real students in the classrooms.

Case studies of theory and practice leading to democratic changes in prison structure and policy might provide prison teachers with a theoretical orientation and the ammunition they need to conceptualize change in their schools and prisons. A general theory of society and the role of the prison within society might provide prison teachers with a global understanding of what is necessary to bring about change locally.

A general problem that encompasses the commonplaces of teaching is how, personally, socially and professionally, teachers engage with difference. A professional development program for correctional educators should begin by locating and examining how differences in particular historical and social locations "are organized and constructed within maps of rules and regulations and located within dominant social forms which either enable or disable such differences" (Giroux, 1997, p.151-2).

Finally, a professional development program should call upon the wisdom of teachers already working in prisons to formulate and provide insights into the realities of prison teaching. Experienced teachers should be provided with opportunities to share their stories with prospective teachers or those already working in the field, either through conversations and presentations, or in print. Prior learning credits should be granted to seasoned prison teachers so as to acknowledge the gap between knowledge located in the academy and the practical knowledge and experience that comes from being in the classroom. In a similar vein, the curriculum prepared for prospective prison teachers should be shared and shaped by teachers already working in the field.

In conclusion, this study grows out of my own personal experience as a teacher in prison for many years. It recognizes the struggles of prison literacy teachers, and acknowledges their voices. The study speaks to the complexity of the issues that prison teachers encounter in the foreign environment of the prison, and points to the need for professional development programs grounded in the practical conflicts that teachers experience within the commonplaces of education described here. If I have been successful
in this endeavour, the reader will have come to a greater appreciation of the lives of their colleagues who choose to teach in prison.
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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Could you describe how you came to teach in prison?
2. What's it like to teach in prison?
3. Could you describe a typical day in prison?
4. What previous experiences did you have (if any) which you have found helpful for teaching in prison?
5. Could you describe how the school fits or doesn't fit into the prison system?
6. Could you describe how you fit (or don't fit) into the school and the prison system?
7. Could you describe a typical or unusual student for me?
8. What do you teach in prison?
9. How do you teach in prison?
10. How do you evaluate students in prison?
11. What are your relationships like with your students?
12. Has your concept of education changed in any way since you began teaching here?
13. What is the most important point in this interview today?
APPENDIX B

"Someplace City"
Place: Jena's house
Date: March 15, 2000

Present:
* Tom - has been working at Canyon Prison for two years
* Jena - has been working at Canyon Prison for seven years
* Kathy - has been working at Canyon Prison for a year and a half
* Lara - has been working at Canyon Prison for six years
* Anna - has been working at Canyon Prison one year

Randall: How did you come to teach in prison?

Tom: I was doing a bit of subbing work up in Stettler. I gave a tour to some friends of mine in Someplace and during the tour, I said: "Man, I really miss Someplace; I kind of wish I was living here again." Then my sister phones me and says there is an ad in the paper for a teacher up at The Other Prison. So, I applied and I got the job, that's the short version of it basically!

Randall: So, you're from Someplace originally then Tom?

Tom: No, I actually spent about five years in Someplace about ten years ago - maybe twelve years ago now. I spent five years in Someplace, then I left and I was gone for five years. So, basically, you're looking at a five year presence in Someplace, a five year absence, and now I'm back!

Randall: How about you Jena, I never really did ask you that question - all those years ago!

Jena: Well, when we came to Someplace — I don't know why we decided to live here; probably to be far enough away from both sets of parents! It was recognizable turf to us, and so we came here and neither one of us had jobs, but I had a background in Adult Education at that point and I think like everyone else here, there was an ad in the paper and you respond to it and you get the job. So that was how I ended up here as well.
Randall: Did you ever think about teaching in prisons before you saw the ad?

Jena: No, but it definitely appealed to me because I knew it would be with adults and I knew that, that was really where I preferred to teach.

Randall: How about you Kathy?

Kathy: Well, I started in Town, The Other Prison., then I graduated from University. I wanted some kind of experience in teaching before applying for jobs in the fall. I got a phone call from a friend who said that the Pen was looking for subs. Anyway, I talked to Dolly on the phone for a long time and she convinced me to come up for just a trial. I liked it and so I just did subbing there for the summer - for almost four months. Dolly came into my classroom one day and said: “Canyon Prison needs a native culture teacher, are you interested in applying?” I said: “Yes”, so she sent my resume away and I moved here within three weeks.

