University of San Diego

Digital USD

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

1995

The Phenomenon of Flow as Experienced by Classroom Teachers: Implications for Leadership Practice

Alyson B. Caouette EdD
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>

Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Caouette, Alyson B. EdD, "The Phenomenon of Flow as Experienced by Classroom Teachers: Implications for Leadership Practice" (1995). *Dissertations*. 601.
<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/601>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

**THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW AS EXPERIENCED BY
CLASSROOM TEACHERS: IMPLICATIONS
FOR LEADERSHIP PRACTICE**

by

Alyson B. Caouette

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education**

University of San Diego

1995

Dissertation Committee

**Larry Frase, Ed.D., Director
Edward Kujawa, Jr., Ph.D.
C. Bobbie Hanson, Ed.D.**

ABSTRACT

The Phenomenon of Flow Among Classroom Teachers and the Implications for Leadership Practice

The purposes of this qualitative study were to investigate the phenomenon of flow as experienced by classroom teachers and to determine the implications of the understanding of flow for leadership practice. The phenomenon of flow, as described by Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, is reported to be experienced when individuals are engaged in activities that have (a) a balance of challenge and skills that can be varied and controlled, (b) a structure with clear goals, and (c) a structure that provides immediate and relevant feedback.

The questions addressed within the study involved determining the specific experiences of classroom teachers of the phenomenon of flow, how those experiences compared to the framework created from studies of flow conducted by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, and the implications of the understanding of flow among classroom teachers for leadership practice.

The methodology involved a series of semi-structured interviews during which the participants were asked to describe their flow experiences. Key themes within the data were identified and then analyzed. An inductive strategy was introduced by the researcher and utilized by participants to assist the participants to analyze and make meaning of their own stories and experiences. The researcher

analyzed the same data to search for recurring themes and for characteristics common to the dimensions of the phenomenon of flow.

The study has provided an understanding of the kinds of experiences held by classroom teachers of the phenomenon of flow. The participants' descriptions, although portraying vividly different scenarios of optimal experiences while teaching, described common conditions critical to all their experiences of flow in consciousness. This understanding is important for other teachers and leaders in education as it enhances the possibility of increased control by teachers of the quality of their work experiences. It also makes available to leaders practical information relating relating to circumstances of teachers' flow experiences in the classroom. This information can assist leaders to modify and enhance their leadership practice resulting in teaching conditions and environments that heighten the quality of teachers' experiences in the classroom.

Copyright © 1995

by

Alyson B. Caouette

All rights reserved

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Immense gratitude is extended to the participants of this study. Without their sincere contributions, my data would not have contained the detailed, wonderful, and moving stories needed for this kind of descriptive study. Their dedication to the profession of teaching and their heartfelt concern for the education and welfare of young people is a credit to all who teach. I thank them very, very much.

I thank, as well, the staff members from my own school who carried on without me for the first half of the year. Great thanks is extended to Karen, Ken, and Linda, whose time and care in editing my work made it much more polished and readable. And to Audrey, who understood my commitment and allowed me to set my own schedule, I am most appreciative.

I must thank, also, the members of my doctoral cohort group, whose caring and support throughout this endeavor made the work rewarding, the effort worthwhile, and the dream possible. Late nights of study, long hikes up the hill, and wonderful fits of laughter will be held and cherished in my memory forever. We were like a family; together in good times and in bad. To Deb, Susan, Verna, Inge, Roger, Jan, Robert, Doug, Gail, Arnold, Elisa, Nola, and Sandra, thank you so, so much.

In the same breath, I must include and thank the faculties of both University of San Diego and San Diego State University. Dean Edward DeRoche, Dr. Ray Latta, my committee chair Dr. Larry Frase, and the members of each faculty exhibited a

great sense of professionalism, enthusiasm, positiveness, and flexibility that made the first international doctoral program the success that it was. Their kindness and generosity is most appreciated and I extend my gratitude to them all.

This kind of personal challenge is never attempted without significant people supporting from afar. In this regard I have my family to thank whose encouragement and support was and still is never ending. They listened intently, insisted that I could do it, and celebrated with me when I did. Dean, Gary, Michelle, and their families, in the midst of their busy lives, put aside time to call, send cards, and provide much cherished fridge art for my sparse apartment away from home. I thank them and share this success with them.

Great love and appreciation must be expressed to my parents who are especially important during this wonderful and interesting time of my life. Their continued understanding of me as an individual, and their recognition of the importance of this specific achievement to me, is a true measure of the depth of their love and commitment. They have as well, in their gentle manner, instilled in me a strength that has allowed me to attempt many things. They have encouraged me in my endeavors and most importantly, have held an unquestionable belief in my ability to achieve whatever I have attempted. This quiet support has allowed me to be successful in so many ways. Thanks Mom and Dad, for the strength of character I have inherited from you and the determination I have seen modeled by you. I am truly grateful.

Lastly, I would like to thank my warm and generous friend Rod, whose sincere support and loyalty was unwavering. His humor, advice, and belief in my ability allowed me to hang on stubbornly at times and to push boldly forward at others.

