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# Teacher Transformations: A Phenomenological Study on the Effect of Courage to Teach on Experienced Teachers' Growth and Development: A Dissertation

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TEACHER TRANSFORMATIONS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON THE EFFECT OF *COURAGE TO TEACH*
ON EXPERIENCED TEACHERS' GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT


A DISSERTATION

submitted by

KATHLEEN M. NOLLET




In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy




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### Approvals

*In the judgment of the following signatories, this Dissertation meets the academic standards that have been established for the Doctor of Philosophy degree.*

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## Acknowledgements

If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants.

Sir Isaac Newton, c. 1675

Although this wording of the familiar quotation is attributed to Sir Isaac Newton, it originates as far back as the Roman poet Lucan (A.D. 39-65). It is appropriate here because I, too, "stood on the shoulders of giants" as I conducted this research: therefore, I owe thanks to many people.

My special thanks go to Dr. Marcia Bromfield, Director of Field Placement and Professional Partnerships in the School of Education at Lesley University, my senior advisor from the beginning of my doctoral studies and who was also my dissertation committee chair. She guided my work with her wisdom, dedication, and expert knowledge in all aspects of teacher education and professional development. Marcia's generous spirit and her experience understanding the individual needs of teachers enlightened me every step of the way.

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the effects of a professional development experience on ten experienced teachers who participated as a cohort in Courage to Teach. Courage to Teach, founded by Parker Palmer, is a program of quarterly retreats that foster personal and professional renewal for teachers. The program focuses on renewal through deep reflection that helps teachers to investigate the inner and outer landscapes of their lives. By using seasonal themes, poetry, readings, and insights from various wisdom traditions, teachers reflect on their identity and integrity as teachers as large group, small group, and solitary settings.

Using phenomenological methodology, the study examines the teachers' transformative learning as a result of their participation in Courage to Teach, using Mezirow's (2000) definition of transformation as a permanent shift in one's meaning perspective. Data was gathered in two phases, using a questionnaire and semi-structured, in-depth interviews of 10 retreat participants.

The findings revealed that 100% of the participants in this study experienced disorienting dilemmas that influenced their decision to join Courage to Teach. According to Mezirow (2000), these are external events that lead a person to question his or her meaning perspective. In addition, 100% of study participants reported personal and/or professional transformations as result of their participation in Courage to Teach. Four areas of transformation were identified: in teachers' personal/professional lives; in classroom teaching; in leadership; and, for these considering either retirement or a career change, a clearer understanding of their next career move.

The data reveal that Courage to Teach provides a unique professional development experience for seasoned teachers; one that can be transformative for teachers, meeting their professional and personal needs in a way that traditional models of professional development programs do no. The study draws implications and provides recommendations for the design of professional development for experienced teachers, which includes the creation of learning environments and opportunities for deep reflection that are characteristic of Courage to Teach.

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## Preface

### The Guest House

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,
meet them at the door laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,
because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Jalalu'l-din Rumi
Persian poet, 1207-1273
Translation by Coleman Barks

In *Courage to Teach*, Parker Palmer (1998) describes the use of "third things"
—which are often poems—to approach deep inquiry, reflection, and discernment.
Because these processes can invoke deep emotion, including fear, third things help us

approach these processes in a measured way, protected by an art medium that allows us to determine the pace at which we proceed.

"The Guest House" is a poem that, for me, describes the paradox of joy and pain that can accompany critical reflection that leads to transformation. Rumi reminds us to embrace it all, because "each has been sent as a guide from beyond"— support and encouragement for all who have the courage to teach, to reflect, and to transform.

# Chapter 1: Overview of the Study

## *Introduction*

*They never ask us what we want for professional development. It's always unrelated
to what we do in the classroom.*
Fifth grade teacher

*We have professional development on whatever the district thinks is important, like
how to restrain a child.*
Second grade teacher

*We can't do inquiry-based science because our MCAS scores dropped.*
Middle school science teacher

These comments about teacher professional development speak volumes to

me. They are drawn from my conversations over the last several years with

experienced teachers who are supervising practitioners to my student teachers in

Massachusetts. Invariably, I hear about a lack of choice and lack of desired depth in

district professional development offerings, which teachers often say are driven by

their administration in response to the demands of state and federal mandates. It is

ironic that, while these teachers struggle to differentiate instruction for their students,

their professional development often is a quick, one-size-fits-all sort.

This dissertation examines the effect of one type of professional development

that provides experienced teachers opportunities for differentiated, deep, and

individualized growth that rests on the belief that "we teach who we are" as described

by Parker Palmer in *Courage to Teach* (1998). The small but growing body of

literature on Courage to Teach (CTT) retreats provides evidence that tending to the

deeper growth needs of teachers is essential to the success of larger school reform efforts.

Today's atmosphere of standards-based education reform is an excellent time to consider how professional development affects teacher growth and development. With its heavy reliance on standardized testing to measure student learning, and its pressure on teachers to cover the content of the tests, it is important to understand what kinds of professional development provide renewal and transformation for teachers. This type of professional development is often overlooked by many school districts, especially when pressured to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind law.

Professional development that meets the needs of experienced teachers can be found in the kind of reflective, inquiry-based atmosphere embodied by professional development schools and professional learning communities (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Their structure and support enables teachers to form partnerships with university colleagues; teach courses to new teachers; conduct action research; and reflect on their teaching in a collegial, educative community (Goodlad, 1994). Another kind of professional development, Courage to Teach, focuses on teacher renewal and involves deep, thoughtful inquiry into aspects of a teacher's inner and outer landscapes (Palmer, 1998). Both the book and the retreat program of the same name lead teachers in that work, the results of which can be transformative.

For example, one review of Courage to Teach research found that teachers who participated in a Courage to Teach (CTT) retreat reported (among other findings) "personal and professional renewal and transformation" (Poutiatine, 2005, p. 7). At

least two evaluations of the CTT program conclude that teachers practice more reflection; that teachers change the way they teach and think about their teaching; and that teachers see tangible benefits for their students (Intrator & Scribner, 2000; 2002). Findings like these supply evidence that participation in CTT changes teaching and learning.

My own experience of the two-year Courage to Teach/New England program from 2002 to 2004 included discovery of a kindred community of teachers who thought about their teaching and their students' learning as I did: that it was deeply complex, difficult work that we loved. Coupled with my interest in professional development for experienced teachers, this inspired my investigation of my CTT colleagues' outcomes three years after the retreat ended. More specifically, I wondered if the Courage to Teach two-year program, as teacher professional development, effected teacher transformations for experienced teachers and, if so, what kind. Therefore, the research questions that guide this study are:

- What kind of transformations take place for experienced teachers as a result of their participation in Courage to Teach?

- What are the implications for professional development programs for experienced teachers as a result of this study?

This dissertation examines results of a qualitative study that aims to understand ten Courage to Teach participants' experiences through their own eyes, in order to understand the "who" that teaches and may be transformed. To identify

transformations, I use Mezirow's (2000) definition of transformation as a permanent change in one's meaning perspective. The teachers in this study had between nine and forty-two years' teaching experience, earning them the designation "veteran teacher" or "experienced teacher" (Darling-Hammond, 2000; NCES, 1997).

      The study design used a survey and semi-structured, in-depth personal interviews to gather data. Using an existential- phenomenological methodology to analyze and present findings, the study reveals teaching transformations that inform professional development for experienced teachers.

<center>*Rationale for Study*</center>

<center>"Know thyself"</center>

<center>*Inscription at the Delphic Oracle, c. 650-c. 600 B.C.*</center>

      In a book often recommended for teachers, *The First Days of School: How to Become an Effective Teacher* (Wong & Wong, 2004), the authors state that what a teacher knows and can do is a critical element of student achievement (p. xiii). Noting the complexity and artistry of teaching, the authors compare it to the work of poets, physicists, maestros, architects, gymnasts, diplomats, and philosophers (p. vi). Although the book consists of mostly practical, how-to advice, it advises both new and veteran teachers "the professional educator never stops learning" (p. 308).

      Reflective practice is an essential element of educators' professional development and lifelong learning. In *From Surviving to Thriving: A Guide for Beginning Teachers*, Bromfield, Deane & Burnett (2003) urge teachers to become

reflective practitioners early in their careers. This habit enables teachers to look carefully at their practice and evaluate its efficacy toward student learning. The authors recommend reflective journal writing as one "way to make sense of what you're doing" (p. 165). Collaboration with colleagues to conduct teaching "rounds", peer coaching, action research, and reflective discussions offer other paths to teacher reflection. Teacher reflection in these and other forms is considered an essential element of teacher growth and professional development by many educators and researchers (Bolin & Falk, 1987; Bransford & Darling-Hammond, 2005; Bromfield, Deane & Burnett, 2003; Brookfield, 1990a; Brookfield, 2000; Bruner, 1996; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Goodlad, 1994; Mezirow, 2000; Nieto, 2003; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Schön, 1987).

Reflection involves "making sense, going 'meta'...even thinking about one's thinking (Bruner, 1996, p. 88). Good teachers weave thinking and feeling together as they forge deep connections between themselves, their subject matter, and their students (Palmer, 1998). This kind of investment explains why many teachers speak of feeling "called" to teaching and of investing themselves so fully in their work that it becomes part of their identity (Palmer, 1998, p. 10; 2004). Teachers who personify passion, sensitivity, and perception in their teaching need renewal as part of their professional growth and the intention of *Courage to Teach*—both book and retreat— is teacher renewal for that purpose (Berman, 1987; Palmer, 1998; 2004).

*Courage to Teach*

The book *Courage to Teach* opens with the words "we teach who we are" (Palmer, 1998, p. 1). This statement is both a theme and a rationale for teachers' self-knowledge because good teaching emerges from within; and Palmer states that because teaching is so complex, teachers need to consider self-knowledge an essential tool to use in building connections with their students and the subjects they teach (Palmer, 1998, p. 2).

Palmer immediately speaks to the current climate of standards-based education reform and states that true education reform will not be achieved until we recognize and honor the valuable human resource present in teachers (Palmer, 1998, p. 3). The current focus on testing, restructuring schools, reviewing and revising curricula to match the tests, and implementing "solutions" does not address teachers' needs: the need to compensate teachers properly, to free them from bureaucratic harassment, give them roles in governance, and give them the best possible resources with which to teach (p. 3). He notes that we ask questions about "what" we teach (subjects, curricula), "how" we teach (methods, techniques), "why" we teach (purposes, outcomes)—and that we rarely ask about the "who" that teaches (p. 4). This essential question—who is the self that teaches?—leads a teacher toward understanding how her inner self –intellect, emotion, spirit—work together to inform her teaching and her students' learning (p. 4-5).

Both the retreat program and the book *Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 1998) help teachers consider how "good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p. 10). The first part, a

teacher's identity, consists of the inner and outer elements of her life---for example, her genetic makeup, all the experiences and people she has encountered—everything that makes her who she is (p. 13). The second part, a teacher's integrity, reaches beyond ethics and one's moral compass to "the quality or state of being undivided" (Merriam-Webster, 2008).

In *Courage to Teach*, Palmer uses a Möbius strip to illustrate how the seamless integration of its two surfaces is much like the inner and outer landscapes of a teacher's life (2004, p. 39-41). Inner and outer sides cannot exist separately. By considering both the inner and outer aspects of their lives—the personal and the professional—teachers can begin to understand how to join both together in order to live "an undivided life" (p. 167). In this way, seeds are planted for teacher renewal and transformation, despite the "increasingly toxic soil of public education" (2007, p. 195).

*Courage to Teach/New England, 2002-2004*

The Courage to Teach/New England retreat that is the subject of this study began in August of 2002. The cohort consisted of twenty-four teachers (including the researcher) and represented teachers of all domains, subjects, and levels from preschool through graduate school. Four weekend retreats, each aligned with a season, took place over two years; the last retreat occurred in August 2004.

These seasonal retreats followed a format developed by Parker Palmer and the Fetzer Institute that combined discourse and reflection in large groups, small groups, and solitary settings (CTT, 2008b). Facilitators, who were trained by CTT,

guided teachers through reflection and discourse using poetry, stories, solitude, reflection, and deep listening (CTT, 2008b, 2008c). The days' schedules were designed to unfold slowly using Palmer's belief that less is more; and as a result, the schedules were not jam-packed with activities and meetings.

### Retreat environment.

While the CTT retreat settings change depending on the geographic location, the settings are usually chosen for their proximity to nature, giving teachers an experience in a beautiful setting that invites insight and inspiration during reflective practices (S. Cochrane, personal communication, October 9, 2008). Inside, the meeting places should have windows, comfortable seating, simple décor, carpet, and warm lighting—what Palmer refers to as "graceful ambiance." Attending to the quality of space impacts the quality of the experience, a consideration often overlooked in other professional development experiences (p. 85).

The setting for the 2002-2004 CTT/New England retreats was an old Franciscan monastery in a rural area, surrounded by lovingly tended gardens, woods, fields, and trails that the retreat participants used for walking alone or together. A small community of religious lived at the monastery and went about their daily work quietly, almost invisibly, in this protective place. The main room in which the large group met created a similar refuge with its comfortable old sofas, ancient fireplace, and dark wood walls. The sounds of nature filtered through the windows and doors; the breeze drifted past a wooden wind chime that hung near a screened door. Cohort members had their own small, simple bedroom; meals were provided in the old-

fashioned basement cafeteria. Every physical need was considered and planned for so retreat participants could focus fully on the work of the retreat. This physical environment provided a beautiful, secure, tranquil place in which to inquire and reflect, a place hard to find in schools.

*Paradox.*

Complementing the physical environment were Palmer's (1998) guidelines of pedagogical design, which he states illustrate the paradoxes inherent in teaching and learning spaces:

1. The space should be bounded and open.

2. The space should be hospitable and "charged."

3. The space should invite the voice of the individual and the voice of the group.

4. The space should honor the "little" stories of the students and the "big" stories of the disciplines and tradition.

5. The space should support solitude and surround it with the resources of community.

6. The space should welcome both silence and speech. (p. 74)

Palmer uses the concept of paradox to encourage teachers to "think the world together" as a way to relieve "either-or" thinking (p. 61). He believes in teachers embracing both identity and integrity as one way to correct an overemphasis on technique, and to use human emotions to correct an overemphasis on objective

knowledge (p. 62). He advocates for a balance, a state of holding "both-and" instead of "either-or" in teaching (p. 62-63). Palmer quotes Nobel prize-winning physicist Neils Bohr's idea that binary logic misleads us if we educators wish to understand the realm of "profound truth, " and that what is essential is found by embracing paradox (p. 63).

Teachers confront many paradoxes in their work: personal and professional, thinking and feeling, joy and frustration, isolation and community, theory and practice, teaching and learning, successes and failures (Palmer, 1998, 2004). Instead of moving toward one or the other, Palmer states that when teachers embrace paradox, a creative synthesis occurs to enable them can see the world, and their students, more clearly and more holistically (Palmer, 2004, p. 66).

Palmer acknowledges that the deep focus of Courage to Teach work is spiritual (not religious) because teaching draws on every part of our physical, intellectual, and emotional selves (Palmer, 1998, 2007). Teaching is rigorous work and leaves teachers feeling exhausted and depleted if their renewal goes unattended. To set the proper tone for reflection and renewal, "touchstones" help CTT retreat participants establish an environment of care and welcome.

*Touchstones.*

A list of "touchstones" balanced the pedagogical environment and hung on an easel in the large room, offering these guidelines:

- Come to the work with all of the self.

- Presume welcome and extend welcome.

- Participation is an invitation, an opportunity, not a demand.

- No fixing, advice-giving, or setting straight.

- When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.

- Listen to the silence.

- Look to nature for insight and inspiration.

- Let our time together remain confidential within the group.

- Consider that it's possible to emerge from our time together

  refreshed. (Touchstones, 2002)

These touchstones opened a safe, respectful environment in which to speak, act,

listen, respond, inquire, and reflect.

*The retreat schedule.*

Retreats began Friday evening and proceeded through the weekend in an

unhurried manner that matched the tone of the environment. Introduction to topics of

inquiry and reflection occurred in the large circle of twenty-four, often accompanied

by poetry or readings chosen to inspire teachers' individual paths to reflection. The

poetry and readings, called "third things," contained metaphors that gently led retreat

members along their own paths to truth (Palmer, 2004). Palmer states that one's

deepest "soul truth" is best approached indirectly so we can hear its voice and allow

ourselves to listen (p. 92). He likens "third things" to the Rorschach inkblot test,

which "[evoke] from us whatever the soul wants us to attend to" (p. 93).

Journals were provided to teachers to use for reflection on questions or third

things in any way they wished---for writing, drawing, painting, or nothing. Art

materials such as watercolors, oil crayons, colored pencils and pens, paper, glue and

scissors presented additional media of expression, as did music, rituals, and wisdom

traditions from different cultures. The reflective activities and small group

discussions could take place anywhere inside or outside, according to participants'

wishes, and set against nature's seasonal backdrop.

*Clearness committee.*

In addition to continued use of third things, Saturday agendas included

preparation for that evening's "clearness committees," a practice drawn from Quaker

tradition dating back to the 1660s and used as a process of discernment (Palmer,

1998, 2007). Palmer defines "discernment" as "[to] distinguish between things" and

it is the central process of clearness committee (Palmer, 2004, p. 24). During a three-

hour period, a small clearness committee of four or five listened to a "focus person"

describe a dilemma or issue related to her teaching. Committee members devoted

their undivided attention while listening, asking only "open, honest questions" at an

appointed time, never speaking at any other. The rules for asking questions were

simple: no "fixing," no giving of advice or solutions, no commiseration. Asking

open, honest questions helped the focus person learn (discern) from her inner teacher,

surrounded by a quiet, supportive community of colleagues (Palmer, 1998, 2007).

As the clearness committee time closed, the focus person chose whether to proceed

with more questions, or with "mirroring." "Mirroring" reflected back to the focus

person what the committee members heard or noticed, such as certain phrases, body

movements, or emotions. This kind of feedback helped the focus person consider

both verbal and nonverbal cues that could be helpful in their discernment. According to Palmer, discernment does not mean the problem has been solved, nor is the process judged by that standard; rather, he emphasizes clearness committee's purpose is "planting seeds" just as teachers do with their students, not knowing whether or not they will eventually bloom (Palmer, 1998, p. 155).

An understanding of double confidentiality protects the clearness committee process. Members of the clearness committee agree that whatever is said within the group is never revealed. Also, no member is to speak to the focus person at any time about the issue discussed, either with advice or comments; Palmer states that these rules create a safe place in which the focus person can speak her truth freely (Palmer, 1998, p. 155).

On Sundays, the facilitators returned to the topic of clearness committee and invited anyone to speak to the experience. While the rule of double confidentiality held, people often spoke of the deeply moving experience of hearing about courage in teaching or, alternatively, being fully listened to. The Sunday agenda, like the other days', was never rushed or crammed with last-minute tasks. It allowed space to unfold for all participants to learn through reflection, guided by a few topics that drew the weekend to a close.

The seasonal weekend schedule remained the same for each season throughout the two years. Weekends proceeded at the same pace, gently pressing forward toward each weekend's clearness committee, the opportunities for reflection shaped by the transformation of the seasons.

*Mezirow's Definition of "Transformative Learning"*

The research questions in this study seek to uncover transformations that occur for experienced teachers as a result of their participation in Courage to Teach. These questions are framed within Mezirow's (2000) definition of transformative learning:

Transformative learning refers to the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

The next chapter reviews literature on adult growth, development and learning; transformative learning; and several teacher professional development frameworks that support critical reflection that can lead to teacher transformations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

*Introduction*

This chapter examines some literature relative to adult growth and development and teacher professional growth and development. Embedded within both of these topics are principles of adult learning and transformative learning, especially as they pertain to the process of critical reflection and experienced teachers' professional development. Finally, some models of professional development that support critical reflection—professional development schools, professional learning communities, and Courage to Teach—and their efficacy are reviewed in light of the needs of experienced teachers' professional development.

*Teaching as Lifelong Learning*

"Show me a school where teachers are learning and I'll show you a school where kids are learning."

Deborah Meier, principal, Mission Hill School, Boston

(Gordon, 2002)

Learning to teach is a career-long process (Grossman, Wineburg & Woolworth, 2001; Little, 2001; Williams, 2003). Teachers' professional learning begins with pre-service training and is often followed by one- or two-year mentoring programs in the schools where teachers begin their careers (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Guskey, 1995; NEA, 1999; Nieto, 2003). As teachers' careers progress, they

participate in professional development that enables them to maintain and renew their licensure (Dilworth & Imig, 1995).

Teachers' participation in professional development helps them to continue to grow and directly impacts successful student learning (Dilworth & Imig, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Oakes & Lipton, 2003). The link between teacher growth and student learning is clear and has been well documented (Darling-Hammond, 1994, 1998, 2000; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; Dufour, 2004; Hargreaves, 2008). In addition, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) underscores the link between teacher professional development and student achievement. NSDC states its purpose as "ensuring that every educator engages in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves" (NSDC, 2008b). When teachers engage in high-quality professional development that offers opportunities for continual learning, they are more likely to "inspire greater achievement for children, especially those for whom education is the only pathway to success" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 5).

*Defining "Teacher Professional Development"*

A definition of "teacher professional development" resides within the broader term "staff development." In its inclusive definition of "staff development" as it relates to teacher professional development, the National Staff Development Council's (2008a) definition states: "Staff development is the term that educators use to describe the continuing education of teachers, administrators, and other school employees."

NSDC states that the term "staff development" is often used interchangeably with in-service education, teacher training, human resource development and professional development; also, that "some of these terms may have special meaning to particular groups or individuals" (2008c). In addition, NSDC states that staff development in schools often includes custodians and school secretaries because "everyone who works for the school district needs to continually learn to improve the work that they do" (2008b).

While recognizing that all who work in a school affect student learning, this dissertation focuses on professional development for experienced teachers in grades kindergarten through twelve. The term "experienced teacher," at times used interchangeably with "veteran" or "senior" teacher, refers to teachers who have more than three years' teaching experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; NCES, 1997). In this study, teachers' experience ranged from nine years to forty-two years, comprising a large part of their adulthood.

The following sections examine some literature on adult development and learning that should inform experienced teachers' professional development.