Randall: Yes, at our end we were going: “Oh, what are we going to do?” Now, the person who contacted you; was that K?

Kathy: No, it was H.– she was subbing up there.

Randall: And, how about you Lara?

Lara: Oh, that was so long ago!

Randall: I remember the interview!

Lara: Yes, we laughed a lot! I remember a friend of mine saying: “Hey, look they want someone to teach in the jail up there.” I said well, other people do it - why not - I’ll try! So, I put my ad in (never thinking I’ll get hired in a thousand years because I had put them everywhere!), and when they said: “Come for an interview”, I did and then I met you guys! I remember Jena with the white blouse and a pink bow tie - do you remember that?

Jena: No, I don’t!

Randall: Sitting in the Someplace hotel, there!

Jena: I remember that!

Lara: I thought, I’d like to work with her, I think! Then they hired me and we came back down, found a place and moved!

Randall: Where were you?
Lara: I lived in a different place and it’s not that far away; but too far to drive.

Randall: Now, you were on a farm weren’t you?

Lara: Yes, so we just decided — well, we’ll try this! Then, as luck had it, there was some work for Jack and the night courses became something that was okay, and then you get into it and if we talk about going, my son falls apart because he loves Someplace!

Randall: Is that right?

Lara: Yes, but it’s okay because I enjoy teaching. I enjoy those bad boys!

Randall: Oh, I’ll have to ask you about that after (what you enjoy about it), as we make the rounds here!

Randall: How about you Anna?

Anna: Well, I got married and moved to Someplace because my husband worked here. So, here I was and I had to find a job. So, after a while, my UI ran out - unfortunately! So, I had the teaching before that I had taught for five years on a couple of different reserves, and I had an elementary degree, but I ended up teaching a lot of Junior High and High School. I had 17, 18 year old in my Junior High classes, so I thought, “Well, this would be interesting because; A: It’s a job and it’s available, and B: It’s a different culture in a sense and I sort of like going to different cultures — I think people are interesting and how they interact in different settings is interesting. So, I thought: “Well, this will be kind of cool because I have never worked in a jail before and my dad had been a M2W2?? volunteer for quite a few years, so I knew about jails, I knew about inmates, and I knew something about what it was like from those people being associated with our family.

Randall: So, were you fearful at all of going in?

Anna: No, this place is safer than some of the schools I’ve worked in, so, no!

Tom: Actually, I should add also, that with me, as soon as I heard that there was a job in the prison; it’s like: “Wow, that’s cool, I’d love to work in a prison”! You know, it seemed like one of those jobs where you can tell your friends - well, guess what I did! So, when my sister told me about the ad, and I phoned to see what kind of position it was, I spoke to Jena, and she said, “Now, one thing I have to tell you - it is in a prison.” And I’m thinking; that’s the main reason why I’m calling!
Randall: Now, that's interesting because you (Kathy) were obviously fearful of it.

Kathy: Well, I didn't know what to expect - I mean, I had one cousin who worked in a jail, and that was it, and he didn't really tell me any stories, and so I just knew what I had seen in the movies. When I got there, the inmates were just walking around, and I was thinking; why aren't they in their cells? Somebody's not doing their job here! I had visions of being in a classroom with a guard with a gun, and I got there, and it was a little more lax than that!

Tom: Actually, with that vision that she's talking about; when I first started teaching there, I used to tell my friends, oh yes, I teach in a cage, and I have a cattle prod and every now and then one of the inmates runs up goes "I'm going to kill you!", and I take my cattle prod and zap them - and then he'll be like: "Okay, I'm calm now, I'll go back to my desk!"

Randall: Because the next question is really what is it like to teach in a prison, and you sort of remember that first day; has your experience lived up to some of your fears; can you describe it a little bit more?

Kathy: Well, I'm not afraid to go to work anymore. I notice a difference even from being at The Other Prison and then being at Someplace. I find Someplace being very relaxed. I'm not tense when I go to work and I enjoy it.