*Adult Growth and Development*

Teacher professional development is adult learning and it usually takes place for the duration of a teacher's career in different ways. Adult educators believe their job is to promote lifelong learning, which is found in the broader context of adult growth and development (Tennant & Pogson, 1995, p. 70).

While child development is a formative process, adult development is a transformative one, a process consisting of "...alienation from [adult] roles [learned in childhood], reframing new perspectives, and reengaging life with a greater degree of self-determination" (Mezirow, 2000, p. xii). A number of social scientists and psychologists present different ways to understand the development of adults (Tennant & Pogson, 1995) and several are discussed below.

*Maslow and Self-Actualization*

Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow believed adults developed their human potential as their needs were met (Maslow, 1968). He organized these into a hierarchy of needs that must be met to motivate adults to move to the next level of growth, toward the highest stage of self-actualization (Huitt, 2004; Maslow, 1968). Although some disagree that Maslow's stages are sequential (Stein, 2005), the model remains one way to understand the path to self-actualization (Table 1).

Maslow named the first four levels "deficit needs" or "D-needs," representing needs that must be met for survival. When a deficit need is not met, a person is motivated to seek provision for it. When a need is met, balance is achieved and the deficit need is no longer motivating.

Maslow stated that once adults reach a certain level of maturity, they self-actualize—the fifth level—provided their basic needs have been met (Tennant & Pogson, 1995). In this period, adults are guided through life by their "inner nature" (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005; Tennant & Pogson, 1995). According to Maslow, self-actualized people are concerned about personal growth and embrace an

Table 1

*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*



5. Self-Actualization
(self-awareness, personal growth, fulfilling one's potential)

4. Esteem
(self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others)

3. Love/Belonging
(friendship, family, intimacy)

2. Safety
(of body, employment, resources, health, property)

1. Physiological
(air, food, water, shelter, sleep)
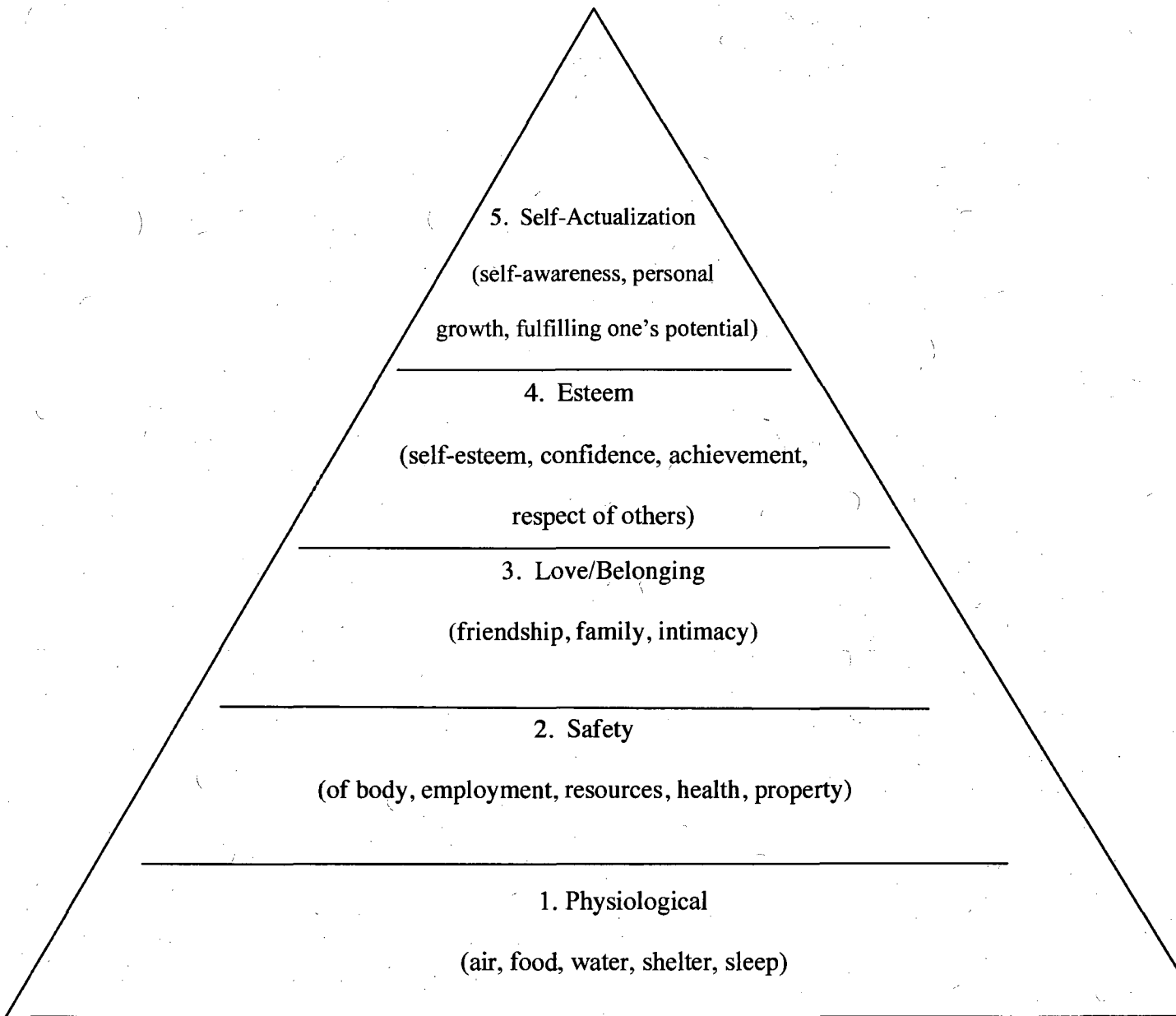
(Adapted from Boeree, 2006)

ongoing "freshness of life" (Huitt, 2004, p. 1). Maslow believed self-actualization

was the goal of learning and he emphasized the importance of safety to facilitate this

growth (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). Maslow stated that self-actualization is

a "being need" or "B-need" and represents the motivation to grow (Boeree, 2006).

Being needs are not related to balance; once self-actualization is reached, those needs

continue to require fulfillment as part of an ongoing process (Maslow, 1971).

Maslow identified some common characteristics of people who are self-

actualized:

- They treat life's difficulties as problems needing solutions, not

  personal troubles

- They perceive means and ends differently: the means can be an end in

  itself and the journey (the means) is as important as the end result

- They enjoy solitude and are comfortable being alone

- They enjoy deeper relationships with a few rather than shallow

  relationships with many

- They are autonomous and prefer to be themselves

- They accept themselves and others

- They possess the ability to see ordinary things with wonder

- They are inventive, creative, original

- They experience "peaks"—transcendent experiences with life or

  nature, that change them for the better (adapted from Boeree, 2006, p.

  5-6).

*Maslow and Self-Transcendence*

Later in his work, Maslow added three other sets of needs (Table 2). He identified two of them, "need to know and understand" and "aesthetic needs", as the immediate stages before self-actualization (Huitt, 2004). He described the third addition, "self-transcendence," as one's ability to connect beyond the self and to help others find self-fulfillment and realize potential (Huitt, 2004).

Maslow (1971) lists thirty-five examples of self-transcendence. Some applicable to this study of experienced teachers' professional growth and development are the ability to:

- Embrace one's destiny

- Surpass what one had thought were one's limits

- Become a full member of humanity by embracing others' culture

- Integrate dichotomies

- Rise to the actual and to the possible

- Move beyond a "we/they" attitude towards synergy

- Self-determine and become autonomous

- Transcend one's past

- Accept the natural world

- Forget the self and become absorbed in something outside the self (Adapted from Maslow, 1971, pp. 259-269).

Table 2

*Maslow's Later Additions to Hierarchy of Needs: Needs 5, 6, and 8*

```
                        8. Self-
                      Transcendence
            ----------------------------------
                  7.  Self-Actualization
            _____
                   6.  Aesthetic Needs
         - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -
              5.  Need to Know & Understand
         _____
                    4.  Esteem Needs
       _____
              3.  Belongingness & Love Needs
     _____
                    2.  Safety Needs
   _____
                 1.  Physiological Needs
```
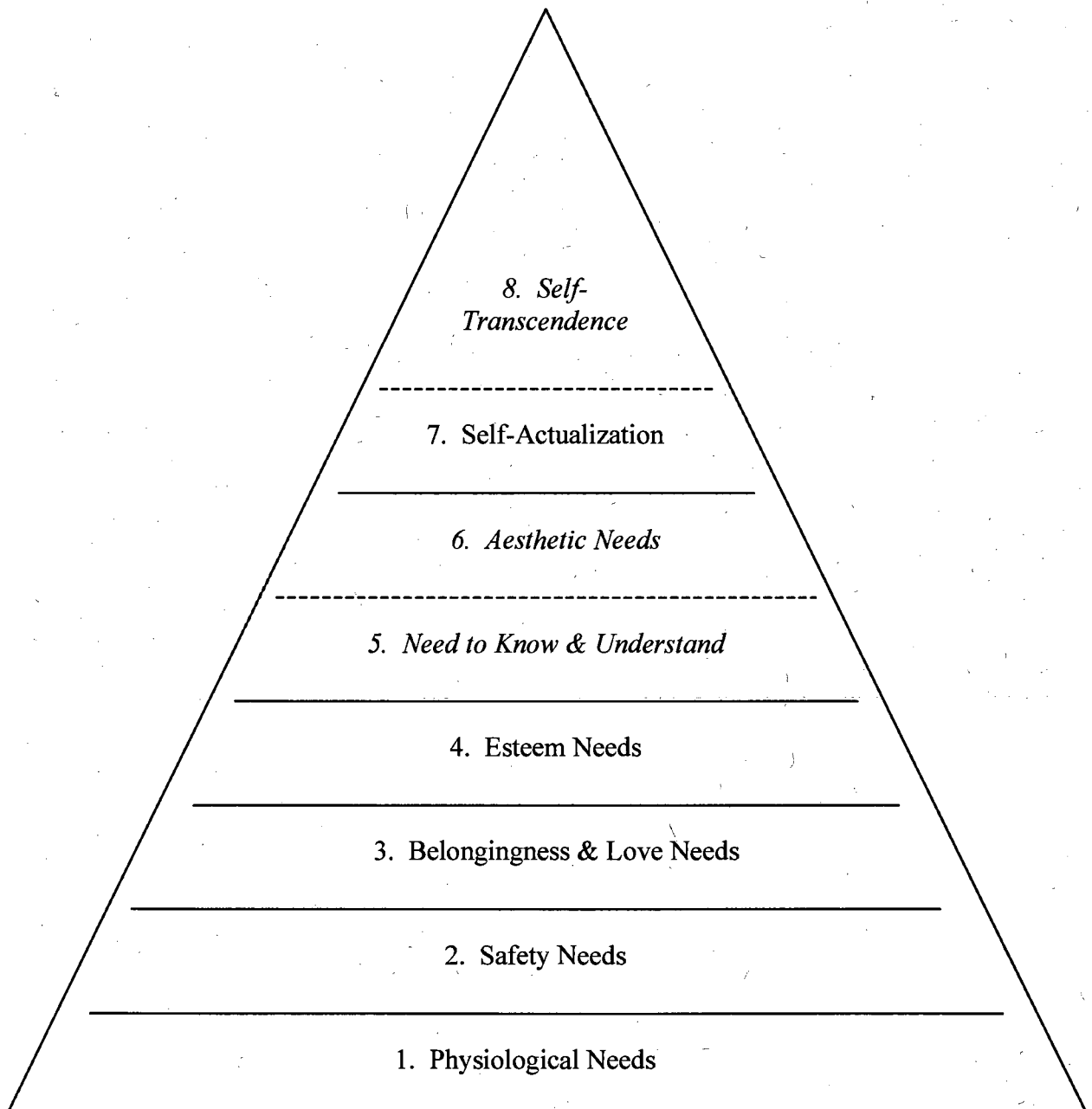
(Adapted from Huitt, 2004; Maslow, 1971)

Located within self-actualization and self-transcendence is the paradox of becoming

separate while becoming more attached: becoming oneself more fully while feeling

more connected to humanity (Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

## Erikson & Generativity

Erik Erikson created a model of eight psychosocial developmental stages of

life as a way to understand middle age, the period of adulthood that describes most of

the teachers in this study. According to Erikson, the midlife stage of generativity is

the approximate period between age 30 and 65 during which adults want to help

establish and guide the next generation (Erikson, 1994; Erikson & Erikson, 1997).

This is the longest stage of adult development, thirty or more years, and encompasses

the major life involvement of individuals (Erikson & Erikson, 1997. p. 112). During

generativity, Erikson says, adults' desire to care for others, for their work, for their

community, and for future generations is most important (Erikson, 1994).

Generativity encompasses procreativity, productivity, and creativity: the foci of

adults in this stage of life (Erikson, 1994, p. 67).

## Levinson and Individuation

Daniel Levinson built on Erikson's work by arguing that relationships are a

critical part of individual development (Kittrell, 1998). Levinson conceived of life as

a cycle of sequential, developmental periods of four, twenty-five year stages

comprised of sub-stages (Kittrell, 1998; Tennant & Pogson, 1995). In each period,

the adult strives toward "individuation" —the paradox of becoming more independent

from the world while becoming a greater part of the world (Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

Levinson also uses the term "self-generating" to describe this process (Tennant &

Pogson, 1995, p. 85). During middle adulthood, according to Levinson, adults create

new life structures as they ask themselves "what have I done with my life?"

(Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005, p. 224).

*Critics of Androcentric Theories*

Some critics of both Erikson's and Levinson's work argue that their research

was androcentric and cannot be generalized to include women (Belenky, Clinchy,

Goldberger & Tarule, 1996; Gilligan, 1993; Tennant & Pogson, 1995). Carol

Gilligan (1993) asserts that women spend more of their lives in the caring, or

generative stage, than men do and that the context of women's development tends to

be relational as opposed to separate. Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1996)

build on Gilligan's work, stating that women's ways of knowing relate to their growth

and development. They argue that women possess different ways of knowing from

men and when these ways of knowing are developed through questioning, listening

and self-reflection, learning transformations occur as women come to voice.

Other critics note that Erikson and Levinson's work is "Euro-American [and]

middle-class," excluding the "development of people of color [and] members of the

lower socioeconomic class" (Christopher, 1999, p. 146). Critics argue that cultural

and gender differences in communication and self-expression must be considered, in

view of the fact that psychological research continues to evolve in the field (Coy &

Kovacs-Long, 2005).

Finally, Miller (1976) states that both men and women possess the "potential for both cooperation and [personal] creativity" (p. 44). According to Miller, "personal creativity is a continuous process of bringing forth a changing vision of oneself, and of oneself in relation to the world" (p. 111).

This new vision of oneself leads to "interdependence," defined as "independence within relationships" (Coy & Kovacs-Long, 2005, p. 140). Both Maslow and Miller emphasize that creativity is the path to self-actualization (Maslow, 1971) and self-determination (Miller, 1976). When this is achieved within the safety and support of community, one can transform and reach one's individual, unique potential (Coy & Kovacs-Long, 2005).

*Adult Learning*

Understanding how adults grow and develop throughout their lives creates a context in order to understand both adult learning and transformative learning. In the 1970s Knowles articulated the concept of "andragogy," which initially meant "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Conner, 2005). According to Knowles, adult learners:

1.  Need to know why, what, and how they learn

2.  Are autonomous and self-directing

3.  Bring prior experience and mental models with them

4.  Are ready to learn because of their developmental stage and/or because they have a need to know

5.  Are focused on problems and context

6. Are motivated to learn, either intrinsically or extrinsically (Knowles,

Holton & Swanson, 2005, p. 4).

These principles are set within the individual and situational differences of each

learner (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005, p. 4). Knowles, however, was careful to

refer to andragogy as "a conceptual framework that serves as a basis for an emergent

theory" (Knowles, 1989, p. 112).

Developmental theorists believe that adults grow and develop throughout their

lives (Erikson, 1994; Erikson & Erikson, 1997; Knowles, 1970). Adults' ideas and

perspectives have been formed and re-formed through life experience and, as a result,

their experience is their highest authority (Gilligan, 1993; Kolb, 1984; Rogers, 1961,

p. 22). Adults bring diversity to their learning: diversity of education, life

experience, work experience; and of different points of view (Baldwin, Cochrane,

Counts, Dolamore, McKenna, & Vacarr, 1990; Gilligan, 1993).

Adult learning is both personal and voluntary. For this reason, adults are self-

directed in their learning (Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1970). Cranton (2006) clarifies

Knowles' definition of "self-directed" learning by explaining that it means

"autonomous," rather than meaning that adult learning should be an "independent or

isolating way of learning" (p. 3). In this way, adults assert control over their learning

and can plan either formal or informal learning experiences that suit their goals.

Many adult educators believe their role is one of either facilitator or co-

learner, thus establishing a peer relationship with their students (Cranton, 2006). As

Freire (1993, 1998) points out, this helps reconcile the politics in the traditional

teacher-student relationship, found in what he calls the "banking" concept of

education, where teachers "deposit" knowledge and students "receive" it (p. 72).

Instead, adult educators who are facilitators help create and re-create knowledge with

their students, so that all become learners and all are teachers (Tennant and Pogson,

1995). When successfully accomplished, teachers and adult learners help create a

collaborative learning experience so critical reflection through discourse takes place

(Mezirow, 2000).

This kind of discourse is "the specialized use of dialogue…involving a critical

assessment of assumptions…tapping collective experience to arrive at a tentative best

judgment." It is collaborative and widens one's point of view by examining

alternative perspectives (Mezirow, 2000, p. 11). During discourse, participants

become aware of their assumptions, realize the consequences of holding them, and

question their validity (Cranton, 2006, p. 63). Engaging in discourse in a

collaborative, supportive environment leads adult learners to critical reflection, the

central process in transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000).

*Transformative Learning*

It is actually through the process of effecting transformations that the human self is

created and re-created.

(Greene, 1988, p. 21).

Throughout their careers, teachers learn from their experience and it is upon

this experience that they develop their own private truths about teaching (Brookfield,

1990a, p. 11). Teacher professional development can help open up new perspectives

for teachers to critically reflect on these truths, and to consider how to incorporate these new perspectives with previous ones (Brookfield, 1990a). According to Greene (1996), this kind of learning performs an "existential function...it provokes a change in the way we view things...[and] brings about a transformation in our thinking" (p. 102).

Transformative learning is a process by which adults critically examine their previously formed beliefs, assumptions, values, and perspectives, resulting in their becoming more open thinkers with better validated beliefs (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Transformative learning involves a change in perspective, and once that change is made, one either stalls or goes forward, but one does not return to the old way of thinking (Mezirow, 2000, p. xii).

Mezirow describes a series of phases within transformative learning, often experienced by adult learners in some variation:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame

3. A critical assessment of assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's

   new perspective (p. 22).

These phases provide a framework for understanding transformation and the process

of deep and permanent change. Although transformation often occurs in a non-linear

fashion, it does begin with a disorienting dilemma (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000).

*Disorienting Dilemmas*

Transformative learning is preceded by a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow,

1991, 2000). A disorienting dilemma is a large event or a series of smaller events that

precipitate the need for change, usually experienced as an acute internal and personal

crisis (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000, p. 298). These externally imposed events can

range from large ones like a death, a change in job, a change in marital status, or "[it]

may be evoked by an eye-opening discussion, book, poem, or painting or by one's

efforts to understand a different culture that challenges one's presuppositions

(Mezirow, 1991, p. 14).

Taylor (2000) expands on Mezirow's definition of a disorienting dilemma,

stating it can include "an indefinite period in which the persons consciously or

unconsciously search for something which is missing in their life...a more subtle and

less profound [experience], providing an opportunity for exploration and clarification

of past experiences (p. 299).

By experiencing a disorienting dilemma, an individual experiences a feeling

of disequilibrium as previously accepted assumptions and meaning perspectives come

into question (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000). According to Roberts (2006),

disorienting dilemmas can cause stress, anxiety, and even sickness or disease. They can also evoke strong emotion, including fear, anger, guilt, or shame (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). This triggers the need to question one's assumptions and perspectives, the first step in a perspective transformation (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000).

*Critical Self-Reflection*

The central process in transformative learning is critical self-reflection (Brookfield, 1990a; Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (1991) describes critical reflection as "appraisive rather than prescriptive or designative" (p. 87). By this, Mezirow means it is a reconsideration of views one holds about herself, others, and the world; it can also include an examination of misconceptions and distortions of ideas and patterns previously held by the adult as fact.

Brookfield (1990b) states that there are three interrelated phrases during the process of critical reflection:

1. The identification of the assumptions that underlie thoughts and actions

2. The scrutiny of the accuracy and validity of these assumptions in terms of how they connect to experience

3. The reconstituting of these assumptions to make them more inclusive and integrative (p. 177).

The assumptions identified in the first phase are what Dewey (1910) calls the "ground[s] of belief" (p. 8). These include one's prior learning, experiences, perspectives, beliefs, and ideas as well as awareness of their sources and their contexts (Brookfield, 1990b; Mezirow, 2000). In addition to these assumptions,

teachers develop theories about what teaching and learning approaches work best and why (Brookfield, 1990b, 1991). Bruner (1996) calls this "folk psychology" or "folk pedagogy," defined as the conventional notions and assumptions teachers hold about teaching and learning (p. 46-47). To improve teaching, Bruner believes folk pedagogies should be made explicit and reexamined through critical reflection (p. 50).

The kind of reflection undertaken in Brookfield's second stage, that of scrutiny, is similar to what Schön (1987) calls "reflection-in-action" and "reflection-on-action." Reflection-in-action takes place in the present, when "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it." Reflection-on-action takes place after the fact and entertains a larger view: a type of "thinking back on what we have done in order to discover how our knowing-in-action may have contributed to an unexpected outcome" (p. 26). In practicing reflective thought, a person considers alternative perspectives and compares them to prior thinking, habits of mind, knowledge, and practices (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 1991; Schön, 1987).

Munby (1989) points out that this process is not necessarily linear or deliberate; rather, it is spontaneous reframing of information or seeing of something as a metaphor. It is also not easy, as Dewey states: "Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome...it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful" (p. 13).