Randall: What's the difference then between The Other Prison and Canyon Prison?

Kathy: Maybe it's just because it's the first Penn I worked at, or I don't know. But the interaction with the students and everything - it just seems so different. Someplace to me just seems more relaxed and calm.

Randall: Do you think that it is the concept of the student or the inmate in the two places?

Kathy: Well, in my mind, The Other Prison just seemed like a max. Just being in that environment — it was kind of a cold environment.

Jena: I remember you saying once, or being concerned when you first came about the inmates wanting to shake hands with you. At The Other Prison, that just wasn't allowed, and of course, at Canyon Prison, that was never an issue. So, there seems to be something different in the culture maybe, because they are both mediums, and there is no reason that the rules shouldn't be consistent, but they're not, they don't seem to be between prisons.
Randall: So, is the culture different only in the school do you think, or is it different in the institution?

Kathy: I think it’s the whole institution, but I don’t know for sure. I didn’t see a lot of the rest of The Other Prison. I also find the teaching very different, maybe it’s just because I’m teaching Native Culture and more hands on type of thing, and I’m constantly walking around the classroom, interacting with the students, and at The Other Prison, it was behind a desk and if they needed anything - the rule was that they had to come to your desk.

Randall: Oh, is that right?

Kathy: Yes, because we could never have our back to them. So, it’s a little different that way too. But I think that it’s a lot more relaxed at Canyon Prison and I enjoy it.

Randall: Tell me what it is like to teach in a prison?

Tom: It is a lot more relaxed like Kathy said, but I’m comparing it to regular school. The place where I worked at full-time before I came to the Someplace was an all-girl Christian High School, I know this may sound dumb, but I felt a lot more free working in a jail with a bunch of guys, because if something came out of my mouth, that was okay. I didn’t have to word phrases correctly, or whatever; you know what I mean! I was able to be myself I mean, one example — Jena knows this very well — one of the students at the Christian school said: “Mr. Tom, your fly is undone!”, and I’m like: “It’s a good thing I chose to wear underwear today!”. Well, they made this big thing about it; I got called into the Principal’s office, and he said: “What’s going on - you just told the class that you don’t wear underwear?”, and I’m like: “What, what are you talking about?” He said: “Well, you said; it’s a good thing you were wearing underwear. . . .” I told him that it was just a joke, but he said that it gives them visions that you don’t wear underwear! So, it was little things, but working here; you could walk into the classroom and say: “Boys, I’m not wearing any underwear!” and it’s no big deal!

Jena: Tom, you could, but I couldn’t!
Tom: I guess the gender has a bit to do with it too! Not that I’d do that - don’t get the wrong idea!

Randall: Now, that’s interesting, quite a difference in some ways. Since you were commenting about gender, what do you think about teaching in prisons - what’s it like?

Jena: I think that as a woman in there, it’s the opposite — you have to be extremely careful what kinds of vibes you give off. Sometimes these guys don’t read things very well, and it’s amazing. So, on that level, Tom may be fine, but we’re not.

Lara: So you have to learn to be very judicious about what kind of persona you present. You have to make sure that your classroom at all times is . . . how can I say? You have to create it to be the way you want it to be, and you have to earn that respect. And I think a lot of them don’t understand. Even the fact that you come in there to begin with is sometimes mistaken. I don’t know if you’ve found that, but for a woman it’s a difficult route to tread through there. I don’t know if you found that too, Jena, at the beginning. You have to be careful. Once you set that tone, you get an amazing support from them, and then a lot of— they become very loyal to you. I remember when I first went in there, and I was like Kathy; Jena had to protect me on the way in!!

Jena: I know I always meet new staff, but I wasn’t; I don’t have any memory that you were so needy! I thought you were fine.

Lara: No, I was not fine.

Jena: Cool!

Lara: But it’s once you establish that. I remember the first TA I had that was Jena’s to begin with. He became; we had no time for any kind of—our introduction to that classroom was I got an hour to look at books, 2 days to walk around the place outside of it, but the classroom itself was like an hour, and that was my orientation. Remember that Jena?

Jena: Yeah.

Lara: Because Jena was starting a new job as the Coordinator, I was brand new as a teacher, and there was nobody to train you because we were all knew, you know?

Randall: Yeah.
Lara: And that inmate, when he sensed how nervous I was, kind of took over. He became the guide and showed me the ropes to the whole thing and worked with us. And I think that’s something; when you’re working in a place you really work by the seat of your pants. I’m getting a little off the topic—

Randall: No, you’re not at all.

Lara: But because there is nothing in place, you know? You’re making that—since then, like Jena’s been in there now going on seven years, so now; she has something going that she orients the staff with. But when we were starting together, it was a nightmare for both of us. Because we had come in, all the staff was gone that had been there. They had all been replaced, and we were doing some heavy duty slugging through it.

Jena: And you know, you weren’t just—you were a brand new teacher too. And a lot of our staff is. And so, I mean, they’re not just learning prison ropes, they’re learning teaching ropes. And... it’s interesting. In fact, as I’ve looked at—often times, the kind of people that I’ve hired over the years, lots of times it’s older women who went back to school. This is really a common thread. It’s not true of everybody around this table, but older women who went back to school after they got their kids kind of raised and in school. And they found that they were not hireable. But they were wonderful people for this environment, because they had age on their side. They didn’t have a whole lot of preconceived teaching ideas.

Randall: Yeah.

Jena: Or—so they had a kind of open mind and a flexibility. And that stood us in good stead. I wasn’t terribly experienced either. I had one year in the prison before I took on that coordinating job. But you know, that was only my third year of teaching. Because I’ve managed to avoid it pretty good!!

Randall: Just a real quick question on the student who showed you around. Do you feel that he mislead you?

Lara: Oh no! Oh no, he was totally loyal. He was totally loyal to Jena, and I think that when he saw she and I had a good working relationship he transferred that loyalty to me. And then that continued through. It was as though the classroom—there was always another person like that would come in, and they; you bond with those students and become extremely
territorial. I’m sure every teacher that’s in here can say that. About you and the classroom. They don’t want to move and they, you know? But if you didn’t have that, I think it would be hell to pay in there, to teach in there. If you couldn’t create that. Because the culture in every classroom—we were talking about prison culture, but the culture in every classroom is different too, because it reflects what works for that particular teacher, and I think that’s exactly what you’re talking about. Something was established there with that first TA that you had, and it never changed. It didn’t matter who the TA was, it was always somebody drawn from your class. They’d already accepted the culture and they were in to promoting it. And so the atmosphere was never dependent on the TA—he was just going to enforce it! It’s a different world to work in.

Randall: Now you said you established that professional distance, or you set the tone or whatever. Could you give me an example of how you did that? You said for a woman it’s different than being a man in the prison. You have to sort of set that relationship up in advance. Can you give me an example of what you would do to set up that kind of--

Jena: I think you can primarily do it by modelling. You know, I mean, you can hear language, all kinds of things that you know, is prison way of talking. But it doesn’t take long for them to see that you don’t do this. And if they respect you, then your classroom becomes the same. And they will tell someone “we don’t do that in here”. And it helps to establish those parameters. And I think it also depends on the parameters that you can live with, you know? I don’t know if I’m saying that right.

Kathy: Yeah, it’s true. Everybody has a different personality, so they have different tolerances for certain kinds of things, right?

Jena: Yeah.

Anna: Because I mean in my class, when I came in, because there was Lara and there were Mern and there were people that were older--and they thought that I was very young. Besides getting rid of the bad boys that didn’t want to take (I took over from Tom)--

Randall: Right.
Anna: It was a man’s world, and here comes this not very big woman, and she looks kinda young, and we’re gonna have some fun, right? And so we got rid of that. We fired a bunch of people, had some scenes. ?Brotherhood? came to see me because I discriminated against ?? I didn’t know he was black, darn it! That was the first time I found out he was black. He’s black?? Anyway, you have that settling in time, right?

Randall Yeah.