The period of "suspense" can also be a period of "cognitive dissonance" (Brookfield, 1991, p. 153). For this reason an atmosphere of trust is necessary,

especially if the reflection is a group process during which controversy arises (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). In addition to trust, a reflective community needs conditions of respect, openness to improvement, supportive leadership (Fullan, 2007, p. 149); members of reflective communities need also be aware that the discourse about implications of what one learns may be difficult, as each searches for her own voice within her own learning (Stokes, 2001, p. 154).

Questioning and scrutiny can be difficult and even "explosive" (Brookfield, 1990b, p. 178). Brookfield uses the illustration of an explosives expert who plans to demolish a building:

> Beginning to recognize and then critically question key assumptions is like laying down charges of psychological dynamite. When these assumptions explode and we realize that what we thought of as fixed ways of thinking and living are only options among a range of alternatives, the whole structure of our assumptive world crumbles. (p. 178)

It is important to understand that Brookfield does not advocate destroying self-esteem in the process of critical self-reflection; rather, he uses the illustration to show the significant affect of critical reflection. He is careful to point out that demolition is not the same as willful destruction: that demolition, like critical reflection, requires training, sensitivity, care, and judgment (p. 178-179).

Palmer (2004) offers another means to critical reflection, through the use of "third things"—poems, stories, music, or art that, when explored as metaphors, lead to greater self-understanding: "In Western culture, we often see truth through

confrontation. But our headstrong ways of charging at truth scare the shy soul away. If soul truth is to be spoken and heard, it must be approached 'on the slant'" (p. 92).

Using "third things" invites one to determine an individual pace and depth while protected by an environment of trust during this vulnerable phase (Palmer, 2004).

*Emancipatory knowledge*

Brookfield's third phase—the reconstituting of one's assumptions—results in a new form of knowledge. Mezirow says the result of reflective, or critical, analysis is "emancipatory knowledge" (Cranton, 1996, 2006; Mezirow, 2000). Emancipatory knowledge liberates learners as they correct their previously unquestioned knowledge, truths, and social theories (Mezirow, 2000, p. 13) One example of the powerful sociocultural effects of emanicipatory learning is Paulo Freire's (1998) literacy work with adults in Brazil, "contributing to the gradual transformation of learners into strong *presences* in the world (p. 33).

Transformative action, like Freire's students becoming politically aware and active as a result of literacy, is emancipatory and is the result of transformative learning (Heaney & Horton, 1990, p. 90). Cranton (2006) is more cautionary, stating that perspective transformation does not necessarily result in social action, but does concur that they go together. Instead, she advocates for a more holistic view of transformation, stating that the transformed person becomes a reformist in that they help others to exercise their own power, also invoking the work of Freire (p. 107).

*Teacher Professional Development as Lifelong Learning*

According to Nieto (2003), "teachers are always in the process in 'becoming'" (p. 125). As they develop during their careers, often spanning a large part of their adult lifetime, they return to their experience, which is their highest authority (Rogers, 1961). This experience, a foundation for learning, is situated in both their personal and their professional lives as well as in the settings in which they teach (Day, 1999, p. 1). These settings include the isolation of the classroom, in which teachers spend most of their time, and the community of their grade level, team, school, and the larger public community (Williams, 2003).

Understanding stages of adult growth helps to explain why people react differently to opportunities to learn and change; it also helps explain how to create optimal environments for professional learning (Joyce & Showers, 2003, p. 157). As lifelong learners, teachers need professional development that connects to a their career cycle and their stage of adult development. Each teacher's professional learning environment needs to consider these elements in order to be most effective (Day, 1999; Pasch, Wolfe, Steffy & Enz, 2000; Sykes, 1999).

*Institutional Models of Professional Development*

To some educators, the term "professional development" refers to a conventional format of in-service training (Guskey, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Johnson, 1990). Brookfield (1986) refers to this kind of professional development as an "institutional model" and notes that it is a format that restricts professional development into a narrow paradigm of thought, "one that is inconsistent with the real

world of professional practice" (p. 207). In-service trainings that appear as isolated workshops, courses, conferences, seminars, brief trainings, and "one-shot" or "drive-by" efforts are often imposed by institutions and administrators in a top-down manner that serves organizations' needs rather than teachers' needs (Brookfield, 1986; Guskey, 2000; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Russo, 2004). Even taking one university course a year or attending one conference is insufficient for sustained teacher growth (Nieto, 2003, p. 127). These conventional forms of professional development are often isolated from classroom practice and not relevant to teachers' perceived needs for growth (Elmore, Peterson & McCarthey, 1996; Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Despite the lack of supportive research, these kinds of professional development continue to exist (Brookfield, 1986; Elmore, Peterson & McCarthey, 1996; Guskey, 2000).

Beginning with the publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (USDOE, 2008) and moving into the current climate of education reform, the larger movement of creating "standards" turned into measurement of student achievement solely by standardized testing (Goodlad, 2003; Sizer, 2004). As a result, raising the standardized test scores of students became the focus of many schools (Meier, 2007; USDOE, n.d.). Such a goal, says Maxine Greene (2007), has "congealed into...prescriptive and controlling" education policy (p. 90). Riley & Peterson (2008) state "demand for high standards should not be reduced to standardization" (p.36). This kind of emphasis on standards limits the possibilities for change, innovation, and creativity for both teachers and students (Fullan, 2007; Greene, 2007; Riley & Peterson, 2008).

It remains the work of schools to impart knowledge imaginatively and solve problems creatively (Berger, 2007). To do this, high quality teacher professional development must be considered an essential component of transforming and revitalizing education (Dilworth & Imig, 1995, p. 1; Intrator & Scribner, 2000; Little, 2001). First, professional development that engages teachers links to improved student learning (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Fullan, 2007; Lieberman & Miller, 2001). Second, professional development creates opportunities for teacher to "open new windows of understanding about students, teaching, learning, purpose, community and oneself" (Glickman & Aldridge, 2001, p. 19). Both of these purposes helps teachers teach with a new democratic purpose, putting into practice the belief that all children can learn and that an educated citizenry is the cornerstone of democracy (Freire, 1993, 1998; Glickman & Aldridge, 2001; Greene, 1973, 1988). For those reasons, professional development that creates opportunities for teachers to grow should be the cornerstone for education reform (Cook, 1997; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005).

*Contemporary Models of Professional Development*

"All the professional development in my town is about how to test and how to grade tests...So [some of us] started planning our own in-services: we wrote up lesson plans, coordinated it with other curricula...Then we brought other people in to teach us things, and we taught each other things."

Elementary teacher

As the teacher above points out, teachers need opportunities to consider what their professional development needs are, and then draw from—or create their own--- choices for professional development. Especially in the current climate of education reform, teacher professional development must include opportunities to create, study, learn, reflect, and grow (Cook, 1997; Palmer, 2004;). Changing the conventional or institutional model of teacher professional development means changing school structures to promote teacher professional development that also promotes student learning (Nieto, 2003, p. 126). One way to do this is to embed professional development in the school day using inquiry, discourse, and reflection (Elmore, 2007; Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Sparks, 1999).

*Teacher learning through reflection.*

One of the best ways to improve teaching is to reflect on it (Bromfield, Dean & Burnett, 2003; Brookfield, 1990a; Johnson, 1990). Reflection requires cultivation and practice from the first day of a teacher's career (Bromfield, Deane & Burnett, 2003; Gordon, 2002). This practice takes time and skill to develop, in order to pursue external and internal questions about one's teaching practice and its relation to good student work (Gordon, 2002; Little, 2001, p. 36). When teachers practice reflection as part of their professional development, they become more aware of new meanings, perspectives, and possibilities, thus becoming more effective practitioners (Bromfield, Deane & Burnett, 2003; Johnson, 1990).

It is important to remember that teacher reflection is grounded in the teacher and in the teacher's personal and professional experiences (Burnaford, Fischer &

Hobson, 2001; Palmer, 1998; Rogers, 1961). Therefore, if educators are to develop

their teaching practice and move beyond learning skills and knowledge, then critical

reflection on their practice is an essential element of their professional development

(Brookfield, 1990b; Cranton, 1996; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Brookfield (1990b)

states that one effective and simple way for teachers to practice critical reflection is to

ask them to learn something that is new and challenging and then to reflect on the

experience. In this way, teachers recognize which of their actions encourage learning

and those which hinder learning. As teachers practice this reflective analysis,

Brookfield says they see implications for their own teaching and student learning (p.

41).

*Action research and teacher reflection.*

Conducting action research, also known as teacher research or inquiry, helps

to cultivate the habit of reflection and mindfulness in teaching (Bromfield, Deane &

Burnett, 2003; Hubbard & Power, 1999). Action research is research conducted by

teachers into their own teaching practices as they relate to student learning (Hubbard

& Power, 1999; Mills, 2006; Sagor, 2000). An issue of interest is chosen; a plan is

made to investigate the issue; data is collected and analyzed; related research is

consulted and compared to the data; and the results are reported, often to colleagues

(Hubbard & Power, 1999; Sagor, 2000). When the inquiry is complete, the teacher

reflects on the results and decides what action needs to be taken: thus the term "action

research" (Hubbard & Power, 1999; Mills, 2006; Sagor, 2000).

One benefit of action research is that it enables teachers to perceive the world anew; that through the action research process, one must walk a fine line between looking at something closely while also seeing it from a distance. By doing this, a teacher researcher develops a fresh perspective as she makes sense of an aspect of her teaching that is of interest to her both personally and professionally (Hubbard & Power, 1999).

*Creating conditions for reflection as professional development.*

Teaching is intellectually demanding and complex work. The structure of schools needs to change in order to create the conditions for the professional development teachers need in order to teach children well (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Elmore, 2007; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; Nieto, 2003). According to Goodlad (2004), schools have a responsibility to move toward change if it means retaining and growing a vital, energized faculty.

It is also important to build strong school cultures that enhance the growth of teachers throughout their careers (McGrath, 2005). Knowles points out that if an organization's climate does not convey that it values human beings as its most valuable asset, then all other elements in its work are jeopardized (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005, p. 122). Not only is a supportive learning community essential to adult learning in general, but it is particularly important when transformative learning is desirable (Brookfield, 1990b; Cranton, 1996; Palmer, 1998). All members of the school leadership community—central administration, principals, school site leaders, school committees, and school councils—must also be enthusiastic learners in order

to set the tone and establish the conditions for critical reflection to flourish (Joyce & Showers, 2003).

In addition, teachers need opportunities to participate in creating professional development experiences that open up possibilities for new learning and growth, instead of narrowing those choices (Greene, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 2001; Little, 2001). They need to set the agenda for their own learning and need "a constellation of learning opportunities" without fragmentation (Little, 2001, p. 34). Finally, teachers need to connect with other teachers in the community to develop satisfying professional relationships that allow them to grow and to learn (Williams, 2003, p. 72).

Several models of teacher professional development exist that provide opportunities for inquiry and critical reflection using different approaches. Descriptions of three of these models follow: professional development schools, professional learning communities, and Courage to Teach.

*Professional development schools.*

Perhaps the most formal framework for professional development discussed here is that of professional development schools, also known as "PDSs" (Sirotnik & Goodlad, 1988; Teitel, 2003). They create the basis for "educative communities," in which schools create connections with all stakeholders to establish environments that promote good teaching and learning (Goodlad, 1994).

In 1983, The Holmes Group (later renamed "The Holmes Partnership") was organized in response to the publication of *A Nation at Risk* to investigate teaching

and teacher education. The group published three volumes focusing on improving teacher education; improving teaching to improve student learning; and developing professional schools as a means to accomplished those goals (Holmes Partnership Trilogy, 2007; Lanier, 2007). Professional development schools were conceived as a way to improve the preparation of pre-service teachers; to provide continuing development of experienced teachers; to establish school-university partnerships for ongoing research and development of the teaching profession; and to improve student learning (Young, Sykes, Featherstone, Elmore & Devaney, 2007).

A professional development school is a formal partnership between a public or private school and a college or university. This partnership exists for the benefit of both institutions. A PDS almost always begins with a personal/professional relationship between faculty members at both schools that develops over time in response to needs of the partners (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Teitel, 2003). For example, a university may wish to establish a year-round teacher education program at the school so that student teachers can learn from their supervising practitioners in a yearlong placement. Also, university faculty may work with school faculty to develop grant-funded research that benefits student learning. Ongoing teacher professional development is a goal in PDSs, which offers faculties from both institutions new opportunities to teach and grow (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

Establishing and maintaining PDSs require an investment of time, money, personnel, and other resources by the school and the university partners; often, the agreement is clearly articulated in a memo of understanding (Teitel, 1997, 1998, 2003). Standards exist for professional development schools' development,

operation, and organizational assessment, which tend to align with the standards established by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, or NCATE (Teitel, 2003).

PDSs link with experienced teachers' professional development in a number of ways. First, they promote teaching and learning for understanding; that is, they encourage teachers to continue to develop the knowledge and skills needed to actively engage all students so they become successful, lifelong learners (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Holmes Partnership Trilogy, 2007). Second, PDSs promote continual mutual learning and inquiry by teachers, administrators, and university faculty, all of whom "are expected to go on learning" (Holmes Partnership Trilogy, 2007, p. 127). For experienced teachers, this mutual learning and inquiry includes coaching prospective teachers, mentoring new ones, teaching university level courses, conducting action research, and cultivating habits of reflection that deepen their understanding of their professional identity (Holmes Partnership Trilogy, 2007, p. 135-146).

The Holmes Partnership states that PDSs should be "[C]enter[s] for reflection and inquiry…[where] purposeful preparation, mindful practice, critical reflection, mutual discourse, and continuing inquiry are normal ways of working, not exceptional events" (Young, Sykes, Featherstone, Elmore, Devaney, 2007, p. 135).

Frameworks like PDSs create an agenda of educational reform that comes from people within schools instead of being imposed in a top-down manner by administrators or education policy makers (Young, Sykes, Featherstone, Elmore, & Devaney, 2007).

For this reason, the inquiry, reflection, and growth encouraged in PDSs helps to develop change in school structures that begins from within. However, for PDSs to sustain their existence over time, they need to become a valued, well-established component of both schools, with strong administrative support (Teitel, 2003).

### *Professional learning communities.*

Creating professional learning communities (PLCs) is another way to establish a collaborative environment and community for teacher reflection (Russo, 2004). While PLCs may not involve a formal agreement between a school and a university, their work is similar to PDSs in many ways. In a professional learning community, teachers work in teams and investigate questions that help them reflect on their teaching and improve student learning (DuFour, 2004; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). In order to work together to achieve better student learning, PLCs promote professional collaboration so teachers can articulate what students should know, how they should be assessed, and how to respond when students need help (DuFour, 2008). In their best form, PLCs "heighten the capacity for community reflection that is at the heart of teacher professionalism" (Hargreaves, 2008, p. 12). Hargreaves acknowledges that in some schools professional learning communities becomes something in name only, either as an "add-on" or where analyzing student work is only done in the context of standardized tests (Hargreaves, 2008, p. 13). Despite this caution, schools with PLCs become collegial, responsive communities that care about student learning and that provide teachers opportunities to conduct collaborative inquiry (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003).

Roberts & Pruitt (2003, p. 7) cite the professional learning community model of Kruse, Louis & Bryk (1995) that operates by promoting collaboration, reflective dialogue, shared norms and values, and a focus on student learning (p. 8). To do this intellectual work, teachers need time, space, empowerment and autonomy, interdependent teaching roles, and ways to communicate (Kruse, Louis & Bryk, 1995, in Roberts & Pruitt, 2003, p. 8). In addition to resources of mind and structure, teachers also need to have:

- Openness to improvement

- Trust and respect

- Supportive leadership

- Ways to support teachers' socialization into a collegial school culture

- Opportunities to acquire necessary skills and/or knowledge (p. 9)

Professional communities are most helpful when they encourage teachers to learn from one another and provide a supportive cushion for the difficulties of teaching, which include isolation from colleagues and depletion of intellectual and emotional energy (Hargreaves, 2008; Oakes & Lipton, 2003). Some consider that professional development opportunities for reflection, like those provided in professional learning communities or professional development schools, should be job-embedded (Hargreaves, 2008). Others believe that reaching outside the boundaries of a school to meet with other colleagues, found in retreat groups or professional networks, is especially valuable (Little, 2001; Meier, 1992).

One example of this kind of outside gathering designed to support teacher growth and reflection is Courage to Teach, described in the following section.

*Courage to Teach.*

Only a decade has passed since publication of the first edition of the book *Courage to Teach.* At this writing, a small but increasing body of primary research studies exists—articles, essays, three doctoral dissertations, and several program evaluations—that gives scholars a view of the direct impact of Courage to Teach practices as experienced by its participants. In this section, aspects of CTT that relate to teacher reflection and renewal are discussed, along with some of the relevant literature on CTT.

*Teacher formation and renewal.*

Courage to Teach is a program of teacher formation and renewal that focuses on the inner landscapes of a teacher's life. Its goal is not to teach techniques or skills like many other professional development programs. Instead, its purpose is to take teachers beyond technique into renewal (Palmer, 1998, 2004). Palmer states that the demands of teaching are so challenging that renewal of teachers is an important way to address their long-term growth needs; he also points out that Erikson believed the way to renewal was through generativity, part of a healthy adult identity (Palmer, 1998, p. 49).

Palmer (1992) distinguishes "teacher formation" from "teacher training" in this way:

Formation is a concept from the spiritual traditions, and it involves a concern for personal wholeness. Where training asks if the person has the

right knowledge and technique, formation asks after the state of the person's

soul. Where training offers the person new data and methods, formation

offers the person help in discerning his or her identity and integrity.

Teacher identity and integrity are at the heart of good teaching and help teachers form

deep connections to themselves, their students, and the subjects they teach (Palmer,

2007, pp. 10-11). In recognition of teachers' deep connections to their work, the

Courage to Teacher program aims to:

- Renew heart, mind, and spirit through the exploration of the inner landscape

  of a teacher's life

- Reconnect to one's identity and integrity—identifying and honoring gifts and

  strengths, and acknowledging limits

- Create a context for careful listening and deep connection that also honors

  diversity in person and the profession

- Help educators create safe spaces and trusting relationships in their schools,

  with their students and colleagues, and within their communities

- Explore the connection between attending to the inner life of educators and

  the renewal of public education. (CTT, 2008b)

Palmer (1998) points out that many teachers describe teaching as a vocational

calling or destiny. Teachers often describe a sense of personal mission and

commitment to social justice as a reason for teaching (Calderhead, 1997). Also,

teaching has a strong emotional component because it includes developing and

maintaining relationships with other humans—colleagues, students, administrators,

parents, and community members (Brookfield, 1990a). For these reasons, teachers

need to engage in personal and professional renewal coupled with reflection that honors and supports their growth (Williams, 2003).

### *Renewal as transformation.*

According to Intrator & Kunzman (2006a), teachers crave quality professional development that "probe[s] their sense of purpose and invite[s] deliberation about what matters most in good teaching" (p. 190). Digging deeper into the connected aspects of a teacher's personal/professional life through critical reflection gives voice to an educator's own vision, a practice acknowledged as necessary to quality teacher professional development and growth (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Intrator & Kunzman, 2006b). It also becomes what Senge et al. (2000) call "transformative pedagogy," through which a teacher "…tap[s] into the deep learning cycle, which provides a means to think critically about the world so that learning is a process of both self- and social transformation" (p. 207).

Senge et al. (2000) point out that transformative pedagogy helps people develop fundamental shifts in their attitudes and beliefs, and this can become the basis of change in teachers and their environments.

One opportunity to explore such change in Courage To Teach is through the process of discernment. Clearness committee and other opportunities for discernment, such as silence, journaling, talking with other teachers in community, and the use of poetry and art, are mentioned as most the useful parts of CTT in an evaluation by Intrator & Kunzman (2006a). Cranton (1996) notes that some researchers consider discernment to be the path to transformative learning (p. 130).

She describes discernment as an inner journey in dialogue with the unconscious, a Jungian perspective (Cranton, 1996; Sharp, 2001). During discernment, a person "is receptive to information from the unconscious, acknowledge[s] its relevance, and allow[s] the disintegration of prior ways of knowing" (Cranton, 1996, p. 130).

Several doctoral dissertations on the effects of Courage to Teach participation identify teacher renewal as a path to transformative change for teachers. In her study on teacher renewal, McMahon (2003) states that teachers' personal and professional renewal "is a dynamic process that requires self-assessment and a re-examination of oneself and one's work [and is one that] offers hope of growth" (p. 57). McMahon further states that schools need "strong, transformational leadership" in order to create and maintain school environments in which renewal can flourish (p. 217). A second study, done by Simone (2004), uses Jung's definition of individuation to explain the process CTT participants undergo as they discover a new level of self-perception as the result of inner work. She notes that the period of transition leading to individuation can be disorienting for the participant, and that the process is not necessarily linear (p. 373-374). Finally, in his research on identity and integrity in teacher development, Poutiatine (2005) identifies teacher transformative learning as one kind of renewal teachers experience as a result of CTT. Program facilitators were also interviewed in this study, and they stated "that part of the formational process is to create a dissonant or counter-cultural process [for] participants...[which] can provide the disorienting or dissonant experience that typically launches the transformational learning process" (p. 342-243). Poutiatine also points out that while

transformation is not an articulated goal of Courage to Teach retreats, it can occur nonetheless.

In two studies of the effects of Courage to Teach, teachers reported they were "profoundly impacted" by Courage to Teach and that they experienced "renewal and rejuvenation" (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2002). Another, a longitudinal program evaluation compiled in 2000 for the Center for Teacher Formation and the Fetzer Institute, found that one hundred percent (100%) of the participants:

- Considered CTT the most influential professional development of their careers

- Believed that teacher formation "could lead to enduring and vital change in education (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, p. 1)

- Experienced transformation in the way they teach

- Encouraged teachers to develop collaborative relationship with colleagues

- Inspired teachers to seek out leadership opportunities (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, p. vi)

Most importantly, Intrator & Scribner (2000), who refer to CTT as "high quality professional development" (p. 1), note that 100% of the participants in their study believed "teacher formation could lead to enduring and vital change in American education." They note that this message is especially significant because it comes from veteran teachers who have experienced many cycles of education reform throughout their careers (p. 22).

Enduring change in teaching, like transformation, needs a safe, hospitable learning environment in which participants can critically reflect on their practices. School administrators and teachers need to work together to create the environments in which such change can take place: "Good talk about teaching can take many forms...and it can transform teaching and learning. But it will happen only if leaders expect it, invite it, and provide hospitable space for the conversation to occur" (Palmer, 1998, p. 160).

It is well documented that CTT retreats deliberately create a hospitable space for participants to engage in discourse with colleagues (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2002; Palmer, 1998). The literature also documents that, as a result of participation in CTT that participants' relationships with their colleagues and their students are enhanced: teachers are more collaborative with colleagues; teachers make positive changes in the way they teach their students; teachers can reflect on their teaching and be more mindful of their need for renewal (Intrator & Scribner, 2000, 2002; Poutiatine, 2005).

What is less clear in the literature is how and what school leaders can learn from CTT about helping to create hospitable learning environments that overtly tend to the renewal needs—and transformations—of teachers. Teachers report that after CTT, they discover a renewed commitment to mindfully creating hospitable environments for their students (Poutiatine, 2005). However, the institutional impediments and challenges that teachers face in schools every day need attention (Intrator & Kunzman, 2006a). These impediments need attention from enlightened school leaders so, as teachers feel renewed, they can work together with leaders to

create hospitable learning environments that go beyond classroom walls. In this way, all educators can work together to create environments that so that reflection and renewal can flourish as part of daily practice.

To better understand how teacher transformation occurs through the reflective practices in Courage to Teach, the next chapter presents a study design aimed at understanding the essence of transformations for experienced teachers who participated in CTT.

Chapter 3: Study Design

*Introduction*

This chapter describes the study designed to investigate these research

questions:

- What kind of transformations take place for experienced teachers as a result of

  their participation in Courage to Teach?

- What are the implications for professional development programs for

  experienced teachers as a result of this study?

The study consisted of two phases. Phase 1 began with a questionnaire of

four open-ended questions designed to assess potential participants' interest and to

shape the research questions for Phase 2. In the second phase ten experienced

teachers, with an average of twenty-four years of experience teaching at levels

kindergarten through grade twelve, participated in in-depth interviews about the

impact of their participation in the 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England retreat.

The interview's purpose was twofold: to gain information and insight into

participants' personal/professional growth in the three years since that time, and a

focus on teaching transformations that may have occurred for them as a result of

participation in CTT. The results of Phase 1 and Phase 2 are analyzed and discussed

in Chapters 4 and 5.

A description of the qualitative research methods used in the study design and

data analysis begins below.

*Qualitative Research*

This study uses qualitative research methodology. When using qualitative methods, the researcher seeks to understand how the participants understand their world through their own experiences. With roots in sociology and anthropology, qualitative research methodologies are both social and human in their orientation (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In addition, qualitative research is a wide-ranging term, used to cover "interviewing with open-ended questions, life history interviews, oral histories, studying personal constructs and mental maps, and observational studies, whether the observer is a participant or a non-participant" (Delamont, 1992, p. 7). The active role assumed by the qualitative researcher indicates she is "on the inside of the phenomena to be observed" (Wirth, 1949, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 53). This aspect applied to me in several ways: I participated in the same two year cohort as the research participants; I entered the research with some knowledge of who the research participants were and knew that each of us possessed an in-depth understanding of Courage to Teach and Parker Palmer's writings; and I re-entered the world of the phenomena by bracketing my CTT experience in order to understand others' perspectives.

Qualitative research, therefore, offered a way to help me understand veteran teachers' experiences in Courage to Teach and whether or not teaching transformations had occurred for them. At the beginning of my research, I knew open-ended questions offered the chance to collect rich data, but I wanted to reserve the option to explore other kinds of qualitative data, if any materialized, that might

deepen my understanding of the research participants' experiences in Courage to Teach. Patton (2002) calls this feature of qualitative research "emergent design flexibility" because it allows the researcher to pursue unexpected discoveries if they arise.

Delamont (1992) states that qualitative research methods are attentive to the outlook of the people and culture being studied. As the Phase 1 questionnaires and the subsequent Phase 2 individual interviews proceeded, it was clear the CTT participants' lives contained many facets of intersecting stories: how and why they teach; the challenges they face in teaching; their professional development experiences; stories of their school and its particular culture and subcultures; and stories illustrating their deep commitment to helping their students learn. The stories mixed vocabularies used by teachers and those familiar with Courage to Teach, providing a rich language from which to identify transformative learning. In qualitative research, language conveys the data and communicates the research participant's human experience and perspective (Polkinghorne, 1989).

My role as a current researcher and as a participant in the same cohort as the study participants provided a shared experience, but not necessarily a shared outcome. It was here that I held in abeyance the assumption that any transformations had occurred---and, if they had, the participants should be the ones to identify them. Palmer (1998), in stating "we teach who we are," embraces an individual path to experience and growth (p.2). Outcomes are expected to be different for each CTT participant because each participant is on a different personal and professional journey, a concept also emphasized by theorists in adult learning theory and

transformative learning theory (Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1970; Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

*Researcher's stance*

> The danger lies in the preconceptions [of the researcher] that are implicit, unacknowledged, and unexamined. (Delamont, 1992, p. 77)

A qualitative researcher maintains a reflexive stance in order to balance her understanding of co-researcher's perspectives with that of her own (Patton, 2002). In fact, Delamont (1992) believes a qualitative researcher must be explicit about her preconceptions, and acknowledge them in writing before the data collection begins. This is also known as "epoché," a process by which the researcher brackets her own preconceived notions in order to fully understand the research participant's point of view (Creswell, 1998, p. 54).

I used several steps to acknowledge my preconceptions and biases before beginning this study. First, I wrote a paper exploring Courage to Teach (along with other programs) as professional development suited to experienced teachers' needs. In it, I wrote of my own experience in Courage to Teach, wondering if the retreat program crossed a boundary that sometimes, to me, felt on the verge of therapy. At the same time, I wrote that the asking of "open, honest questions" (Palmer, 1998, 2004) was exactly what I thought today's professional development programs needed: less of the unvarying, one-size-fits-all approach and more of the open-ended sort that

is supported by adult growth and development learning theories. This last bias, I acknowledge, is firmly rooted in my thinking about professional development.

Second, my interest in transformative learning for experienced teachers led me to wonder if Courage to Teach had resulted in teaching transformations for my co-researchers. For me, participation in CTT provided learning that continues to evolve in my work with teachers: offering participation as an invitation rather than a requirement; using poetry and other "third things" for reflection; embracing silence as desirable space in which to learn; and the value in reconsidering the overwhelming tendency to be a "fixer." When I began this research, I didn't think of these changes as transformative at all—rather, I believed they were the natural result of learning something new. As the process of epoché, data gathering, and data analysis evolved, I realized that my learning in CTT was indeed transformational in that it permanently changed the way I think about teacher development—and it took my own study with others to see it!

Third, I re-examined my CTT artifacts. I reread my two years' worth of journals; reread the poetry selections used at the retreat and reflected on their meaning; and re-examined artwork I created at the retreat. These artifacts brought the experience alive for me again, as did a book that retreat participants had created with our written and artistic contributions. A piece of handmade paper brought to mind the CTT participant who gave this to everyone as a gift, which represented to me the personal/professional sharing during the retreat. Photos of the group and picture postcards of the facility reconnected me to memories of the retreat participants and those with whom I tended to sit or work. Bits and pieces of conversations I

remembered were attached to various people and led me to reflect on the unique experience of finding kindred spirits who wished to grow in teaching as I did.

Finally, I did not share my preconceptions or biases with the study participants. I wished to maintain, as much as possible, a "naturalistic" attitude, in which I remained open to whatever findings might emerge (Patton, 2002). If transformations did not occur for participants, that itself would be considered a result of the research.

My interest in investigating the experience of transformation through participation in CTT led me to phenomenological inquiry.

*Phenomenology*

Phenomenology is both a disciplinary field and a movement in philosophy (Smith, 2003). In qualitative research, it is a tradition of inquiry in which the researcher seeks to understand concepts, or phenomena, as they are lived or experienced by the subjects (Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 1985; Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology has its roots in the work of Edmund Husserl, who is considered the founder of phenomenology (Cogan, 2006; Creswell, 1998). Husserl, a mathematician and logician, described a need for a new regimen of inquiry because he believed traditional scientific inquiry was compromised and limited by both the framework of scientific inquiry and the unacknowledged psychological assumptions of the scientist (Cogan, 2006, p. 1). According to Giorgi (1985), Husserl urged phenomenologists to "go back to the things themselves," by which Husserl meant back to the everyday world, where people live through phenomena in actual situations (p. 8). Heidegger,

Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, and others continued Husserl's work, debated it, and extended

it to other dimensions (Creswell, 1998; Smith, 2003).

There are several considerations in "going back to the things themselves"

(Giorgi, 1985). First, it is important to focus on what participants experience and how

they experience it—which is the heart of phenomenological inquiry (Patton, 2002, p.

106). Second, in terms of methodology, it is important for the researcher to

experience the phenomenon as directly as possible, such as through participant-

observation or in-depth interviewing (Patton, 2002, p. 106). The third consideration

is the assumption that there is an essence to the experience, which Patton states is the

defining characteristic of a phenomenological study (Patton, 2002, p. 106).

In describing phenomenology as human science research, Moustakas (1994)

points out: "The aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who

have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it"

(p. 13).

Participants in phenomenological research are considered co-researchers on

equal footing with the principal researcher, because they have experienced the

phenomenon under investigation and they have a vested interest in the topic (Giorgi,

1985; Moustakas, 1994).

In selecting a particular phenomenological approach, the individual style of

researcher & specific nature of the phenomenon are important considerations for

establishing the specific research procedure and tools of description (Seamon, 2002,

p. 15). The fact that I sought to understand what transformative learning occurred as

a result of participation in CTT meant that each respondent's experience would be

viewed as uniquely his or her own and situated in his or her own personal and professional lives. I also anticipated that stories might unfold, even stories inside of stories that required an understanding of not just CTT vocabulary and concepts, but educational concepts and language particular to level and subject matter taught, as well as school-wide, district-wide, state-wide, and even national issues that affect teaching and learning. Here I drew upon my experience as a teacher, school administrator, and teacher educator to help me listen well and ask "open, honest questions" (Palmer, 1998, p. 153) when necessary, in order to fully understand the contexts and stories of which the respondents spoke.

Bearing in mind the differences that might occur in the individual stories of transformation—and that the experience could be described in a similar manner while remaining unique to each person—was what led me to include an existential phenomenological methodology.

*Existential Phenomenology*

Existential phenomenology considers that a person "is viewed as having no existence apart from the world and the world as having no existence apart from the person" (Valle, King & Halling, 1989, p. 7). This emphasizes the interrelationship of one's existence and that it is the very interrelationship that gives unique meaning to each individual's life (Weiskopf-Jeolson, 1978). It is particularly suited to researching specific experiences of individuals in a particular situation or place (von Eckartsberg, 1998a). In this case, it is desirable to have a certain equivalence of meaning for the respondents, that they can name and identify experience in a

consistent or shared manner (von Eckartsberg, 1998a, 1998b). Also, an important assumption in existential phenomenological research is that the respondents (1) must have had the experience under investigation and (2) be able to express themselves clearly to give an experiential account. Ideally, respondents should feel a spontaneous interest in the research topic, since personal concern can motivate respondent to proved a thorough and accurate account (Shertock, 1998).

The German philosopher Husserl's belief was that meaning could be found in the "world of everyday experience as expressed in everyday language ('back to the things themselves')" Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 9). To Husserl, existential phenomenological methodology begins with the researcher assuming the stance of bracketing, or epoché, during which one suspends preconceived ideas, by first making them explicit and then by revisiting them throughout the process (Valle, 1998; Valle & King, 1978). This requires the setting aside, or at least acknowledgement, of preconceived ideas, notions, opinions and beliefs in order to revisit the phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002; Valle, 1998; Valle & King, 1978). This process of bracketing enables the qualitative researcher to look at things and see them as if it were the first time; to clear the mind and open the self; to be transparent in the viewing of things (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86). The practice of bracketing is ongoing and is revisited throughout the phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1996; Patton, 2002; Valle, 1998). By bracketing and re-bracketing, one moves from the "natural attitude" to the "transcendental attitude," in which the reduction, or data analysis, takes place. (Valle & King, 1978, p. 14).

*Existential-Phenomenological Data Analysis*

Data analysis in phenomenology does not follow one particular method (Patton, 2002). Creswell (1998) notes there is general consensus on an approach that is rigorous, systematic and accepted by those who have written extensively on the topic, including Colaizzi (1978), Giorgi (1985), Van Kaam (1969), Moustakas (1994), Valle (1998), von Eckartsberg (1998a, 1998b). According to Polkinghorne (1989), What is most important in formulating a method is to develop a plan that is suited to understanding the particular phenomenon under study (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 44).

The central process in phenomenological data analysis is referred to as phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). Four general steps are taken to treat the data in an existential phenomenological reduction (Giorgi, 1995; Seamon, 2002; von Eckartsberg, 1998b):

1. Identifying the phenomenon under study

2. Gathering descriptive accounts from research participants, or "co-researchers"

3. Careful studying of respondents' accounts to identify underlying commonalities and patterns.

4. Presenting of findings to respondents and to fellow researchers.

I used these four general steps in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study, described in detail below.

*Phase 1 of Study*

*Rationale*

This research began with a questionnaire consisting of four open-ended questions designed to introduce this research to potential participants; to renew my connection with the group at large; and to gather general information about the cohort members' experiences in the three years since the 2002-2004 cohort ended. At this early stage in the research, I did not want to exclude anyone in the twenty-three-member cohort. I informed them the subject of my study was to examine the effect of Courage to Teach on experienced teachers' professional growth and development; I also invited them to offer comments, questions, or points of view I may not have considered. Cohort members were given the option to participate in this early stage of questioning, the later stage, or both.

Those who chose to participate were asked to answer the four questions as completely as possible and in any way they wished. During Courage to Teach, the cohort regularly participated in reflective and responsive writing, and art materials were always available for additional modes of expression. For this reason, I wanted respondents to feel comfortable writing as much as they desired, and to have the option of expressing themselves artistically if desired.

*Access*

I began with careful consideration of access (Delamont, 1992). Every member of the 2002-2004 CTT cohort received an email from Professor Sharlene Cochrane of Lesley University, one of the co-facilitators of the cohort, that introduced

my research (Appendix A). Although everyone had the cohort members' contact information; members felt free to email news to everyone; and the co-facilitators shared ownership of the cohort with its members, I did not want to make any assumptions about access to the members for the purposes of this study. Also, Professor Cochrane and I discussed the fact that an optimal response rate might occur if she, as a university colleague, formally introduced my work to the cohort.

Following Professor Cochrane's introductory email, I emailed the twenty-three cohort members a letter of introduction to my research, the questionnaire, a request for basic biographical data, and a letter of informed consent (Appendices B-E). At the same time, cohort members received a duplicate of these documents through U.S. postal mail, with a postage paid, self-addressed return envelope. Cohort members were invited to respond to the request for information in any way they wished, using email or postal mail.

*Informed Consent*

The letter of informed consent (Appendix C) offered the opportunity for participants to choose to participate in answering the four initial questions; to participate in a focus group or individual interview; or to participate in both stages of inquiry.

In keeping with that, the cover letter sent to cohort members was carefully designed to both convey my respect for the group and to acknowledge their contribution to the development of this research (Appendix B). I had not maintained any relationships with individual cohort members since the cohort ended in 2004,

with the exception of one Lesley University doctoral student colleague, whom I knew beforehand and had seen only once since the cohort ended. A number of small group and large group cohort reunions had taken place since 2004, but I had not attended any. Instead, I felt a connection to the group as a whole and to the shared retreat experience.

*Confidentiality*

Cohort members received written assurance of complete confidentiality (Appendix A). This was of particular importance to establish because I anticipated interviewing many who were still employed as teachers. As a Massachusetts educator, I am aware that even teachers who have gained professional status (formerly known in Massachusetts as "tenure") can become a target of negative repercussions in their schools, and I wanted to eliminate any concerns of respondents in that area. In addition, I stated that pseudonyms would be used and names of schools would be changed. (Appendix A)

*Phase 1 Questionnaire*

I designed four open-ended questions with care and deliberation, hoping to inspire interest in the study and a sufficient rate of response.

The first of the four open-ended questions, "In the three years since completing Courage to Teach/New England, what has happened to you professionally and how has it impacted you personally?" was designed to gather information about respondents' professional lives, including personal information they chose to share if relevant, and to learn if professional changes, if any, had been made (Appendix D).

In replies to the second question, "What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher and your perception of your teaching practice?" I hoped to learn if the respondent's perceptions of themselves had changed since the retreat ended in 2004. In answers to the third question, "What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England experience?" I hoped to learn if a general connection could be made by the respondents between Courage to Teach and any change they identified. Finally, I asked "What suggestions and thoughts do you have for me, the researcher, to consider during my study?" Here, I hoped to draw upon the respondents' experience to alert me to issues I may not have considered.

*Phase 1 Response*

Three and a half weeks were given for cohort members to respond to the invitation to participate and the questions. Coincidentally, after the mailing was sent, I encountered several cohort members during an evening Parker Palmer was scheduled to speak about Courage to Teach at the Boston Public Library. We exchanged greetings and several of them spoke to me with enthusiasm about my research:

- Here's whom you should talk to if you want to take your research nationally.

- This is so important, what you're doing now.

- Maybe you can get the word out about how important CTT is to teaching.

These comments and the conversations that followed them affirmed for me the

direction of this study and that there was interest in participating by some cohort members. However, in the conversations that followed these comments, I was careful not to indicate pressure or express the expectation that the people I talked to that night would follow through with written replies. In every way, I wanted to maintain my request to them was an invitation to participate, not an expectation. During the CTT retreat, one touchstone that guided us was that participation was always invited, never required (Touchstones, 2002), and that is a standard I wished to maintain as the study proceeded.

I received fourteen emailed replies of support (60% of the cohort), all of which indicated interest in participating in the study. These fourteen represented all levels of education present in the cohort, kindergarten through community education and graduate school; many domains of knowledge; teachers from urban, suburban, and rural schools; and both males and females. Of these fourteen, I received nine written replies (Table 3) to the questionnaire (64% of those who indicated interest by email; 39% of the cohort overall). To me, this indicated sufficient interest to continue to develop the study.

*Treatment of Phase 1 Data*

Analysis of the nine written replies to the questions and comments produced on the questionnaire was conducted using variations of Moustakas's (1994), Polkinghorne's (1989), Colaizzi's (1978) and van Kaam's (1969) methods. First, I read and reread the replies in order to understand the respondent's point of view. Next, this raw data was horizontalized by listing every statement relevant to the

Table 3

*Phase 1 Questionnaire Respondents*

| Years of Teaching Experience | | Level Taught | Demographic Area of School |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | 39 | Secondary | Suburban |
| 2. | 37 | Elementary | Suburban |
| 3. | 33 | Secondary | Suburban |
| 4. | 31 | Community ed | Rural |
| 5. | 22 | Secondary | Suburban |
| 6. | 19 | Elementary | Rural |
| 7. | 14 | Elementary | Urban |
| 8. | 12 | Elementary | Suburban |
| 9. | 6 | Higher ed | Urban |

Phase 1 respondents' average years of teaching experience: 24 years

question. In this step, every relevant statement was given equal weight; redundant, unrelated, and overlapping statements were eliminated. The resulting list was the invariant meaning statements. After studying these for commonalities and patterns, I reduced the data by transforming them into themes, or "experience to which [they] point" (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 52), taking care to refer back to the original contexts for accuracy in interpretation and, once again, eliminating overlapping statements. During this step, the data is transformed from the participants' language to the

researcher's language in order to search for the essential structure of the experience under study, a critical step in phenomenological reduction (Polkinghorne, 1989). To emphasize the importance of carefully conducting this step, Colaizzi (1978) states that these transformed statements "should never sever all connections with the original [statements by the participant]" and he urges the researcher to zigzag back and forth from the researcher's statements, to the participant's original statements, and back again (p. 59).

At this point, a first identification and description of the experience under study is attained (Polkinghorne, 1989). Phenomenological methodologists vary on how to proceed further. Van Kaam looks for intersubjective validity and seeks the agreement of judges before moving from the first identification of the experience to a final validated one (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 52). Colaizzi returns to each participant to ask if his descriptions and interpretations accurately reflect their experience, allowing follow-up interviews to gain new information if necessary (Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 53). Moustakas (1994) recommends constructing detailed individual and composite textural descriptions, structural descriptions, textural-structural descriptions, and composite descriptions. Modifying Van Kaam's model, I used my dissertation committee as judges, consulting with them on methodological procedure and a treatment of data that reflected accuracy, validity, and made sense for the research at this point.

Therefore, the themes that emerged at this point shaped the development of the Phase 2 semi-structured interview questions in a number of ways. As I realized the full extent to which each CTT participant's journey was his or her own, it became

clear that conducting focus groups in Phase 2 (which were noted as a possibility in the letter of introduction) might not work for this investigation. Individual interviews, however, would give each voice equal attention, through which I hoped to hear and investigate nuances of meaning that might be overshadowed or overlooked in a group context. Also, the themes that emerged in replies to the questionnaire indicated that, for those who replied, changes and transformations did occur, enabling me to develop ten semi-structured interview questions that investigated such changes in more depth.

The next section describes the development and design of Phase 2 of this study.

*Phase 2 of Study*

*Rationale*

In Phase 2 of this study, ten experienced teachers from the 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England retreat participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Interview questions were designed to discover if disorienting dilemmas caused participants to join CTT and if transformative changes in participants' teaching occurred as a result of the two-year retreat.

*Participant Selection*

The research participants in this phase of the study, all experienced teachers, were selected according to several criteria. First, the participants were self-selecting in two ways: they chose to participate in Courage to Teach and they chose to

participate in this study. Second, I decided to focus the study on educators at levels kindergarten through grade twelve, my professional development interest. Eight participants from Phase 1 agreed to be interviewed, and I contacted two more who had indicated interest but had cited busy schedules as an impediment to participating in Phase 1. Both agreed to participate in Phase 2. This step of purposeful selection resulted in ten study participants, which represented forty-three percent (43%) of the cohort (Table 4). With a solid representation of grade levels, domains of study and licensure, and of urban, suburban, and rural schools, I proceeded with scheduling of semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

*Interview Settings*

I contacted the research participants by both telephone and email to schedule interviews and asked them to choose a setting in which they felt most comfortable speaking. Two invited me to their homes and one asked to come to my home. Three invited me to their classrooms after the school day. One chose a coffee shop near school, fearing repercussions from the school principal. One interview took place in an empty classroom at Lesley University. Two interviews were conducted by telephone due to distance and scheduling limitations.