Anna: Then it’s your class after that. And I find that, yeah, the guys will often try to hit on you in a certain way. And that they’ll sort of joke about it. I have this one guy now that just showers me with compliments every day. You know? And it’s like “Anna, you know, they should re-write the alphabet and put you and I next to each other” and that kind of stuff! I always just make a big joke out of it and say “oh, he’s good, he’s good. This guy is good—listen and learn gentlemen, listen and learn!” You just play with it all the time. And I always make sure that they know how old I am. And I say stuff like “on my 40th birthday . . .” and they go on about “you’re 40 years old” and like “yeah I am, seriously old now”. And stuff like that, so that they understand what my parameters are. And I joke about it and I’ll say oh yeah—I have this one guy who’s way out of line, but you know, I can take a little craziness because I like to be crazy. And he said to me this summer once, “Anna, if you do that for me, I will suck your toes!” And I said “oh yeah, that would be a new experience, but I don’t think we have to go that far.” This Fall he said to me—he wanted something—and said “I’ll give you a foot massage”. And I said “yeah, yeah, promises, promises”. And then you know, a few minutes later—I just play with these guys, it’s kinda fun for me—then I’ll say (especially because the new guys can’t believe the conversation sometimes), and I’ll say “Jerry, you must not be as fond of me as you were this summer”. He goes “why’s that?” I go “because this summer you were willing to lick my toes, and now it’s just a foot massage.” And then the other goes (gasp) what? But we just laugh about it and joke about everything. But they know that there’s no rude language. The minute I hear a word I say “language”. And then the guy will say—even if the guy doesn’t catch it, the other guys will say “yeah, you’re not supposed to swear man”. And if they go into a conversation, “I remember that chick, you know, da, da da, da da” I say “we don’t need to hear that here. Way too much information.”
So I find that you can set your parameters by joking, by telling them your age, or maybe by referring to my husband, referring to my children. Not by name, but you know? My little boy told me this today and stuff. It makes it seem like a friendly place for them where they can tell their stories. Which some of them do. And they can talk about anything they want, which we often do. But they know that this is who you are, this is your job. You know, I make no bones about I'd quit this job in a day if I win the lottery and that sort of thing. And that's where it ends. And they like that because they get a taste of outside, I think, from you, when you talk about stuff with them. Or when you tell them oh yeah, I went to Calgary this weekend and I did this and this.

Randall: Oh, is that right?

Anna: I tell them all kinds of stuff. Because I figure, you know what, that's modelling for them. That tells them what is a normal life? What do quote, unquote normal people do, right?

Randall: Isn't that interesting.

Anna: And they'll say “Oh yeah, you know, I bet you’re just a lush, you just (they joke like this), I bet you drink up all night. And I go “no.” And they say “how many bars are there in Someplace?” “Gee, actually, I don’t know. I’m a Mom. I go home, I cook, I clean, right? How would I know how many bars are in Someplace?” And they get a certain message that way.

Lara: I find too--I have a 15 year old son, and I share endless stories with them and there’s this tremendous curiosity from the young men who are maybe 18 or 19. What does your son do? What does he listen to? I bet he’s doing dope. I bet he’s drinking. And I’m saying “I guess my son is really quite naive because you know, I don’t think he is.” And it’s like there’s no comprehension that maybe a 15--well that’s gotta be a blip, you know? And there’s all this time in, because they’re bringing their background in, and you’re always saying well, you know . . . . or he’s in grade 8, hey? And he’s doing the same math they’re doing. And all of this stuff. There’s this tremendous curiosity because so many of them; not all of them, but many, many of them come from such a dysfunctional background. That what we see as total normal behaviour from a 15 year old kid is incomprehensible. And so you’re bringing in the
normalcy as Anna says. It’s really, I think, very much an important part of what you’re bringing in to that place. So they can have something to compare with from their own experience. So when you’re teaching, you’re doing a lot more than numbers and writing. You’re constantly--I feel like you’re counselling all day long.

**Randall:** You’re counselling? How do you find that, Kathy?

**Kathy:** Like it’s all day.

**Tom:** I find that as well. And I get asked the same questions. “Oh, you’re a lush. You go out and you get drunk. Aren’t you going to get drunk tonight?” or whatever. And “you smoke dope, don’t you?” and all this kind of stuff. I get that a lot. I’ve also been asked “how many bars are there in Someplace?” The difference was, instead of saying I don’t know, I actually told them how many bars there were, I rated every one of them, and I described what the service was like in each one too.

**Randall:** It’s interesting, because the question that I was going to try and get to was “what do we teach? I mean, what should we teach in prison?” Not only what do you teach, but what should we teach in prisons? So maybe we can keep on with that question. I mean, what should we be teaching? You agreed that counselling is very much a part of what you do. What do you counsel about, or what would you--

**Kathy:** well, I think . . . a lot of them talk about their kids, and that’s what we spend a lot of time talking about. And I have no experience with parenting, but they still want to know my opinion about how they should raise their kids so that their kids don’t end up in jail. But I have a hard time with that. I talk about how my parents raised me, and they just don’t believe that I’ve never done drugs.

**Anna:** Yeah, that’s a big one.

**Kathy:** They do not believe it at all. And so talking about that and just . . . what I do in my everyday life has nothing to do with drugs and stealing and . . . you know? But they think that’s part of everybody’s life. “Well you have to have stole something.” You have to have done this or done that.

**Lara:** I find too, that if you; something that they love for you to do and they’ll find different ways to talk you into this, is to talk about history. Like as if there’s a void there that they
don’t; it’s like their world has been so narrow. I don’t know if the rest of you find that, but we’ll have the tv on a lot in the background. And there’s the news and that will take you on in to something else. Like today. We were talking about one fellow. He’s Lebanese and saying “I’m not going to be at work tomorrow because I’m cooking in the kitchen and it’s a Muslim holy day tomorrow and it’s our Easter.” And I said “How does a Muslim celebrate Easter?” And he’s saying well, you know, when Abraham took Isaac to the mountain and he was going to sacrifice his son, and then he didn’t, we celebrate that, and we sacrifice a lamb on the following day, and it’s our Easter. And the guy in behind, he starts saying “well are you anti-Semitic?” And we got into this huge conversation about what did that mean? And then into the whole history of the Jewish religion and the conflict between the Germans, the Jews, all that stuff. And one guy says to me “You know, Lara, I don’t know how you know all these things. I know none of this. Tell me some more.” It’s like that whole history is missing. Whether it’s because school has been so hit and miss for many of them. Not a lot. Some of them are well educated. But an awful lot of them know none of that. And like it’s our whole background, and they know none of it.

Randall: Why do you think it’s interesting for you? I mean, I know they don’t know—as you’re saying—they don’t know anything about it, but why history and not geography or?

Lara: Because they’re watching the news and they don’t know--

Randall: Okay.

Jena: They want to make their world make some sense.

Lara: Yeah. They can’t make those connections, you know?

Kathy: And I think what they’re trying to do too, in the most awkward way so often, is to try and find their place in the world. I think that’s true.

Jena: And I think that’s what’s so appealing about school. I had one of your guys come the other day and he said to me—and there’s a million stories like this—and he said “Jena, what do you know about the dark ages?” So you know, what I ended up doing was spending an hour giving him kind of a mini history of everything that I remembered about the history of western Europe. We got into colonialism, imperialism. We ended up talking about the fall,
the crash of the stock market in 1929, the depression and you know? It was an hour. And he was a sponge! He was so silent through that.

**Randall:** Yeah. Was this one on one?

**Jena:** Yeah. It was one on one. And so I gave him a couple of books at the end of it. And I said “if you want to read some more, it’s all in here”. And about three days later he came back. The going was a little--the slugging was a little tough and he brought the books back!

**Lara:** But yeah . . . And you seem to be teaching this hit and miss, you know? Like it’s not connected, but it is. Because . . .

**Randall:** How is it connected though? Because what you’re saying is it comes out of nowhere. The topic almost appears to come out of nowhere. How do you see it all being connected, or do you? I mean, the curricula, the curriculum?