Table 4

*Phase 2 Interview Participants*

| Years of Teaching Experience | Demographic Area of School | Level Taught | Primary Assignment* Areas of licensure/expertise |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. 39 | Suburban | Secondary | English |
| 2. 38 | Suburban | Elementary | Art |
| 3. 37 | Suburban | Elementary | Elementary education* Moderate special needs Responsive Classroom |
| 4. 33 | Suburban | Secondary | English* AP English American literature World literature |
| 5. 22 | Suburban | Secondary | Psychology* AP psychology Sociology United States history Western philosophy |
| 6. 19 | Urban | Elementary | Early childhood education* Occupational therapy |
| 7. 19 | Rural | Elementary | Literacy* Elementary education Moderate special needs |
| 8. 14 | Urban | Elementary | Early childhood education* Responsive Classroom Efficacy Training Literacy Collaborative |
| 9. 12 | Suburban | Elementary | Communication disorders* Early childhood education Autism Second language acquisition |
| 10. 9 | Suburban | Elementary | Elementary education |

Phase 2 participants' average years of teaching experience = 24 years

The ten interviews began two weeks after the deadline for Phase 1 responses and were completed within six weeks. Interviews lasted about an hour to an hour and a half. One interview lasted over two hours. The two telephone interviews were shorter and lasted about forty-five minutes each. All interviews, including the telephone interviews, were audiotaped with the participants' permission; later, I transcribed the tapes. In addition, I scripted the interviews as the participants talked, giving me one set of field notes in which I wrote their answers as they spoke; noted body language and displays of emotion; noted use of CTT artifacts; and recorded details about the interview setting. I created a second set of field notes immediately after the interviews, using a spreadsheet, in which I summarized my impressions of the interview. The two sets of field notes and the tape transcriptions were compared with the audiotapes for accuracy, clarity, context, and meaning during the data analysis.

*Informed Consent and Confidentiality*

Prior to Phase 1, each participant received two mailings, through U.S. postal mail and email, of a letter of informed consent and written assurance of confidentiality for the entire study. At the beginning of Phase 2, I reviewed these documents with the interview participants, and they signed the letter of informed consent again, keeping a copy for themselves.

*Interview Questions & Rationales*

Guided by the themes produced in Phase 1, the Phase 2 interview questions probed the participant's CTT experience for transformative changes and any disorienting dilemmas that may have preceded participants' decision to join Courage to Teach.

*Question 1.*

Review with interview participant the responses received from Phase 1 or ask them of the participant if not received in writing.

    a.  In the 3 yrs since completing CTT/NE, what has happened to you professionally and how has it impacted you personally?

    b.  What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher and your perception of your teaching practice?

    c.  What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004 CTT/NE experience?

    d.  What suggestions & thoughts do you have for me, the researcher?

*Rationale.*

After exchanging greetings, I began by reviewing the participants' responses to the Phase 1 questions. For one or two who had not sent me written answers, the interview began with the Phase 1 questions. This was intentional: each participant had the opportunity to answer (or review) all questions and the process helped build a shared entry point to the interview for both the participant and me.

*Question 2.*

How did you view yourself as a teacher before CTT?

*Rationale.*

Answers to this question provided detailed information on teachers'

professional background and experience, interests, professional development, and

classroom practices.

*Question 3.*

Why did you apply to Courage to Teach? What were your expectations of

CTT before the program? How has the outcome matched your expectations?

*Rationale.*

This question probed for a disorienting dilemma or some kind of precipitating

event or series of events. I wondered what participants knew about CTT before they

joined and what kind of learning they expected. Were they ready for a transformative

experience?

*Question 4.*

Three years after completing CTT, how do you view yourself as a teacher

now?

*Rationale.*

Responses to this question provided insight into teacher change, if any took place, and provided the opportunity for the participants to define the kind of changes. This question also searched for transformative changes that might be the result of participation in CTT.

*Question 5.*

What part of CTT was most helpful to you?

*Rationale*

I wanted to know what part of CTT worked best for the participants: for example, the use of nature; using the arts for expression; or the environment or format of the retreat. Because clearness committee was a significant part of each weekend retreat, this was also an opportunity to listen for references to Clearness Committee as a catalyst for change.

*Question 6.*

What was your involvement with the arts before CTT? Have you continued to use the arts since CTT? Why or why not?

*Rationale.*

The majority of responses in Phase 1 mentioned the use of poetry in Courage to Teach as a "third thing" carrying great personal meaning. Also, art materials were

available during the retreats to use as additional "third things"; did participants use them at the retreat? Are the arts central to the participants in their personal and professional lives, and how do they use them?

### Question 7.

I am working with a definition of "transformation" as a change that is so profound that it becomes permanent in the personal/professional lives of experienced teachers. Of the changes or growth you experienced in CTT, do you consider any of them transformations? If so, what caused these transformations?

### Rationale

All Phase 1 responses hinted at transformative learning by participants. Here, participants had the opportunity to explicitly define their own transformations and how they took place.

### Question 8.

When each seasonal retreat ended, what was it like to return to your school? When the 2002-2004 cohort ended, what was it like to return to your school?

### Rationale.

A number of Phase 1 responses mentioned experiencing re-entry issues with their school colleagues. As the CTT retreat progressed, did the participants experience personal re-entry issues; did these relate to undergoing transformations?

*Question 9.*

What are the implications for schools that have had one or more teachers participate in Courage to Teach?

*Rationale*

Some participants came from the same school; some came from the same district; others attended alone. Many Phase 1 responses mentioned large and small-scale school changes as a result of their CTT participation, both positive and negative. Did all participants experience these changes? How did their colleagues and schools react to these changes?

*Question 10.*

What about CTT do you think could inform school/district professional development programs? What do you think would make a school receptive or unreceptive to CTT?

*Rationale.*

Do the participants consider Courage to Teach as professional development? How does it compare to other professional development participants experience in their schools? Would CTT work in their schools or are there aspects of it that could inform their school professional development programs?

*Treatment of Phase 2 Data*

I followed a method similar to analyzing the Phase 1 data, drawing upon Moustakas's (1994), Polkinghorne's (1989), Colaizzi's (1978) and van Kaam's (1969) methods. First, I revisited the process of epoché by setting aside my biases and preconceived ideas. Second, I read, re-read, and examined my two sets of field notes: the scripted notes taken during the interview and the spreadsheet filled out after the interview. Third, I transcribed the tapes, using the two sets of field notes to clarify responses when needed. In these first two stages, I immersed myself in the worlds of the participants while trying to understand, from their points of view, each participant's own Courage to Teach experience and its meaning.

In the next step I horizontalized the raw data for each participant by listing every statement relevant to each question, eliminating overlapping or unrelated statements. This produced a listing of what Moustakas (1994) calls the "invariant constituents of the experience" (p. 121). These invariant meaning statements were then clustered and labeled, creating a list of core themes of the experience using my language, a first transformation of the data. The themes were further reduced into clusters of themes that were reflected in all of the participants' interview transcripts, a second transformation of the data. Polkinghorne (1989) states that this step of thematization is the "search for essential structures" of the investigated experience (p. 51): in this case, a search for the essential structures of transformation. In particular, I searched for phrases and expressions that indicated a disorienting dilemma that preceded a participant's joining the Courage to Teach retreat; a permanent change in

the participants' professional growth and development, as defined by the participants themselves; and descriptions of how and why these changes occurred.

Validation of invariant constituents and their themes occurred by comparing them to the transcripts and field notes for each participant, constantly checking for explicit expression and compatibility. Polkinghorne (1989, p. 53) points out that both van Kaam (1969) and Colaizzi (1978) use this "zigzag" procedure until the result, or finding, of the research.

The step of "imaginative variation" (Polkinghorne, 1989) was employed several times as I imagined possible meanings of the invariant statements, returning to the original contexts when necessary to check and refine my understanding of their meaning. This step enables the researcher to attain an "eidetic seeing of the whole" so that all elements are fully understood (p. 56).

Finally, I tied the theme clusters together to describe the essential structure of participants' transformations. The description contained the essence of the transformative experience for the Courage to Teach participants in this study, which is described in the following chapter.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

*Introduction*

This chapter presents the results of this study, which investigated these research questions:

- What kind of transformations take place for experienced teachers as a result of their participation in Courage to Teach?

- What are the implications for professional development programs for experienced teachers as a result of this study?

Research was conducted in two phases. In Phase 1, self-selecting participants responded to a questionnaire that gathered information about their experiences in the three years since a Courage to Teach/New England retreat. The data collected in Phase 1 was analyzed using phenomenological methods suggested by Van Kaam (1969) and informed by methods suggested by Colaizzi (1978), Polkinghorne (1989), and Moustakas (1994). The themes that emerged in Phase 1 were used to create the interview questions for the second phase of the study.

In Phase 2, a group of ten purposefully selected and self-selecting participants took part in semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The questions in Phase 2 were designed to uncover teaching transformations that occurred as a result of CTT participation. Data in Phase 2 was analyzed using a similar approach to that used in Phase 1, using methods suggested by Van Kaam (1969) and informed by methods suggested by Colaizzi (1978), Polkinghorne (1989), and Moustakas (1994). The themes that emerged in Phase 2 were tied together to produce the essential structure

of transformations experienced by the study participants, described as Transformations 1 through 4.

## *Phase 1 of Study*

### *Phase 1 Respondents*

Fourteen replies were received in response to my email requesting participation in the study. This represents almost 61% of the twenty-three-member cohort. All were enthusiastic supporters of this study and indicated interest in participating. Ultimately, I received nine written replies to the Phase 1 questions, representing almost 40% of the cohort.

The nine respondents averaged twenty-four years of teaching experience (Table 3, page 74). Since Courage to Teach had ended, some changes had taken place for the respondents. One respondent had changed careers. Two respondents were recent retirees. Five respondents continued teaching in the same schools in which they were teaching at the time of the CTT retreat, and another respondent changed teaching positions within the school district.

Every level of teaching represented in the CTT 2002-2004 cohort, from kindergarten to higher education and community education, had at least one respondent to the Phase 1 questions. Four elementary teachers were represented, including 2 elementary specialists. Three secondary teachers, one teacher from community education, and one teacher from higher education were represented. Also, schools from each demographic area in the cohort—rural, urban, and suburban—were represented in Phase 1. Males and females responded, as did teachers of color.

However, because of the small sample size neither gender nor ethnicity is revealed in the study, in order to maintain confidentiality.

*Phase 1 Questions*

The questions designed for Phase 1 were:

1. In the three years since completing Courage to Teach/New England, what has happened to you professionally and how has it impacted you personally?

2. What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher and your perception of your teaching practice?

3. What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England experience?

4. What suggestions and thoughts do you have for me, the researcher, to consider during my study?

Responses to these questions were horizontalized, a process in which every statement relevant to the question was listed and given equal value. Next, redundancies and overlapping statements were eliminated. This step resulted in a list of invariant meaning statements of the experience, which were then clustered by theme. These themes provided the basis for development of questions in Phase 2.

*Phase 1 Results*

In response to the first question, all teachers reported some kind of professional change. Due to the length and complexity of many of the replies, the

answers to the first part of the question (Table 5) were separated from answers to the second part of the question (Table 6), as it became clear to me that they were, in fact, two questions.

Some teachers reported more than one professional change in answering the first part of Question 1, which accounts for more than nine responses on Table 5. These changes pointed toward three referents, or themes. First, 33% of respondents initiated change at their school by taking action with their colleagues. For example:

I wrote a grant to provide 5 teachers with training in a weeklong course for Responsive Classroom. This resulted in follow-up study groups at my school and additional teachers completing the program. The bond was an important support for all of us, with the ever-increasing amounts of curriculum and the demands of MCAS testing.

Elementary teacher

[With another colleague], I organized and facilitated a CTT readers' group...which met for a couple of years...We related the issues in the readings to those in our school.

Secondary teacher

Table 5

*Phase 1, Question 1, **first part***

"What has happened to you professionally...?"

Themes with invariant meaning statements from 9 respondents

---

**1. Initiated change at school with colleagues:**　　　**33% of respondents**

   a. Organized a CTT book group

   b. Organized an *Artist's Way at Work* group

   c. Wrote grant for Responsive Classroom


**2. Communicate more confidently with colleagues:**　　**56% of respondents**

   a. Initiate more meetings with colleagues

   b. Speak and react more passionately


**3. Changed work status or aspects of position:**　　　**89% of respondents**

   a. Changed jobs and am happier

   b. Completed another degree

   c. Obtained new job

   d. Teach new course in school

   e. Expanded work on alumni board

   f. Left classroom position

   g. Do contract work

   h. Do substitute teaching

   i. Left job and retired

*Example:* Numbers 3e through 3g are from the same reply: "I decided to *leave* my *classroom position* to take a break. I have been *doing contract work* with [an agency] and my local public school system as well as *subbing at my former school.*"

---

Table 6

*Phase 1, Question 1, **second part***

> "(*What has happened to you professionally...*) and how has it impacted you personally?"

Themes with invariant statements from 9 respondents

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1. **See an improvement in classroom teaching:**       **44% of respondents**
   a. Energy for teaching has returned
   b. Feel more engaged with the content I teach
   c. See problems more as opportunities
   d. Can reflect on my needs as teacher and breathe

2. **Made changes that improved both my teaching & my life: 78% of respondents**
   a. Am a better listener
   b. Try not to "fix"
   c. Asking open-ended questions was important for me to learn
   d. Learned my perspective on education was too narrow
   e. Felt certain it was time to retire

3. **Am a more confident colleague in school:**       **100% of respondents**
   a. Am more at ease with my colleagues and myself
   b. Feels safer now to risk exploring critical issues
   c. Speak up more often at faculty meetings & student team meetings
   d. Felt affirmed when I learned others have same struggles as I do

*Example:* Statements 2a - 2b are from the following reply: "I *am*, at times, *a better listener* and responder and I *try not to* quickly inject my *"fix"* into a conversation."

     The following phrases from these replies were considered duplications of significant statements and were not repeated again: *"More open with colleagues"* was considered the same as *"More at ease with colleagues"* (number 3a).

---

Second, 56% of respondents said they communicated more effectively and openly with their teaching colleagues, which they considered to be important personal/professional changes. For example, one secondary teacher, a department chair, noted that after the retreat she was more confident when interviewing or hiring new people, an aspect of her position about which she had felt uncomfortable. Another teacher also noted growth in self-confidence and self-empowerment, enabling her to speak and react with passion about issues in her school she cared about.

Third, 89% of respondents reported feeling more confident about changing their teaching assignments, jobs, or retiring:

I accepted [a new position which allows me to] tend the environment within which teaching and learning occurs.

Community/higher education teacher

I requested a change in assignment so I could teach World Literature. [It is more aligned] with my interest and belief in unity…and cultures and issues of a global nature.

Secondary teacher

In the last year of my career, I was more able to leave because I was certain that I wanted to move on, and I was glad I hadn't done so earlier.

Secondary teacher

In the second part of question one (Table 6), respondents described the personal impact of their professional changes. In addition to the actions they took to initiate change at their school, 44% of respondents saw improvement in their classroom teaching; 78% of respondents detected positive changes that occurred in both their teaching and their personal lives; and 100% of respondents noted a growth in confidence as members of their school community:

I feel more competent and grounded as a teacher...and I am also clearer about my own stance as a leader and educator.

Community/higher education teacher

CTT was good preparation [for my new position]---learning to listen, to not "fix," to ask honest, open-ended questions.

Elementary teacher

I was more at ease with my colleagues and more open with them...In the last year of my career, I think I was able to leave because I was certain that I wanted to move on, and was glad I hadn't done so earlier.

Secondary teacher

Question two asked teachers to identify changes in their perception of themselves as a teacher and changes in perception of their teaching practice. Three themes emerged: identifying positive changes in oneself as a teacher; a new use of strategies to renew oneself; and a change in one's teaching practice in the classroom (Table 7).

The first theme, a change in perception of oneself as a teacher, showed positive changes for 89% of respondents:

CTT was a wonderfully affirming experience...I enter my work feeling more peaceful and alive—more grounded in the rich tradition of education—feeling part of a great world of practitioners. Capable. Open. With direction.

Community/higher education

I discovered that I was an artist and that teaching was my creative process. By discovering this, I was able to understand more fully why I didn't initially miss the classroom when I left.

Elementary teacher

My perception of myself as a teacher has become more focused on letting "me" into my classroom and sharing more of my life [with students].

Elementary teacher

Table 7

*Phase 2, Question 2*

> "What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher
> and your perception of your teaching practice?"

Themes with invariant statements from 9 respondents

---

**1. See changes in oneself as a teacher:**          **89% of respondents**
   a. Am more grounded and feel part of a world of practitioners
   b. More focused on letting "me" into classroom and sharing more
   c. Can better say what I know, while realizing what I don't know
   d. Discovered teaching is my creative process
   e. Completed my career with a stronger sense of self
   f. Feel capable, open, peaceful, and alive

**2. Use new strategies to renew and help oneself:**          **78% of respondents**
   a. Recognize my needs as well as my students'
   b. Can ask for help or a listener when I need to
   c. Am more likely to stop and ask, "What's essential here?"
   d. Don't feel apologetic about my time any more
   e. Continue to use poetry and journal writing to express my feelings

**3. Made changes in one's teaching practice:**          **78% of respondents**
   a. Let students make choices about their work
   b. Can reflect on my teaching now
   c. Am more willing to explore professionally in all directions
   d. See my work as service contributing to the common good
   e. Am more objective about how my teaching affects student learning
   f. Make better connections with students about themselves and their learning
   g. Make time every week for students to [express themselves creatively]

*Example:* Statements 3c – 3d are from the following reply: I also *am willing to explore professionally in all directions...I see* myself now as a servant of others and *my work as service contributing to the common good.*

---

Along with the stronger perception of oneself as a teacher, 78% mentioned a link between this and the use of new strategies to for renewal, which was a second theme:

I think I am more likely to stop and ask, "What's essential here?" When things get frantic, I value my commitment more—I don't feel apologetic about it—and at the same time some of the drama is diffused.

Elementary teacher

I continued to use poetry and journal writing to explore and express my inner thoughts and feelings and [am] frequently amazed by what I [uncover].

Elementary teacher

I think I am more aware...of the commonalities of the human experience, and more open to asking for help, or at least a listener, when I need it.

Secondary teacher

Finally, 78% of respondents reported positive changes in their teaching practice, which comprised the third theme:

When we studied Thoreau...I found that my students and I all hated the excerpts in the textbook, so I did a quick Internet search, found that all of Walden is online, assigned the students to get in groups, choose a section, and

present bits of it to the class. This was a very successful project. I let go

entirely, and the results were wonderful.

Secondary teacher

I see myself as part of a circle…I also am more willing to explore

professionally in all directions…I see myself now as a servant of others and

my work as service contributing to the common good and an increase in

consciousness.

Secondary teacher

I am more reflective about my teaching practice and more objective about

how my practice impacts my students—both positively and negatively. My

perception of my teaching practice is ever present in my consciousness, which

has been heightened by my participation in CTT.

Elementary teacher

All three of these themes from responses to Question 2 indicate what these

experienced teachers saw as growth in themselves as teachers—a strengthened

identity as a teacher, a stronger sense of self, and the ability to recognize the need for

better self-care—so they could be better teachers to their students.

Table 8

*Phase 1, Question 3*

"What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004
Courage to Teach/New England experience?"

Themes with invariant statements from 9 respondents

1.  **Increased personal/professional awareness:**        **100% of respondents**

    a.  Am happier since I did CTT

    b.  I seek out more spiritual experiences.

    c.  I ended a relationship that held no promise

    d.  Am aware that even the most solid folks have things that trouble them

    e.  Am a better listener, who doesn't try to "fix" things

    f.  I pay more attention now to the whole person and am more tolerant of
        others

    g.  CTT helped me trust the truth that I needed to leave the classroom

    h.  Aware now of the role of community as holding environment for personal
        inquiry

    i.  CTT helped me work through the struggle of letting go of teaching

    j.  Helped my colleagues take care of themselves

2.  **Increased awareness of nature for reflection:**        **33% of respondents**

    a.  Learned about nature as a teacher

    b.  Give more attention to nature and gifts of seasons

3.  **Increased use of poetry and the arts:**        **89% of respondents**

    a.  I need to read and write poetry now.

    b.  Use arts and poetry to connect with strong emotions and creative visions

    c.  Have joined writer's workshops to develop my writing.

    d.  Poetry seeped into my soul and settled me.

*Example:* The following phrases from these replies were considered duplications of
significant statements and were not repeated again: *"I seek out more poetry"*
was considered the same as *"I need to read and write poetry now"* (number 3a).

Responses to Question 3, "What personal/professional changes if, any, do you ascribe to your CTT experience," embodied Parker Palmer's statement that "we teach who we are." In this area, personal and professional changes occurred for 100% of respondents:

> I am more open to the importance of a spiritual life, whether it be God-based or simply spirit based. I have been happier since I did CTT.
>
> Secondary teacher

> I ended…a relationship that never came together and which held no promise of the shifts of condition within which I could fully live.
>
> Community/higher education teacher

> I [have] a much stronger sense of the commonality of experiences, and the fact that others, all others, even the most seemingly solid folks, have things on their mind, things that puzzle/trouble/haunt them.
>
> Secondary teacher

> I found myself trying to help [my colleagues] take care of themselves… I spent a great deal of time celebrating our accomplishments and finding ways to lift people. I strongly feel that CTT set the tone for all these inspirations.
>
> Elementary teacher

A heightened awareness of nature as a teacher was reported by 33% of respondents which they regarded as a reminder of the cyclical nature of teaching and as a focus for reflection:

> The biggest change is my increased love for and attention to nature and the
> gifts of each season. I have "gone to the fields to be lovely."
>
> Secondary teacher

The use of poetry and the arts continued for 89% of respondents after CTT ended. Some mentioned rereading CTT poems and collecting new ones for comfort at difficult times; writing poetry; journaling and attending writer's workshops, and an increase in the amount of arts used for personal exploration or in their teaching.