**Lara:** I don’t know if it is. Like I think that is something that is really missing in what we’re trying to do.

**Randall:** Yeah.

**Lara:** If you could find something where you could structure the history and . . . you know how when you go into; when you go to university, and I’m sure this is going to take years of work when you’re trying to work with; setting something like that up in a prison setting. But things that connect the English that you’re teaching, the history that you’re teaching. It all; because that; I was fascinated when I went to university, how I was; I started in English, Art History because I was an art major, and the history; all of it was tied together. And we’re working like; because this guy asked, and we’re giving him a pile of stuff--

**Anna:** But I don’t think you can do that really where we’re at. Because I think the gaps are just so enormous.

**Lara:** They are.

**Anna:** And where we’re; I think what we’re really trying to do when we feed that hunger for whatever bit of information that that guy happens to be keen on, or a particular guy happens to be keen on, is that we’re giving him a taste. Because we always say how it connects. Like you know, when I was telling this little story about the guy who wanted to know about the Dark Ages, what I ended up telling him was how some of the literature connected. So I think
what you’re doing is you’re cracking a window. And like I; we can’t do a comprehensive thing. Those guys are in and out so fast. They’re there, they’re gone. I don’t think we can do that comprehensive thing. But what I think we can do is give some of them a taste for more. And they are great readers. And they’ll go away from you, and you don’t know what the devil they might be reading. And they love things like the Discovery Channel and--

**Kathy:** They FEAST on the Discovery Channel.

**Anna:** They do.

**Tom:** I think probably most; the type of book that’s mostly in demand in my classroom, and I was in your class as well, was atlases.

**Anna:** Yeah, they love atlases.

**Tom:** I probably at least once a month get someone coming into my room saying “do you have any atlases?” And usually no, because whenever we do get them, eventually they’ll go missing or something. But they’re always looking for atlases. They love to look at different places in the world.

**Kathy:** Of course, when they see Discovery Channel, it’s crocodiles in such and such land, well then, where is that place? They’re always trying to figure out where things are. They don’t; some of them couldn’t even draw a map of North America.

**Randall:** Why do you think; well I guess it’s just pure lack of knowledge, but I’m sort of tying my question to Jena’s comment about them finding their place in the world. Is this part of finding their place? Like history gives them a sense place in the world?

**Tom:** I think it’s a sense of escapism or something. Like they’re in a little tiny area, and I guess they’re dreaming of if I could go anywhere, let me look at the atlas. And history, gee, if I could live at any time... because they don’t like the time they’re living in and they don’t like place that they’re living in, obviously.

**Jena:** That’s a--

**Anna:** I never thought of that. I always viewed it from the other point of view.

**Randall:** That’s interesting.
Anna: I always thought from the point of view that I felt that that person was trying to figure out where he fit.

Lara: And I think that’s also true.

Anna: Yeah. I think it can be more than one thing.

Lara: And different things for different people. Because I also find for a lot of people--like you were talking about the Jews, etc.--a lot of people ask you religious questions. If they know you have a religious background or that you practice, they ask you incredible questions. I’ve had this guy--I’ve gone to the whole Testament I don’t know how many times. Especially; they like the Old Testament, these guys. They like rules. The dietary rules of Deuteronomy. They love this stuff, you know? Because they want to sort out if you’re a Christian, what’s the difference between Protestant and catholic, if you’re not a Christian what’s the difference between a Christian and an Islamic person? They want to sort that out. Because you know, these guys have a lot of time to think, right?

Randall: Yeah.

Lara: And life’s not going that great, because they’re in there, and what is the meaning of life, right? Some of them are suicidal at times. Almost every guy in my class--once somebody said “well who hasn’t thought about committing suicide?” There was total general agreement in the class. They had all thought about doing suicide. Every single one. I was like: give your head a shake! But like I said, if you’re going to jail for ten years, you might think about it too. So they want to know their place in the world, they want to sort out the world, they want to figure out, you know, their spiritual side, if it makes sense, and they want to pick your brain for that, and then they want to figure out why things are the way they are in the world. Like this whole colonialism thing and you know, the Jamaican guys want to talk about why all these people ended up on the islands and that kind of stuff.

Randall: Which is again, a bit of identity building isn’t it?

Lara: And it’s really interesting, because you never know what you’re going to talk about on any given day. You never know. [wise teacher]
Jena: And you also have this amazing blend in your classroom at all times. Most of the time—and I think this is the sad truth—you are maybe the only light skinned person in the room most of the time.

Kathy: You are the minority.

Jena: Yeah. And so you’ll have this whole cultural group of people, and there’s nothing nicer that can happen in the class when all these people begin to share. And I found that those were some of the finest times in my class. Was when we had—remember like Isamo and you know, Abraham and Thom. These guys, they were all different cultures, and they were all in there just doing their math table, you know? And in that sharing also comes the stories. And with the stories would come the understanding that the world is a lot bigger than downtown Edmonton, or Alberta. Because now you’ve got a Lebanese, you’ve got an African, you’ve got a Jamaican, you have a couple natives, and they all come in with different points of view. But the oneness in the room is the literacy that they’re looking for. But that’s—

Randall: That’s really fascinating, you know? The fact that you can bring the cultures together through a literacy program. It’s—it begs the questions though, how do you evaluate what goes on in your school? I mean in your programs. Given what you see in your classrooms, I know that you teach courses, but how do you evaluate what you do? What happens in the classroom and in the school?

Jena: I just—you evaluate your students because you have to, right? And you evaluate them according to the test. And then when you give them your progress report or whatever you’re doing with them, you evaluate the soft stuff, right? Their skills. Their personal skills, their social skills, you put that in your whole comment section. So you evaluate that part. And I think I evaluate myself as to how . . . well I evaluate myself on how hard I’m working. Like whether I’m circulating, whether I, you know—I make sure I have one on one with every student every day. Where I look them in the eye, I speak to them, I acknowledge they are people. But I also want to make sure that they’re doing their work. Like if it’s just a big chat room, then that’s not good enough. There has to be work. So you evaluate yourself: am I working with them? You know, if I have nothing on my board all day, does that mean I haven’t been teaching?
Randall: And does it?

Jena: Not necessarily. But if I have nothing on my board for repeated days, that’s a bad sign.

Randall: Yeah.

Jena: Because usually I’ll be talking about something, and then I’ll write the word up on the board so they can see the word. And then we’ll talk about this or that. And I draw the pictures to go with it, and the figuring, and then there’ll be someone who doesn’t—division of numbers, fractions or whatever. So you evaluate that way, but I think that we cannot evaluate everything that we do in the school. Because most of it is soft. Like how do you evaluate that you are modelling behaviour for them? How do you evaluate the fact that you are giving them some world view? That you are making them think about things. That they’re learning to treat each other with respect, you know? Today I had two guys swearing at each other over the computer room. And learning to get along and do the game together and helping each other. One guy was helping the other guy spell, you know? How do you evaluate that? Can you evaluate that?

Randall: Yeah, I don’t know. As you say, it’s soft. And you know, it’s—how do you evaluate what goes on in your classroom aside from—well, don’t let me put words in your mouth. I was going to say aside from tests, but you know?

Anna: Well, I think we’re trying to give these guys something that’s tangible for them when they get out. And I think we’re trying to; I teach ?AB through E? So we’re sort of working in with what Tom does, which is the GED. So you’re setting them up so they can pass that. Because that’s a tangible for them, that GED. And like they’ll say “where’s that marked?” Well in Edmonton, the provincial. “Are you sure?” Because this ... then it becomes something that’s very relevant. And I’m sure Tom can vouch for that when they get with you, they’re writing an exam that now has a seal on it that says “yes, you have an equivalency”. We also in my room do a lot of English 30, and that’s a wonderful thing, to see these guys who see themselves as not very good achievers, and Jena sets up a thing where they can challenge the English 30. And they come in and they make it. And these guys are WOW!

Jena: That in itself is the most amazing thing.
Anna: Yes.

Jena: Because what that does for them--so many of these fellows--we’ve talked about huge wholes and that sort of thing. But I think the fellows who are at the stage where they’ve made a successful challenge of either English 30 or 33, they’ve been the readers, and what we know is that reading often starts at the remand--there’s nothing else to do, right? And a lot of them have maybe formal education that they would describe as grade 6 or grade 7. But they’re self taught. And some have been readers and they’ve absorbed quite a lot too, just as a result of reading. So when they-- [tape ends]