> I joined CTT at a tumultuous personal and professional time for
> me...the poetry seeped into my soul and settled me...I reread many of [the
> poems now].
>
> Elementary teacher

> Although it's difficult to find the time with the increased amount of
> curriculum and the demands of MCAS testing, I make time every week for
> children to show their creative talents to the class.
>
> Elementary teacher

Finally, Question 4 responses ("What suggestions and thoughts do you have for me to consider during the study?") offered much for me to think about in

developing the Phase 2 interview questions. Many respondents affirmed the need for the study, with 78% stating that professional development in their schools continued to lack inspiration. At least one teacher, who had been granted a paid sabbatical twenty years earlier, knew that time away from school was important so teachers could grow and renew themselves. This teacher noted that the current system of teacher professional development, with its requirement for content-based professional development points (PDPs) was too discouraging for those who needed more from professional development.

For 33% of respondents, a concern remained that the significant demands of teaching continued to pose a threat to a long and satisfying career, believing that the ultimate goal of CTT is to counteract attrition. This was important for those who felt while they had transformed, their workplaces had not, and this created a dissonance for them as they tried to effect change. Other retreat participants wondered how "the CTT feeling" had been kept alive despite such challenges, perhaps by incorporating some aspects of CTT into their teaching, with 44% wondering if poetry, meditation, writing, and clearness committee were in use by the retreat participants.

These comments confirmed ideas that I had about the need for new professional development in schools to meet the needs of experienced teachers. Also, while I had thought about the use of artistic media and clearness committee—and hoped that in the interviews I would hear references to them, I hadn't thought of listening for how some teachers might specifically use them since CTT. The continued use of poetry, in particular, was mentioned by almost all respondents.

Hearing these suggestions helped me to consider a broader point of view when writing the interview questions and while listening during the interviews.

Finally, two respondents (22%) specifically suggested a focus on these areas:

Has a paradigm shift occurred [for CTT participants]?

Secondary teacher

Did the CTT rituals or practices create turning points for participants?

Community/higher education teacher

A paradigm shift was exactly what I hoped to find, perhaps one that was tied to specific CTT experiences, ideas, practices, or environments.

*Phase 1 Summary*

Responses to the Phase 1 questionnaire clearly indicated that investigating the effects of Courage to Teach on experienced teachers' professional growth and development was worthwhile, for two reasons. First, sufficient interest in participating in the study existed for the study to move forward. Evidence of teacher transformations was apparent at this early stage of the research, as were the connections between transformations and participation in Courage to Teach. One hundred percent of respondents ascribed one or more personal/professional changes to their participation in CTT; 33% of participants said they used nature as a tool for

reflection; and 89% stated they increased their used of poetry and arts since completing CTT.

Second, the research participants, as former CTT retreat members, would be able to give rich descriptions of the experience of transformations, if they occurred. Polkinghorne (1989) states that it is necessary to have research participants who can give such comprehensive and detailed descriptions, in order to conduct an existential phenomenological inquiry that seeks to understand the essence of an experience: in this case, the essence of experienced teachers' transformations.

Following the analysis of all Phase 1 responses, I proceeded to develop the Phase 2 interview questions, chose a group of participants to interview, and began to conduct the interviews.

*Phase 2 of Study*

*Phase 2 Interviews*

Ten experienced K-12 teachers participated in individual, semi-structured interviews for Phase 2 (Table 4, page 78). The interview participants and I had not seen each other since CTT ended three years before; our only contact had been brief and about this study. Despite this, we exchanged warm greetings (whether in person or by phone) and began with a social conversation, aimed at creating a relaxed and trusting atmosphere (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114).

Phase 2 data analysis began concurrently with the interviews, consisting of an examination of field notes and tape transcripts, as well as listening to the interview tape recordings. A list of every statement relative to each question produced horizons

of the experience. Redundancies and overlapping statements were eliminated. This produced a list of invariant meaning statements, which were then clustered by theme. Two findings emerged from this process: that transformations did occur for the experienced teachers in this study, and that the disorienting dilemmas that preceded the transformations led teachers, in various ways, to join Courage to Teach.

*Phase 2 Findings: Disorienting Dilemmas*

Disorienting dilemmas precede transformations (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; Cranton, 1996, 2006). These are external events—either large ones or a series of small events or issues—that lead a person to question his or her perspective (Mezirow, 2000). This leads to a process of critical reflection that can result in transformation (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

A striking result of the individual interviews was that one hundred percent of the study participants reported experiencing disorienting dilemmas prior to Courage to Teach. Throughout the interviews, participants referred again and again to the issues that disturbed them and led them to realize they needed change. Table 9 shows the types of disorienting dilemmas experienced by the participants with the percentage of those who reported experiencing each disorienting event.

As the individual interviews unfolded, I observed and recorded in my field notes when participants expressed deep emotion while talking about the dilemmas they faced prior to CTT. Eighty percent of those interviewed shed tears or spoke with a shaky or cracking voice when describing these painful situations; others would pause and look away, sometimes rubbing their hands or thighs; and several spoke

with anger, accompanied by a raised, emphatic voice. Several had a pine cone on hand, an artifact saved from one retreat weekend, that they handled during the interview almost as a talisman. These gestures and displays of emotion emphasized to me that pain was deeply embedded in the stories of why participants joined CTT. Taylor (2000) states that disorienting dilemmas can be experienced as an "acute and internal personal crisis" (Taylor, 2000, p. 298) brought on by external forces, and this became even more real as participants gave reasons for seeking out CTT.

Table 9

*Disorienting Dilemmas Experienced by the Ten Phase 2 Study Participants*

| Disorienting Dilemma | Percentage of Study Participants Who Experienced Dilemma |
|---|---|
| 1. I felt isolated at my school | 100% |
| 2. I felt a need for renewal | 100% |
| 3. Aspects of my school culture were unhealthy | 100% |
|     3a. Unsupportive school administrators | 90% |
|     3b. Difficulties with school colleagues | 90% |
| 4. Had one or more difficult years teaching | 80% |
| 5. Felt worn out | 70% |
| 6. Considered leaving teaching | 70% |
| 7. Considered career change | 60% |
| 8. Loss of effective school leadership | 50% |

For most, these disorienting dilemmas pushed participants to a search for meaning and support. Some participants began with the discovery of books about Courage to Teach:

> [During a very stressful year during which] the administration had abandoned me, I walked into a bookstore and saw *Honoring the Teacher's Heart* [Intrator & Palmer, 2002] and thought, "That's what I need: honor." And I bought the book.
>
> Elementary teacher

> I found the book in Borders one day, read the entire book in the store, and then knew I had to find this program.
>
> Elementary teacher

Other participants heard about the book *Courage to Teach* from friends, the Internet, mailings, or programs at Pendle Hill, Responsive Classroom, and Wellesley College. After reading it they, too, discovered the book or program information struck just the right chord inside them:

> I had contemplated leaving the profession…But during a "Teachers as Scholars" course, one of the other students slid me a piece of paper at the last meeting, which said "Must read this book—*Courage to Teach* by Parker

Palmer." When I read it, [I thought] it was the best book on education I'd ever read.

<div align="center">Secondary teacher</div>

An overwhelming number of disorienting dilemmas emanated from lack of administrative or district support, which created disequilibrium for many:

When I heard about CTT, I hoped to get re-energized. We had had [a job action in our district] 5-7 years prior to CTT, and although things technically got resolved, the inner core of the real issue was still at hand. And I wasn't feeling supported in [my school district], from the administration—zero!—or from within my team, because it had broken up and things had changed.

<div align="center">Elementary teacher</div>

[In my district], things just get sucked out of you...something was missing: soul, spirit to carry into the classroom and maintain you. It bothered me to see teachers walking around crying. The principal said if we couldn't do our jobs between 8:00 and 3:00, then we're no good, there was no need to have a key to come in on the weekends. But we hatched baby ducks every year and had to check on them.

<div align="center">Elementary teacher</div>

I was ready to leave teaching—my principal had made racist comments to me and said I had no cultural competence…

> Elementary teacher

Others were worn out by the lack of collegiality in their schools:

> Most of the people in my department were really mean people. You'd come back from your epiphany about writing being a process, and they'd say, "Right, well, I'd be happy not to mark papers, too!
>
> Secondary teacher

Some, due to the strain and difficulties in their school, considered leaving for other careers or to even start their own schools:

> Some of my colleagues and I met with teachers in other districts—forward-thinking teachers we knew—about starting a new school. But it's risky; they had families and needed the benefits. So we never did it.
>
> Elementary teacher

*Summary: Disorienting Dilemmas*

Disorienting dilemmas precede transformations and are external events that cause a person to question his or her meaning perspective (Mezirow, 2000). This

leads to a process of critical reflection that can result in transformation (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

For the ten experienced teachers interviewed in this study, 100% experienced disorienting dilemmas prior to joining Courage to Teach. All reported feeling a need for renewal due to isolation: described as stress, "something was missing," or a lack of collegiality. Also, all participants reported disorienting dilemmas resulting from aspects of unhealthy school cultures, emanating from poor administrative leadership or challenges dealing with colleagues. Other dilemmas included having one or more difficult years teaching; considering leaving teaching; or the loss of effective administrators. As teachers described these dilemmas, deep emotion was often displayed, which emphasized the profound effect of these events on teachers' identity and integrity.

Some teachers reported discovering the *Courage to Teach* book (Palmer, 1998) first; others heard of the retreat program first. For all, the awareness came at just the right time for pressing forward to learn more about themselves—and their teaching—in a group that practiced deep, critical reflection within a supportive community.

*Phase 2 Findings: Transformations*

All ten teachers in this study reported experiencing transformations as a result of participating in Courage to Teach. The raw data obtained in the interviews was horizontalized, a step in which all statements relative to the question are given equal weight. Next, redundancies and overlapping statements are eliminated. This

produced the invariant statements, or the unique aspects of the transformations, which

I then clustered by theme (Tables 10-13). The next step, describing the themes of

experienced teachers' transformations in my language—the transformation of the raw

data—is presented below. Keeping in mind Colaizzi's (1979) advice that the

researcher should not "sever all connection with the original [statements]"

(Polkinghorne, 1989, p. 53), I offer supporting examples from the participants'

interviews with the discussion of each transformation, so that the experience is

illuminated by the voices of the participants.

*Transformation 1: Transformed understanding of personal/professional*

*needs.*

Participation in Courage to Teach helped experienced teachers better identify

their personal/professional needs. This growth helped most teachers cope with the

stress and isolation of their classrooms and schools, which in turn made them feel that

they were better teachers and colleagues.

Although Table 10 lists only seven invariant constituents, participants

mentioned them repeatedly throughout the interviews. Of the ten teachers, 90%

stated that their inner perspectives as teachers had permanently changed, helping

them to return to their work with renewed energy and an expanded vision:

My perspective has changed. I understand I'm not alone anymore, even in the isolation of the classroom. There's a bigger picture and others have challenges and frustrations, too.

Elementary teacher

Now, I'm much more likely to reach out to other people who I think experience the same things I do [in teaching]. I'm more aware that I don't need to suffer in silence, I have resources in me to reach out to others, to reflect and be quiet, and to see where I am.

Secondary teacher

In clearness committees, I saw people going through the same things that I was at my school.

Elementary teacher

Table 10

*Transformation No. 1*

**Teachers Possess a Transformed Understanding of Their Personal/Professional Needs:**
**90% of 10 study participants**

---

Invariant statements of theme

1. Don't feel alone anymore despite isolation of classroom

2. Can better manage stress in school

3. Possess a new sense of my boundaries

4. Possess an expanded inner life

5. Am a better listener

6. Am less of a "fixer"

7. Realize that all of us grow and evolve over time

*Example:* The following phrase was considered a duplication of a significant statement and was not repeated again: "have resources to reach out to others" was considered the same as "not alone anymore, even in the isolation of the classroom."

---

The expanded vision included a fresh perspective for some whose school culture, colleagues, or administrators had a negative effect on teachers and teaching. One participant described a renewed, stronger commitment to the school community by initiating positive, loving, inclusive actions toward others:

I feel better able to deal with negativity in my school. Do you know that

hymn, "They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love?" Well, I like to

think "They Will Know We Are Courage-To-Teachers by Our Love."

                                                    Secondary teacher


Some participants expressed growth in terms of learning to listen, while "not fixing"

for colleagues:


I'm less shy now and Courage to Teach made me better about not taking

things personally. The idea of not fixing, stepping back, has definitely

changed me.

                                                    Elementary teacher


Really sitting there [in clearness committee] and learning to listen to

someone...and asking open, honest questions—that took real discipline, and is

a shift in teacher thinking away from [always needing to] "fix it."

                                                    Elementary teacher


Other Courage to Teach participants returned to schools with a guarded approach to

their boundaries, because of school cultures and administrators who did not support

their personal/professional growth and renewal:

I am more aware than ever of the detrimental effects of NCLB and the immoral effects it has on children living in poverty, violence, and neglect…and am more honest with myself and my colleagues about my opinions. But it's a daily struggle to reconcile my expanded inner life with the unchanged dysfunctionality of my school, where there is no "invitation to participate" and where my principal makes me a target for negative criticism.

Elementary teacher

I felt guarded about sharing my CTT experience with my colleagues and only talked about it with [a few] friends at school. You know, there's that fine line between doing a good job and having the test scores go up…and I didn't want to publicize this because I didn't want people to feel like I was doing more. If I was doing extra, it would make them look bad. I didn't trust the atmosphere, to share everything.

Elementary teacher

Changes in perspective often came from the inner self, brought about by Courage to Teach retreat activities:

[At the retreat,] I was trying to understand the idea of paradox and how it related to what I was doing [in my teaching.] To journal during [CTT], it reawakened a part of me I hadn't visited in a long time. I used to be right

brained!  I used to love music and art, but with the crushing demands from our administrators, I stopped using that part of my brain.

>Secondary teacher

Going to the retreat, I was exhausted, tired and thought, how can I go? Each time I was astonished at what I could share.  Afterwards, I had tremendous energy to teach, to restore, and renew energy.

>Secondary teacher

I learned what it was like to be cared for with a sense of intention, not coercion.  If you didn't want to participate [in something at the retreat], that was okay—there was no tally.  That sort of thing is not okay at my school, [where a lot of talk takes place about] who's talking to the principal, who's not showing up at professional development…At CTT, I didn't have to worry.  I was being held in a gentle, quiet way.

>Elementary teacher

Understanding the cyclical nature of growth—in life, teaching, and learning— prompted new learning and connections for experienced teachers:

I learned that all of us grow and evolve like the seasons:  something grows, blooms, dies…it goes around and around in a circle.  Being where I am in my career, this matters to me.

>Secondary teacher

It helped me to see [more senior teachers than I] reflecting on these issues [near] the end of their careers, still wanting to be thoughtful practitioners and wanting to be better.

Elementary teacher

*Summary: Transformation 1.*

Of the ten teachers interviewed, 90% reported a transformed understanding of their personal/professional needs. Palmer (2007) points out that "teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life" (p. 18). He states that external fixes—especially in the era of education reform—do not consider that meaningful change comes from within rather from without (p. 19). Therefore, this area of transformation is, in many ways, the most important one because it addresses the nexus of the personal and the professional.

For the study participants, this meant a transformation in how they perceived themselves as part of a larger world of teachers, rather than as isolated practitioners. This was important to teachers who stated they worked in unhealthy school cultures, consisting of poor leadership and/or a lack of collegial relationships. They found ways to manage their stress by defining their boundaries more clearly and by claiming both the time and the energy they needed to replenish their energy through reflective practices. Some reported returning to these unhealthy school cultures and feeling guarded about sharing their Courage to Teach experiences, and being reluctant to share their growth with more than a few close friends.

Learning to be a better listener and learning to be less of a "fixer" were two other personal/professional transformations reported. One participant noted the discipline required to do this, necessitating a significant shift in teacher thinking. Looking within through deep reflection helped experienced teachers discern their own needs for growth and become their own experts in learning how to address those needs.

*Transformation 2: Transformed teaching practice.*

Participation in Courage to Teach helped experienced teachers transform their teaching and in the way they approach their teaching. Some felt a new empowerment to make changes in what they taught. Others discovered how to set priorities, achieved a greater sense of balance in their lives, or continued to use poetry as a way to renew themselves. All teachers reported a refreshed approach to their teaching, resulting in closer connections with students and new ways of teaching their students.

In the three years since the Courage to Teach retreat, teachers noted significant changes in their teaching (Table 11). First, several teachers made changes in what they taught because of the new direction they felt as a result of CTT. As Palmer (1998) points out, a large part of the identity of teachers is intertwined with the subjects they teach; because they are experts in what they teach, making a change is not a decision undertaken lightly:

Table 11

*Transformation No. 2*

**Teachers Change How They Teach and How They Approach Their Teaching:
90% of 10 study participants**

---

Invariant statements of theme

1. I changed my teaching assignment after CTT.

2. I learned how to set my priorities.

3. I changed how I teach my students.

4. I feel more balanced in my teaching and outside of teaching.

5. Now I make closer connections to my students.

5. I use the arts in my teaching.

6. Poetry has become very important to me since CTT.

*Example:* The following phrase was considered a duplication of a significant statement and was not repeated again: "use poetry," "go back to the poetry," "collect poetry," and "poetry helped me" were considered the same as "poetry has become very important to me since CTT.

---

I asked to change [my teaching assignment] to World Literature after CTT

because now I have a broader outlook and see different points of view. And I

use poetry from different countries now.

> Secondary teacher

I see myself now as much as an artist as a teacher. I was an artist and it

needed to come out...CTT gave me the door.

> Elementary teacher

My last year, I decided I didn't want to teach honors kids any more, I wanted to teach regular kids. They were much more appreciative, easier, and I was able to exercise more of what I wanted, not dealing with neurotic kids who all they wanted was an A+.

Secondary teacher

Teachers also set new priorities for themselves by speaking up more often and by handling conflict differently:

[When I hear other teachers talking negatively about students], I say, "What's really going on for the students? Where's the joy in the day?"

Elementary teacher

I used to be distracted by silly conflicts [within my school] and now I can detach in a positive way. CTT reminded me that reflection, pondering, contemplation [is worthwhile].

Elementary teacher

Several teachers from urban districts voiced concern about the violence they faced with their students on a regular basis. One teacher expressed deep concern at the lack of urgent action she saw in her school administration, and refused to be silenced:

I speak out more about what is right. It's how I was trained and I think it is immoral not to speak out on behalf of children. With the murders and violence in my school the last year or two—and we have no support from our principal, no counselors, there is no discussion of anything [to help us and our students]. I'm not sure how long [I can continue this]—I may have to look at something else [for a job].

Elementary teacher

CTT inspired a number of teachers to change how they teach their students, whether by how the room was arranged or by approaching the content differently:

CTT even changed how I set up my room. Now I have my students sit in a circle and the experience changes their learning. It's a kinder, gentler arrangement. I can't believe I ever taught (with the students sitting) in rows— I used to think it wasn't practical [to do otherwise] and I never saw my colleagues do different things with desks.

Secondary teacher

Years ago, I used to spend time on Fridays letting the students perform for each other individually or in small groups. They did skits, songs, puppetry, magic acts, and game shows. With the onset of always being expected "to be on task", I slipped away from that time of child-selected and child-created work. [After CTT] I started it again with a new sense of its value…it helped

children develop social bonds and gave them a means to use their other interests and strengths.

Elementary teacher

Now I put myself in my students' places—they sit at my desk and I'll sit at theirs—it's a whole new perspective for me and my students...[I often think], what can happen [today] that we all enjoy?

Secondary teacher

With changes in teaching practice and perspective came a balanced feeling that teachers say helped them cope with the complex, demanding work of teaching:

I view myself more empathetically since CTT. I'm more gentle with myself and less judgmental with myself and others. Really stupid things at school used to upset me.

Secondary teacher

The feeling of giving myself permission to relax—this is a permanent change, directly from CTT. Now I have a little space in between my thinking and my reaction. [I realize that teaching] is more cyclical, and more busy sometimes than others.

Elementary teacher

Many of the teacher transformations resulted in a desire for closer connections with students, even when school mandates made it nearly impossible:

> I'm more willing to experience them as people now, so I do more in small groups and one-on-one. I have a more personal connection with my students that I didn't have before and my load feels lightened [as a result].
>
> Elementary teacher

> We've been a "failing school" and under restructuring [by the state], so everything we do is mandated and scripted…This year I had to give up doing Open Circle, which was magic—the things that would come up, the kids acting as we would as adults. Without it, they're less able to be peacemakers or even people. The things that are important to my children are [not discussed in my school].
>
> Elementary teacher

Some teachers discovered a way to use the arts in their teaching, enhancing student learning:

> Now I see the arts as a way of expressing and sharing. [Gestures to student artwork on wall.] The students did these from another character's perspective in the story we read.
>
> Secondary teacher

I love music—I integrate music and poetry into my lessons and wish I could do even more. It feels like treading water just to stay competent [in teaching].

Secondary teacher

All teachers mentioned the new place of poetry in their lives, transforming them through reflection and renewal:

[Using poetry] is something I wouldn't have done if not in CTT... I used to feel that poetry wasn't accessible to me...I liked that [the poems] were selected for me.

Elementary teacher

I became very aware of metaphor as a result of CTT. I loved the poetry, the writing, and the art—they speak to your soul and keep you fresh.

Elementary teacher

Poetry has helped me hold the tension [of teaching] better.

Elementary teacher

*Summary: Transformation 2.*

Ninety percent of the ten experienced teachers in this study reported transformations in how they teach and how they approach their teaching. The practice of reflection in Courage to Teach helped teachers discern what their teaching

priorities were. For some, this meant requesting a change in teaching assignment that was a better match for their expanded understanding of themselves and their beliefs. Others discovered a desire to build closer connections with their students, which they felt made them better teachers and better advocates for their students. As one teacher noted, even a seemingly small change made in teaching—such as rearranging the desks from rows into a large circle—changed the dynamics of the classroom so that students became more actively engaged in learning, with the teacher discovering the role of facilitator.

Teaching transformations like these occurred after a process of critical reflection. Palmer (2004) states that by using "third things" during a process of critical reflection, teachers can approach difficult or complex issues in a more indirect way (p. 92). Teachers stated that poetry, readings, journaling, and art activities helped them through the process of reflection; after CTT, teachers incorporated these third things into their own lives and their teaching. All teachers affirmed poetry as especially meaningful to them: all teachers stated they returned to the CTT poetry when they needed to, and many reported building their own collection of poetry to use after CTT.

A transformed understanding of their identity and integrity led these experienced teachers to gain new perspectives on their teaching practice, leading to a greater sense of personal/professional balance. This balance allowed the teachers to feel more confident, relaxed, and able to consider, as one teacher put it, "What can happen today that we all enjoy?"

*Transformation 3: Teachers transform as leaders.*

Participation in Courage to Teach can transform experienced teachers into leaders who bring about positive change in their schools. They do this by taking on new, formal leadership roles; by establishing or enhancing informal roles to show support and care for their colleagues; and by leading from within to guide their colleagues.

After the Courage to Teach retreat, many teachers found a new way to express themselves as experienced teachers. Eighty percent (80%) become leaders in their school and this discovery energized them:

It was in me, an element of leadership and positive energy! Unfortunately, in the negative setting at my school, it was getting pushed down. I didn't realize the [negative] impact my principal had had on me.

Elementary teacher

For the longest time I thought I could never do anything in leadership, that I was not strong enough… now, the idea that I could do something outside the classroom [in school leadership] has transformed me. [I discovered] I'm not just attached to teaching. I remember [someone] at one of the retreats said, "Sometimes, life's about having the courage *not* to teach!"

Elementary teacher

Some teachers took on new, formal leadership roles in their lives as educators as they realized their growth after CTT:

> Courage to Teach gave me more of a backbone and the realization that I have an obligation to stand up and improve our situation [in our school]. The morale in our school was low and our administration was dehumanizing and discouraging to us. I discovered a greater obligation to be a leader and am a building rep now.
>
> Secondary teacher

Table 12

*Transformation 3*

**Teachers Transform into Leaders at Their Schools:
80% of 10 study participants**

Two sub-themes with invariant statements for 8 participants

**1. Teachers discovered aspects of leadership in selves:     70% of 8 participants**
  * Element of leadership and positive energy are in me
  * More likely to reach out to other people
  * Discovered not just attached to teaching
  * Discovered obligation to lead in my school
  * Decided to work on what I believed and how I was trained

**2. Teachers took on new roles as leaders in school:     63% of 8 participants**
  * Am a building rep now
  * CTT was the first step in becoming a reading coach
  * Helped organize colleagues against a political move
  * Gave support and energy to my colleagues
  * We organized a CTT teachers' reading group at our school
  * We organized an Artist's Way group at our school

Others developed themselves as leaders in informal roles, doing work with a far-reaching impact:

> I did not anticipate how strong CTT would make me in being able to reach out to other people [in my department]. [There was a plan to move some of us to another school] so they could fire people over there and I helped to organize my colleagues—we met many times to brainstorm and wrote a position paper about it, and we fought that off. That was me—I was proud of that!—just through my own need to talk about problems with other people.
>
> Secondary teacher

> I'm on my college's alumni association board and decided to start one meeting by reading a poem—William Stafford's poem on elephants. We all read a line and then told what line spoke to us. Amazing things came out! We realized we really didn't know each other—we just came to meetings, had dinner—but then decided to work on what we believed in and what we were taught [at my college]: carrying on the founder's mission.
>
> Elementary teacher

Two participants, who were from the same school, brought Courage to Teach to their school by organizing their own book group:

We had about 30 people who would meet after school [to discuss the book *Courage to Teach*]. We tried to adhere to the touchstones [to guide us] and it became a little community. A lot have gone on to hear Palmer speak and others in our school joined another Courage to Teach retreat.

Secondary teacher


The two of us shared the leadership of it. The respect people had for us! People would stay after school until 4 or 5 o'clock! We tried to steer the group away from negativity—there is great value in focusing on the positive.

Secondary teacher


In this particular school, the Courage to Teach book group led to an Artist's Way group:


We even had art and science teachers join us [to work on creating art]. About 15-18 people were in it. When we were done, we had a breakfast and art show for the faculty—about 100 faculty came—it was spectacular and our hearts were filled! Then other departments got the spirit and started have themed breakfasts. It resulted in a total climate change for us.

Secondary teacher


Our school was hurting and good teachers were leaving. We had seen the need for a new kind of professional development. Our new superintendent

wrote us a thank you note and now lets us do Artist's Way as professional development.

Secondary teacher

*Summary: Transformation 3.*

After participating in Courage to Teach, 80% of the ten experienced teachers in this study discovered transformations into roles as leaders. This began as part of their renewal from within and evolved throughout the cycles of reflection at each seasonal retreat. Some described the discovery of leadership within themselves as positive energy to give to others, often by reaching out to others whom it appeared shared the same concerns that the CTT participant did. This improved relationships with colleagues and helped the CTT teachers to find new, meaningful ways to contribute to education. Others discovered a latent ability to lead, which opened up new career possibilities as school leaders. As one experienced teacher contemplating such a role said, "I discovered I wasn't just attached to teaching."

A number of study participants found new, formal leadership roles that matched their newly transformed perspectives. An interesting example is of a teacher who, unable to find opportunities at her school to apply her transformed perspective, refused to yield to negative repercussions from her principal and found a receptive community for her ideas at her college's alumni association board. Conversely, two teachers in the CTT cohort started and led a CTT book group at their school, working together to heal some wounds in their school culture and ultimately attracting about thirty people after school. An *Artist's Way* group began at their school afterward, and a number of their colleagues joined other Courage to Teach retreat groups.

Perhaps the greatest manifestation of these leadership transformations was the replenishment of the teachers' spirit, allowing them to make substantive contributions to their schools, colleagues, and communities—and ultimately returning renewed, fulfilled, and experienced teachers to their students.

### *Transformation 4: Teachers transform as leaders.*

Courage to Teach helped experienced teachers decide how or when to leave their job or end their career, and to see new possibilities in their decision.

Some members of the CTT cohort were nearing the end of their career, and of those approaching retirement, all said CTT helped them clarify how and when to leave a career they loved:

> I don't like change. I stayed way beyond the time when I got maximum [retirement]…When we got a new superintendent, I thought things would change. But instead, they got worse. CTT helped me make the jump: it gave me the courage to retire.
>
> Elementary teacher

> I was conflicted about the decision to retire. When I finally did clearness committee, I learned how much school filled my life and was important to me.

So the last few years of my career, I felt more centered and whole about my teaching. It had been a fulfilling job for me. [In my last few years], I was able to have a different sense of my teaching. And that was a gift.

Secondary teacher

I felt called to my vocation as a teacher. That's the gift I was called to [give to the world]. But I had been abandoned by my administration, during what was a traumatic year for me [and my students]. I needed to [leave and experiment] with something outside the classroom for a while.

Elementary teacher

*Summary: Transformation 4.*

Of the ten experienced teachers in this study, 40% either retired or left teaching for another career since CTT. The teachers experienced this as a transformation for several reasons. First, all of the teachers felt deeply committed to teaching and to their students. Leaving either one was not an easy decision nor was it made quickly. Second, these CTT participants, who had spent years—even decades—preparing lessons, welcoming students, and engaging in all kinds of professional development and learning, considered their teaching careers true vocations. They were committed in their souls to teaching.

Even the disorienting dilemmas that led these teachers to join Courage to Teach were not enough to make these teachers rush to a decision to leave teaching. Instead, they wished to leave on their own terms, feeling happy that they had chosen

teaching as a good expression of themselves. Also, teachers stated they wished to choose their own timeline for leaving and their own path to leaving; the deep reflection during Courage to Teach gave them, as one teacher stated, "the courage to make a change." To all of them, discovering their own way to leave teaching was a significant transformation of their identity and their integrity.

Table 13

*Transformation 4*

| **Teachers Transform Into Retirement or Another Career:** **40% of study participants** |
| --- |
| Invariant statements of theme |
| 1. Gave me the courage to retire |
| 2. Ready to leave teaching for something more creative |
| 3. Gave me the courage to make a change |

*Summary of Phase 1 and Phase 2 Findings*

The phenomenon investigated in this study—the transformations of experienced teachers—was shaped by Mezirow's (2000) definition of transformation as a permanent shift in one's meaning perspective. As the evidence of transformations emerged, so did evidence of disorienting dilemmas, which are external events that cause one to question one's meaning perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

The data collected for this study came in two phases. In Phase 1, a questionnaire was sent to the twenty-three participants in the 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England retreat. Nine written responses were received, a near 40% rate of response. The data produced by the responses was analyzed using a phenomenological methodology, informed by an existential-phenomenology approach. The results were the following:

- Sufficient interest in participation existed to continue the study

- The direction of the study was affirmed

- Sufficient interest existed to research transformative change as a result of participation in a Courage to Teach two-year retreat

- Indications existed that transformations did occur for Phase 1 respondents, as well as for cohort members who indicated interest but who were unable to participate due to time and schedule constraints

- Suggestions were received from respondents on what to consider when developing the next phase of the study

In Phase 2, a group of ten K-12 teachers participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to probe for and understand transformations that occurred as a result of participating in a two-year cohort of Courage to Teach. The ten participants were drawn from the cohort members who indicated interest in participating in the study. Again, data produced by the responses was analyzed using a phenomenological methodology, informed by an existential-phenomenology approach. The results for Phase 2 were the following:

- 100% of the interview participants experienced some kind of disorienting dilemma or dilemmas prior to joining the Courage to Teach retreat. These ranged from an unhealthy school culture to the need for a new meaning perspective in other areas of their teaching lives. These disorienting dilemmas prompted participants to begin a personal search to resolve these dilemmas.

- 100% of the interview participants experienced one or more transformations as a result of participation in the CTT retreat. These fell into four categories: personal/professional transformations that made teachers better able to cope with the complex demands of teaching; teaching transformations that teachers believed improved their teaching; transformations of teachers into leaders who made

positive changes in their schools; and a transformed understanding about one's path to retirement or to a career change.

These results are discussed in the following chapter, along with the implications of this study for educator professional development and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations

*Introduction*

In this chapter, the results of this study are discussed in terms of experienced

teachers' professional development and transformative learning. The important

implications for education reform drawn from this study include recommendations for

a systemic shift in thinking about professional development and how best to meet the

needs of experienced teachers.

Teacher professional development systems must be *transformed.* Considering

that districts, states, and the national education agenda are confronting educational

and fiscal challenges as never before, educators and policy-makers must acknowledge

and address the strong body of research about what works in teacher professional

development and what doesn't. This includes learning from Courage to Teach and its

growing body of research, including this study. There is little research that supports a

"business-as-usual" approach to professional development. Instead, educators,

education leaders, politicians, and education policy makers must heed this call for

systemic change. Accomplishing such a shift does not require massive funding—

which is good news—but does require a change in thinking, requiring a commitment

from all stakeholders in education.

*Study Summary*

This study was designed to investigate these research questions:

- What kind of transformations take place for experienced teachers as a result of

  their participation in Courage to Teach?

- What are the implications for professional development programs for experienced teachers as a result of this study?

The investigation of these questions was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 of the study was designed to gather general information about the Courage to Teach/New England 2002-2004 retreat participants: to gather general information about personal/professional changes in the three years since the retreat had ended; and to assess interest in study participation. All members of the twenty-three member cohort received an invitation to participate in the study. I received fourteen emailed expressions of interest and support (almost 61% of the cohort) and nine completed questionnaires (almost 40% of the cohort). This response rate indicated strong interest in participation as the study moved forward.

The written responses in Phase 1 represented every level of teaching, kindergarten through graduate school, including community education. The nine respondents averaged almost 24 years of teaching experience, well beyond the definition of an experienced teacher as one who has more than three years of teaching experience (Darling-Hammond, 2000; NCES, 1997). The data generated by the responses was analyzed using an existential-phenomenological methodology. The results of Phase 1 gave early indications of transformation as a result of participation in CTT.

Shaped by the data gathered in Phase 1, Phase 2 of the study focused on experienced teachers in grades kindergarten through twelve. Ten cohort members drawn from the pool of Phase 1 respondents and the fourteen expressions of interest,

a pool representing sixty-one percent (61%) of the cohort, agreed to participate in individual, semi-structured interviews at a place they chose. These Phase 2 participants, a slightly different group of cohort members from the Phase 1 respondents, averaged 24 years of teaching experience and represented forty-three percent (43%) of the cohort. Data generated in the Phase 2 interviews was analyzed using an existential-phenomenological methodology.

As I analyzed data from the ten semi-structured interviews, both disorienting dilemmas and teacher transformations emerged, along with evidence that participation in Courage to Teach effected transformations for 100% of those in the study. The following section presents the essential structure of the transformations experienced by the Phase 2 participants.

## The Process of Transformation

Mezirow (2000) defines transformative learning as:

> ...the process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets) to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (pp. 7-8)

The central process in transformative learning is critical reflection, through which a person reconsiders her view of the world by identifying assumptions, scrutinizing their accuracy and validity, and reconstituting them (Brookfield, 1990b; Mezirow, 2000). It can be a period of cognitive dissonance and should take place in

an atmosphere of trust (Brookfield, 1991; Roberts & Pruitt, 2002). Mezirow (2000)

states that a perspective transformation proceeds through these general phases, which

are not necessarily sequential:

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame

3. A critical assessment of assumptions

4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are

   shared

5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6. Planning a course of action

7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8. Provisional trying of new roles

9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's

    new perspective (p. 22)

One or more transformations were experienced by 100% of the study

participants as a result of their participation in Courage to Teach. Phases of

transformation seemed to be grouped together for some participants, and overlapped

or zigzagged for others, affirming Mezirow's (2000) premise that transformation does

not occur in a linear fashion. However, all participants reported disorienting

dilemmas occurring prior to Courage to Teach, which began their process of

transformative learning.

*Disorienting Dilemmas*

According to Mezirow (1990, 2000), transformative learning is preceded by a

disorienting dilemma. A disorienting dilemma is an event that "cannot be resolved by

simply acquiring more information, enhancing problem solving skills or adding to

one's competencies" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 108). The results of this study show that

100% of Courage to Teach participants reported experiencing at least one disorienting

dilemma prior to joining CTT. These dilemmas caused the teachers in the study to

initiate a search for meaning in order to help them solve or understand "a problematic

frame of reference" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20). In fact, the effect of the disorienting

dilemmas was so strong that many of the teachers in this study felt compelled to take

action, which led them in one way or another to Courage to Teach.

Palmer states that many teachers describe teaching as a vocational calling or

destiny (Palmer, 1998). Teaching is an essential part of their identity and their

integrity, and these elements are closely connected to both the subjects they teach and

the students whom they teach (Palmer, 1998). When disorienting dilemmas violate

one's identity and integrity, Palmer states, "The teacher within stands guard at the

gate of selfhood, warding off whatever insults our integrity and welcoming whatever

affirms it (p. 31).

Before this group of teachers joined Courage to Teach in search of meaning or

affirmation, they experienced disorienting dilemmas at their schools that made them

feel isolated or in need of renewal (100% of participants); also, they experienced

disorienting dilemmas that were connected with one or more unhealthy aspects of

their school culture (100% of participants). Participants described school cultures in

which leadership was unconcerned with the needs of teachers who craved substantive professional conversations and growth; cultures where colleagues criticized each other, leaving participants feeling isolated; cultures that never recovered from job actions; school cultures that blamed teachers for the problems of its students. According to 90% of the study participants, a major reason given for this was poor educational leadership: the belief that superintendents and principals exacerbated participants' disorienting dilemmas with their lack of attention to creating school cultures that encouraged teachers to grow.

Other disorienting dilemmas reported by participants included large-scale curricular changes imposed by administrators without teacher participation; principals who rarely talked with their teachers; and the affects of working on a fractured and demoralized school faculty. It became clear that educational leaders who lack an understanding of the fundamental principles of adult learning and teacher professional development can create the conditions for disorienting dilemmas to grow. Teachers who feel unsupported, threatened, and marginalized by their leaders feel disempowered and even more isolated in their teaching, creating complex layers of disorienting dilemmas.

Because teaching involves developing and maintaining relationships with other human beings—administrators, colleagues, and students—it has a strong emotional component (Brookfield, 1990a). It is easy to understand the emotional response of the study participants when they felt that their teacher identity and integrity—which Palmer (2003) names as a teacher's soul—were threatened or endangered: "The challenge of such a crisis is always clear, though finding a way

through never is: do we follow the soul's calling, or do we bend to the forces of deformation around us and within us?" (p. 2).

The creation of supportive environments for teaching and learning is the ultimate responsibility of school leaders, who must communicate that they value the human beings in the school as its most valuable asset (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2005). A supportive, respectful environment is necessary for inquiry and reflection to take place (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). As Palmer (1998) points out: "Good talk about teaching can take many forms…and it can transform teaching and learning. But it will happen only if leaders expect it, invite it, and provide hospitable space for the conversation to occur" (p. 160).

Given the pressures and complexities of leading schools and districts today, educational leaders deserve professional development to help them learn how to create cultures that enhance teacher growth; to recognize the symptoms of teacher withdrawal and isolation; and to provide opportunities for renewal (Wolfe, Murphy, Phelps, & McGrath, 2000). True education reform will not be achieved until the professional needs of teachers are recognized and addressed as priorities by education leaders.

The disorienting dilemmas described in this study did not resolve or evaporate with participation in CTT. Instead, participants reported that the transformations they experienced helped them cope better with stress and isolation. With the transformations came the application of tools and strategies learned in CTT that participants used to create changes in their classrooms, with their students, and with their colleagues. Every participant spoke of the value they placed on poetry,

returning to the poems used in CTT for meditation or reflection; using poetry with their students; or introducing poetry at a board meeting to help refocus the board's work. In addition, journaling, solitude, meditation, and using the arts sustained renewal for participants after CTT.

This is not surprising for two reasons. First, Palmer (2004) considers the use of "third things" such as poetry or the arts as desirable ways to approach difficult or charged topics. Third things, used as metaphors, allow participants to reflect on these topics at a pace and depth that is appropriate for each person. Second, the arts contain a language of their own, one that can lead a person to consider "thinking of things as if they could be otherwise," which is part of the process of reflection (Greene, 2001, p. 116). All of the strategies that participants stated they brought with them after the retreat helped their transformations to continue to evolve, despite any unresolved disorienting dilemmas. As one participant noted, "[The transformations] are subtle and keep happening" (Phase 2 teacher).

*Transformations*

A striking 100% of participants in this study reported transformations as a result of their participation in critical reflection during Courage to Teach. Four areas of transformation emerged from the data analysis:

1. Teachers possessed a transformed understanding of their personal/professional needs,

2. Teachers changed how they taught and how they approached their teaching,

3. Teachers transformed into leaders at their schools,

4. Teachers transformed into retirement or another career.

*A Transformed Awareness of Personal/Professional Needs*

The first transformation was reported by 90% of the study participants. Many

realized that they had found a group of kindred spirits who, like them, had the same

concerns about feeling enervated. This discovery reduced the feeling of isolation

many experienced in their schools and as well as the stress produced by isolation and

coping with complex problems in teaching. One teacher stated that a change in

perspective occurred for her because of the realization that others—in the greater

world of teaching—confronted the same challenges that she did.

According to 60% of the study participants, clearness committee helped

facilitate these transformations. In the intimate and carefully structured environment

of clearness committee, the participants often came to greater self-understanding

while listening to the focus person grapple with a problem. This, too, reduced

isolation, and as one clearness committee member put it, "I saw people going through

the same things that I was at my school" (Phase 2 teacher). This perspective

transformation helped bring the teachers into the "great world of practitioners" (Phase

1 teacher) where they could transcend their immediate surroundings and draw

replenishment from a larger world of support. In this, the participants demonstrated

the desire and the ability to grow out of isolation and into a realization "that all of us

grow and evolve over time" (Phase 2 teachers). For those study participants (40%)

who did not mention clearness committee as a path toward transformation, the variety

of reflective activities (journaling, walking, talking, creating art, reading poetry) and environments (large group, small group, and solitary) provided the right context for their transformations.

Maslow (1971) states that beyond the stage of self-actualization comes the stage of "self-transcendence," describing it as one's ability to connect beyond the self, surpassing what one had thought were one's limits. By discovering connections beyond themselves through CTT, teachers who no longer felt isolated reduced their stress. This greater sense of connection also helps explain the sense of an expanded inner life, helping participants to reach deeper into themselves while reaching outward. As one teacher said,

> "I have resources in me to reach out to others, to reflect and be quiet,
>
> to see where I am" (Phase 2 teacher).

Courage to Teach encouraged more listening and less "fixing", practices encouraged in CTT through adherence through to "touchstones" (Appendix C). By understanding their inner resources, by developing them, and by using them, teachers reported a better sense of their boundaries. This relationship between the inner and the outer self had an immediate impact on their lives at school. By developing inner resources, teachers reported being able to give more of themselves outwardly—to their work, their students, and their colleagues.

*Transformation of Teaching Practices*

A new realization—that tending the inner landscape of their lives meant teachers became better equipped to tend their outer landscape—also emerged in the

second area of transformation. Ninety percent of the study participants stated that they changed both how they taught and how they approached their teaching. Participants reported being better able to teach the way they knew was right for them. Several teachers changed teaching assignments in order to better align what they taught with what they believed, whether it was with a different group of students or a new course. A majority of others reported a transformed philosophical and pedagogical shift in their teaching, leading them to share more of themselves with their students. Not one teacher in the study mentioned using new teaching techniques or newly gained content knowledge: the usual focus of professional development. Instead, teachers began to discuss learning more openly with their students, giving students more choices in their learning. Participants reported doing more individual and small group work in the classroom, increasing the amount of active learning done by students and developing closer connections to their students. As one teacher stated:

> I remember talking [in CTT] about feeling disconnected to my students…they were a set of problems to me, "here's 15 kids, how do I get them from "a" to "b"…and now I'm willing to experience them as people, one-on-one (Phase 2 teacher).

Teachers reported experiencing these inner shifts in teaching philosophy as embodiment of Palmer's (1998) belief that "we teach who we are" (p. 1). By being more of whom they really felt they were, participants could teach the way they believed was best for their students. Despite teaching in this standards-based era, with politicians and education policymakers placing stress on making "adequate

yearly progress" as determined by scores on standardized tests, participants did not report moving towards more restrictive classroom environments. Rather, they reported that they wanted to embrace more active engagement among their students, encouraging them to make decisions about what and how to learn; letting students' interests play a larger role in the teachers' agendas; using poetry and the arts more often for student expression. One teacher was pressured to eliminate Open Circle in order to spend more time preparing students for standardized testing, yet managed to set aside a little time to take her students outside to sketch, teaching them to enjoy art and nature though in a more limited way than she would have preferred.

*Teachers Transform into Leaders*

The third area of transformation that participants reported involved leadership in two areas: discovering a leader within oneself and taking on new leadership roles in school. After CTT, 80% of the study participants discovered leadership roles that suited them. Seventy percent reported discovering a new inner aspect of themselves, one that enabled them to consider a change to educational leadership or to infuse new energy into their relationships at school. Some study participants experienced this transformation as a "coming to voice," as they discovered a new ability to speak on behalf of themselves and articulate their personal/professional needs (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1996).

Sixty-three percent also took on new, formal leadership roles as they discovered that their increased confidence led to opportunities to lead their colleagues as union or association representatives, board members, and grade level or domain

leaders. In these roles, participants reported feeling both a new ability and a responsibility to lead their colleagues by either speaking out in support of them or by demonstrating how to incorporate new ideas into teaching. As one participant said, "I discovered an obligation to lead in my school" (Phase 2 teacher). Another described leading a discussion on teaching philosophy that resulted in an agreement among colleagues: "We decided [we were going to] work on what we believed in and how we were trained [as teachers]." These teachers exemplified Erikson's (1997) stage of generativity—the phase in middle adulthood in which adults discover a desire to care for others and help guide and establish the next generation.

Teachers who embraced new informal leadership roles in their schools also shared this new sense of empowerment. An interesting example is that of two Phase 2 participants who were from the same school and who were deeply concerned about their colleagues' morale during changes in school leadership. They began a book group that read and studied *Courage to Teach* (Palmer, 1998), which was followed by a group that studied *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (Bryan, Cameron & Allen, 1998). In their interviews, each of these participants mentioned the large numbers of colleagues who joined them and the positive change they saw in their colleagues, resulting in some joining other Courage to Teach retreats and others assembling a building-wide art show to display their creations.

These are examples of adult learning at its most personal and autonomous (Cranton, 2006; Knowles, 1970). They also exemplify the need for experienced teachers to create their own opportunities for professional development (Cook, 1997). When teachers take control of their learning, they are fully individuated in their

relationships with their colleagues, which Levinson also called "self-generating" (Tennant & Pogson, 1995).

*Teachers Transform into Retirement or Another Career*

A fourth transformation was reported by those CTT participants (40%) who were approaching retirement or contemplating a career change. All spoke of an inner struggle—that was quite separate from the disorienting dilemmas they named—to come to terms with how and when to end the career they loved. All wished to leave feeling positive about themselves, the contributions they had made over decades, the rewarding relationships they had built with their students, and the pleasure of seeing their students grow. As one teacher put it, "Courage to Teach gave me the courage to retire." All three teachers who retired felt they could "teach who they were" up to the end of their careers. One teacher stated, "And that was a gift."

For one teacher who decided to take a break from teaching and try something else, leaving a teaching job didn't mean she was no longer a teacher. As she put it, "I felt called to my vocation as a teacher," a sentiment repeated by all Phase 2 participants in this study. CTT gave her the courage to try something else, and she did not rule out returning to teaching at some point. For all four teachers who experienced this transformation, the practices of Courage to Teach—reflection in large and small groups; being either a focus person or a listener on a clearness committee; and the supportive environment of CTT—helped them to discern their own path to the next stage of their lives. Furthermore, the next steps were not seen as endings; they were seen as creative new beginnings. For this group, the

transformative act of leaving teaching and moving toward something new took the form of emancipatory knowledge, which is the result of critical reflection (Cranton, 1996, 2006; Mezirow, 2000).

## *Implications of Study*

For over two decades, the research has been clear about teacher professional development. One-size-fits-all approaches do not work. While not every teacher may be drawn to join a Courage to Teach retreat, there are elements of CTT that could easily enhance existing professional development models, particularly the opportunity for collegiality and critical reflection.

### *Critical Reflection as the Focus of Professional Development Design*

In terms of a renewed focus on teacher reflection as transformative professional development, at least two decades' worth of research supports professional development that responds to teachers' needs; reduces their isolation; and engages teachers' critical reflection. This study shows how sustained critical reflection worked for ten experienced teachers, and suggests applications for a wider audience.

Critical reflection—through Courage to Teach or similar models—meets the needs of teachers at every stage of their careers. CTT's use of clearness committee, a small group of peers focused on listening to a teacher, asking open and honest questions, with no "fixing" allowed, gives teachers the opportunity to grow in a profound way. Being listened to and supported by one's peers in a safe environment

while reflecting on and discerning one's own truth provides a powerful and potentially transformative learning experience for adults.

There are other ways to practice reflection, many of them inexpensive to implement and having little or no impact on a district's budget:

- Conducting action research, used by teachers to investigate and reflect upon aspects of their teaching practices;

- Participating in Japanese lesson study, a way for teachers to collaborate on planning, teaching, and evaluating lessons;

- Conducting teaching rounds to study teaching and learning, using a medical school model;

- Meeting in critical friends groups to promote collegiality and collaboration, while reflecting on the impact of teaching practice on student learning;

- Participating in the National Writing Project to encourage teachers to reflect through writing and storytelling;

- Book study groups to engage teachers in critical reflection on topics chosen by them;

- Journaling on poetry or other third things to promote teacher reflection from different perspectives.

Groups organized to study *Courage to Teach* or *The Artist's Way at Work* (a method of using creativity to reflect and transform) as two teachers in this study showed, have far-reaching effects as teachers engaged with one another and invited their colleagues to join them. For experienced teachers, these methods of critical reflection tap into their deep knowledge of teaching, their years of experience, and

help them to develop knowledge about themselves. Opportunities for reflection and collaboration help keep teachers fully engaged and energized throughout their careers, building community and lessening isolation.

Implementing substantial but expensive models of professional development such as professional development schools may be untenable during these difficult financial times, but several components of professional learning communities are consistent with Courage to Teach and are inexpensive to organize and implement. Some of these components—such as discussions of shared practices and building an atmosphere of collaboration—can promote an atmosphere in which reflection can be the heart of professional development. The work of PLCs should move beyond analyzing test scores, toward the development of strong collegial relationships that support critical reflection, which has a strong impact on teachers' classroom practices.

*The Role of Educational Leadership*

District and school leaders today are faced with their own set of pressures, two of which are lack of time and extremely tight budgets. In terms of school budgets, introducing critical reflection can be inexpensive and have long-lasting affects, an excellent example of cost effective investment in teacher professional development. Professional development time, already in short supply, is often used to deliver required information or new curricula. However, ineffective use of that time is often the norm in schools. Many hours of professional development that fail to honor teachers or acknowledge their needs as adult learners fail to have substantial impact

on teaching or learning. Empowering teachers, giving them a voice in the design of their learning experiences, providing the opportunity to collaborate with peers and giving time to reflect on their practice could have significant impact on teacher satisfaction and performance.

Administrative leadership is essential to help teachers grow reflective practice from the ground up, building the habits of reflection and collaboration slowly and securely, until they become an essential elements of school and district culture. School and district cultures that honor teachers' growth through reflection create a sense of shared ownership, a healthy climate for teaching and learning, and open a path for teacher self-actualization and self-transcendence. This is the mission schools hold for students and it should also be the mission for all adult learners in a school.

Finally, school leaders and education policymakers need to be included in experiences like Courage to Teach. School leaders carry heavy burdens and need the same kind of support and renewal that teachers do. (During the time of my participation in Courage to Teach, I attended a weekend-long Courage to Lead retreat for school principals, which I found helpful and relevant.) Education policymakers should work with school leaders to explore professional development models that incorporate Courage to Teach practices as a way to have a deep impact on teaching and student learning. This kind of investment in schools could have positive and far-reaching social, emotional, and behavioral effects on its students, as teachers learn to nourish their inner lives.

*Raising the Profile of Courage to Teach*

As the body of research on Courage to Teach continues to expand, efforts should be made by those familiar with CTT's values and principles to raise the program's national profile and visibility in the discussion on educator professional development. In particular, CTT's use of critical reflection needs to become part of the national education reform agenda. The "banking model" of adult learning and teacher professional development is not supported by education research (Freire, 1993, 1998). Neither are initiatives that offer "tips, tricks, and techniques" as Palmer puts it. (1998, p. 11). One reason that current education reform efforts do not have a more profound effect on teaching and learning may be that these efforts fail to focus on teacher reflection: an essential, inexpensive, easy-to-implement aspect of professional development. With the national urgency to improve teaching and learning, schools today cannot afford to spend time and money on professional development that doesn't work or doesn't last.

*Limitations of This Study*

The results of this study are valid only for the population researched, ten experienced teachers who participated in a two-year cohort of Courage to Teach. The population in this study was self-selecting: once as they decided to join CTT, and a second time as they agreed to participate in this research.

*Recommendations for Further Study*

A number of questions arose during this study that warrant further research:

- Replication of this study and further confirmation that transformations occur for teachers as a result of participation in CTT.

- What are the transformations that occur for school administrators as a result of participation in Courage to Lead?

- What are the characteristics of educators who choose to participate in Courage to Teach?

- What are the characteristics of CTT participants who are dissatisfied with their CTT experience? What are the reasons for their dissatisfaction?

- How does Courage to Teach help with teacher retention?

- What can schools do to create cultures of professional development that are informed by elements of Courage to Teach?

- How does CTT affect transformations experienced by early-career, mid-career and late-career teachers?

- What other models of professional development address experienced teachers' personal/professional needs and how do these models result in teacher transformations?

- If a school exists that operates on Courage to Teach principles, can research be done using a case study approach?

- What the effects a teacher's transformation through reflection have on student learning?

- What are the effects that a teacher's participation in Courage to Teach has on student learning?

*Conclusion*

This study demonstrated that transformations occurred for 10 experienced teachers who participated in a two-year retreat cycle of Courage to Teach. The essence of these transformations was the personal/professional renewal and growth of experienced teachers who discovered ways to honor their integrity and identity by "teaching who they are." As teachers grew inwardly through opportunities for reflection with others who wished to do the same, they experienced inner transformations as well as professional transformations. The teachers in this study stated that these transformations helped them better identify their personal and professional needs; made them better teachers; helped them embrace leadership roles in their schools; and helped them approach the end or a pause in their careers feeling fulfilled and ready for their next steps.

This study has created a sense of fulfillment for me, too, as I held a privileged position while listening to the ten teachers I interviewed describe their inner and outer transformations. It affirms for me the strong affinity I feel with experienced teachers, many of whom are great sources of untapped wisdom and expertise. They deserve specialized professional development that meets their evolving needs—as adults and as teachers—at every stage of their careers. During the interviews, two participants mentioned the fact that they were amazed that I, a school principal, would think it important to join Courage to Teach. I could only reply that, at heart, I am a teacher, too.

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## Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Phase 1 Mailing

October 1, 2007

Dear CTT Colleagues:

I am happy to report that I am coming down the home stretch on my Ph.D. at Lesley University and invite you to participate in my research:

*A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of Courage to Teach on Experienced Teachers'*
*Professional Growth and Development*

Each of you inspired me during the 2002-2004 Courage to Teach/New England program, and now I want to better understand what aspects of CTT could inform professional development programs for teachers at all levels. When my research is complete, I hope to write an article for publication, which I will share with you.

Since I am in the process of developing my dissertation research questions, I would be delighted to receive your help in these two ways:

1. Respond to the initial 4 questions to help me shape my next questions (about 20-30 minutes).

2. Participate in follow-up, small focus groups and/or individual interviews in person or by phone. Focus groups and individual interviews will be taped and transcribed. Topics discussed will be drawn from the responses to initial questions. (Interviews may be 1-2 hours in length, held at a mutually convenient time and place.)

You can participate in my study whether or not you are still teaching, and I assure you of complete confidentiality. Every member of our cohort, except the facilitators, will be invited to participate. Pseudonyms will be used, and names of schools will be changed. You may respond by email if convenient; also, this information will be mailed to you with a postage paid return envelope in case that is preferable. I welcome any questions you have about my work, so please feel free to call me at 978-486-3646 or email me at knollet@usa.net.

Thank you for considering my invitation to participate. If you accept, please sign and return (by email or U.S. mail, directions on following pages) the letter of informed consent, answers to the four questions, and the demographic form. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,
Kathleen M. Nollet
Candidate, Ph.D. in Educational Studies
Faculty Supervisor: Professor Marcia Bromfield
Director of Field Placement and Professional Partnerships
Tel: 800-999-1959 Ext. 8396   Email: mbromfie@lesley.edu

A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of *Courage to Teach* on Experienced
Teachers' Professional Growth and Development

*Letter of Informed Consent*

> ➤ If <u>completing by email</u>, please type your name and date on the bottom of
> this page before returning this 4-page attachment by email.
> ➤ If <u>completing and sending by U.S. mail</u>, please sign and return one copy.
> Keep the second copy for your records.

By signing this letter:

You agree to participate in this study as described in the introductory letter.

You understand that participation in this research is voluntary; that you can refuse to
be in the study; that you may change my mind and drop out at any time; that you can
skip questions and will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled; and that no
penalty exists if you choose not to participate.

You understand your privacy and confidentiality will be assured by the use of
pseudonyms; that any individual identifying characteristics will be changed; and that
the name of your school(s) will be changed.

You understand that data obtained during the study will be kept private and
confidential to the extent allowed by law.

October 1, 2007        Investigator:  Kathleen M. Nollet
Contact Information: Tel (978-486-3646)  Email knollet@usa.net

*I am 18 years of age or older. The nature and purpose of this research have been
satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as
described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time
if I so choose, and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise
during the course of the research.*

_____         _____        _____
Date                        Subject's signature                   Print Name

*There is a Standing Committee for Human Subjects in Research at Lesley University
to which complaints or problems concerning any research project may, and should,
be reported if they arise. Contact the Dean of Faculty or the Committee at Lesley
University, 29 Everett Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, telephone (617) 349-8517.*

A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of *Courage to Teach* on Experienced
Teachers' Professional Growth and Development
Kathleen M. Nollet
Tel: (978) 486-3646     Email: knollet@usa.net

Four Initial Research Questions

> **Please answer questions as completely as you can and in any way you
wish.**
> **Return by email or by U.S. mail.**

1. In the three years since completing Courage to Teach/New England, what has
happened to you professionally and how has it impacted you personally?

2. What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher and
your perception of your teaching practice?

3. What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004
Courage to Teach/New England experience?

4. What suggestions and thoughts do you have for me, the researcher, to consider
during my study?

*A Phenomenological Study of the Effects of Courage to Teach on Experienced*

*Teachers' Professional Growth and Development*

Kathleen M. Nollet
Tel: (978) 486-3646     Email: knollet@usa.net

Demographic Information

(Continue on bottom if more space needed)

➤ **Please answer questions as completely as you can and in any way you wish.**
➤ **Return by email or by U.S. mail**

Your name_____ Date_____

Telephone_____ Best time to call_____

Email_____

Your undergraduate college and degree_____

Graduate school and degree_____

At what age did you begin to teach? _____

Have you had another career before, during, or after teaching?_____

_____

| Years of experience | Grade(s) & subjects | Urban/rural/suburban school |
|---|---|---|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

Is there anything else you would like me to know?

Appendix B: Interview questions for Phase 2 individual interviews

Semi-structured questions for one-on-one interviews

11/5/07

1. Review responses received from Phase 1 questions or ask them of the participant if not completed:
    a. In the 3 yrs since completing CTT/NE, what has happened to you professionally and how has it impacted you personally?
    b. What changes can you identify in your perception of yourself as a teacher and your perception of your teaching practice?
    c. What personal/professional changes, if any, do you ascribe to your 2002-2004 CTT/NE experience?
    d. What suggestions & thoughts do you have for me, the researcher?
    *Rationale: Review what participants have already told me to help build a shared entry point.*

2. How did you view yourself as a teacher before CTT?
    *Rationale: I want to know where they began.*

3. Why did you apply to Courage to Teach? What were your expectations of CTT before the program? How has the outcome matched your expectations?
    *Rationale: Was there a disorienting dilemma or some kind of precipitating event or series of events? What did they know about CTT before they began and where did they hope to go?*

4. Three years after completing CTT, how do you view yourself as a teacher now?
    *Rationale: Has there been a journey, and how do they define it?*

5. What part of CTT was most helpful to you?
    *Rationale: I want to know what worked for them and am curious if anyone mentions Clearness Committee without my leading them.*

6. What was your involvement with the arts before CTT? Have you continued to use the arts since CTT? Why or why not?
    *Rationale: Everyone so far has mentioned poetry; the arts are central to expression during CTT; did people feel comfortable with the arts; did it matter?*

7. [Explain my working definition, referencing Mezirow, of transformation as a permanent shift in one's thinking.] Of the changes or growth you experienced in CTT, do you consider any of them transformations? If so, what caused these transformations?

*Rationale: This is what I hope to learn—so far, people have hinted at such changes but I want them better defined.*

8.  When each seasonal retreat ended, what was it like to return to your school? When the 2002-2004 cohort ended, what was it like to return to your school?
    *Rationale: Several mentioned re-entry issues w/others; what about re-entry w/selves, too*

9.  What are the implications for schools that have had one or more teachers participate in CTT?
    *Rationale: Some mentioned large & small scale changes, positive and negative. Did anyone else experience this?*

10. What about CTT do you think could inform school/district professional development programs? What do you think would make a school receptive or unreceptive to CTT?
    *Rationale: I don't want conflate CTT with professional development yet—CTT is explicitly not "teacher formation" in that sense—but I wonder what they think?*

# *Touchstones*

❖ *Come to the work with all of the self.*

❖ *Presume welcome and extend welcome.*

❖ *Participation is an invitation, an opportunity, not a demand.*

❖ *No fixing, advice giving, or setting straight*

❖ *When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.*

❖ *Listen to the silence.*

❖ *Look to nature for insight and inspiration.*

❖ *Let our time together remain confidential within the group.*

❖ *Consider that it's possible to emerge from our time together refreshed.*

Appendix D: Comments from Raw Data

Chapter 4, Phase 1 comments

Question 1

Since I left teaching, I have found that being a teacher doesn't stop even when you are not following the traditional classroom teacher path…Recently I have found that my energy for teaching in my field has returned and I am contemplating where I need to go next. The experience and tools that CTT gave me will no doubt be utilized as I begin this next stage.

Elementary teacher

As a department chair, I was more confident when I interviewed and hired new people.

Secondary teacher

I speak and react more passionately about issues I care deeply about.

Elementary teacher

Question 3

CTT gave me time to work through my struggles of letting go and following a different path [in the arts] with no certainty…It allowed me to trust that my truth was that I needed to get out of the classroom and that was important.

Elementary teacher

Question 4

> Any [school district] has a lot to gain by providing experiences like retreats and sabbaticals. The current system [of professional development] is too discouraging.
>
> > Elementary teacher

> I believe the ultimate goal is [to counteract] teacher attrition.
>
> > Elementary teacher

> [It concerns me that] the workplace has not undergone the subtle yet pervasive, life-changing perspectives that I have [in CTT].
>
> > Elementary teacher

> What activities have participants used to keep alive the CTT process/feeling?
>
> > Community/higher education teacher

> How has poetry been used since CTT?
>
> > Elementary teacher

> Has clearness committee been used [by anyone] since CTT?
>
> > Community/higher education teacher

[During a very stressful year during which] the administration had abandoned me, I walked into a bookstore and saw *Honoring the Teacher's Heart* [Intrator & Palmer, 2002] and thought, "That's what I need: honor." And I bought the book.

Elementary teacher

I found the book in Borders one day, read the entire book in the store, and then I knew I had to find this program.

Elementary teacher

It was during a stressful time [at our school] and [it was] not like me to step out of my comfort zone, to take the trip up there by myself to attend the [CTT] informational meeting. Courage to Teach struck me as a different kind of professional development [that I needed to find out about].

Secondary teacher

When I heard about CTT, I hoped to get re-energized. We had had [a job action in our district] 5-7 years prior to CTT, and although things technically got resolved, the inner core of the real issue was still at hand. And I wasn't feeling supported in [my school district], from the administration—zero!—or from within my team, because it had broken up and things had changed.

Elementary teacher

We had a constant turnover or principals, with interim ones in between permanent ones. So there was a lot of fear, especially over teacher evaluations, because no one knew what to expect…Every principal did them differently.

<div align="right">Secondary teacher</div>

I didn't have a [permanent] job in my school, so I moved to another school [in the district] and worked with teachers who were all inappropriate, so cruel, yelling at [young] children: "You should be ashamed of that picture! How can you show that to your mother?" It was horrible, horrible. Then when NCLB came into play, it was such a push-pull thing, so against how I was trained to teach.

<div align="right">Elementary teacher</div>

I felt isolated at school because our staff wasn't reflective. At CTT, I felt, here's a group of teachers pondering the same things I am, and I don't have to apologize for teaching being my passion. That was big.

<div align="right">Elementary teacher</div>

She just crushed my heart, even as I continued to work with her [on projects]; I felt like I was hobbled, with a broken leg….and the hobbler's still there!

<div align="right">Elementary teacher</div>

We had a child stab another child on a bus before it left our school one day. I looked out and saw children crying and screaming and I made the bus driver let me get on the bus. This was forty-five minutes after it happened! The principal was nowhere. There was blood on their faces, our feet, our hands…and I had no gloves, no gel, but I got them off the bus, took them to my room, and tried to clean them up…Later, my principal called and left a message at my house and said "There was an incident. Everything is fine. All safety precautions were followed. And MCAS is starting next week." You would be talking about MCAS when you were talking about a child who had stabbed someone?

Urban teacher

[During contract negotiations] our new superintendent called us [specialists] down to his office and said, "You know, you guys better go talk to your teachers. Because if a raise goes through in this town, it means your jobs." Nice man, huh?

Elementary teacher