Through his positiveness and persistent nudging, it was possible for me to see the light at the end of the long tunnel. I know that this endeavor would have been much more difficult had he not so unsparingly devoted his energies into encouraging me toward my dream. I thank him from the bottom of my heart. Thank you. Thank you all.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
CHAPTER	
I. STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE	1
Introduction	1
The Purpose of the Study	2
Research Questions or Objectives	3
Importance of the Study	3
Adding to the Knowledge Base	3
Enhancing the Understanding of Participants	4
Value Within Leadership Practice	4
Definition of Terms	5
Limitations and Assumptions of the Study	9
Limitations	9
Assumptions	10
Summary of Chapter One	11
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	13
Introduction	13
Experiences Similar to Flow	14

CHAPTER	PAGE
Peak Experiences	14
Autotelic Experiences	16
The Phenomenon of Flow	18
The Evolution of Flow	19
Self-Awareness and Quality of Experience	20
Consequences and Benefits of the Flow Experience	21
The Dark Side of Flow	21
Flow in Work Situations	22
Large Companies: Work Versus Leisure	22
Generations of Agricultural Families	25
Developing Talent in Teenagers	26
Job Redesign and Flow	28
Professional and Blue-Collar Jobs and Flow	29
Implications for Leadership Practice	29
Perspectives of Leadership Theory	29
Satisfaction, Motivation, Performance, and Quality of Life in Work	32
Summary of the Review of the Literature	36
III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	38
Introduction	38
Qualitative Methods	39
Credibility	41
Validity, Generalizability, and Reliability	43

CHAPTER	PAGE
Ethics in Research	45
Design and Methodology of the Investigation	47
The Ethical Process of This Study	47
The Pilot Study	48
Participant Selection	49
The Interviewer as Instrument	50
Data Collection	50
Interviews	50
Data Analysis	52
Preexisting Themes	54
Summary of the Chapter	55
IV. PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA	57
Purpose and Questions of the Study	57
Explanation of Data Collection and Interpretation	58
Louise	59
Specific Experiences and Situations	60
Personal Outlook on Life	60
Connection With Students	61
Celebrating Success	63
Searching Out the Needy	63
Connection and Creativity	64
Being Professional	64

CHAPTER	PAGE
Creativity	67
Inhibition and Creativity	67
Collegial Support for Creativity	68
Administrative Support for Creativity	68
Creativity and Personal Outlook	69
Creativity and Anger	69
Creativity and Connecting Through Writing	70
Support From Colleagues and Administration	70
Administrative support	71
Collegial support	71
The Facility and Connecting With Others	71
A Good Place to Work	72
Internal Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow	73
Lost in work	73
Consciousness of the moment	74
Overall wellness	74
Trust, lack of tension, and joy	74
Spiritual and sacred	75
External Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow	75
Connection and external cues	75
Silence as a cue	77
Enhancers and Detractors of Flow	78

CHAPTER	PAGE
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative	79
Louise's Interpretation	80
Professionalism	81
Harmony	81
Creativity	82
Window, mirror, truth	83
My personal outlook	84
Discussion of the categories	85
My Interpretation as a Researcher	85
The balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled	87
A structure with clear goals	89
A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback	90
The secondary characteristic of focused concentration	90
Merging of activity and awareness	90
Control of the activity by the individual	91
Distorted perception of time and loss of self-awareness	92
Summary of My Interpretation as Researcher	92
Concluding Thoughts Regarding Louise and Her Experiences of Flow	95
Heather	95
Specific Experiences and Situations	96

CHAPTER	PAGE
Classroom Discussions	97
Distorted Time	97
Organization and Preparation	97
Physiological Responses to Flow	98
Connecting With Kids	100
Challenge	101
Control	102
Goals Within Teaching	102
Feedback	103
Rules and Expectations	106
The School and the People	106
The Administration's Role	107
Detractors	108
Describing a Complete Experience	109
Heather's Own Learning	110
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative	111
Heather's Interpretation	111
Connecting through feedback	111
"Sensing" the kids	112
Staff	112
The "high" of teaching	113
People—feelings—need to feel close to others	114

CHAPTER	PAGE
Sense of control	115
Challenges	116
Discussion of the categories	117
My Interpretation as the Researcher	118
The balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled	118
A structure with clear goals	119
Immediate and relative feedback	120
Secondary characteristics of flow	120
Summary of the Researcher's Interpretation	123
Concluding Thoughts Regarding Heather and Her Experiences of Flow	124
Derek	125
Experiences and Situations	125
Physiological Sensations	126
Passing of Time	127
Enhancers and Detractors of Flow	127
Purpose	128
Intrinsic Reward	130
The Basis of Long Lasting Teaching	131
Student Connection and Curiosity	131
Expectations of Himself	132
Goals and Standards	132

CHAPTER	PAGE
Unexpected Success for Students	133
The Effect of the Staff, Administration, and Environment of the School	133
Autonomy	133
A strong staff	134
Restrictive rules	134
The cookie cutter syndrome	135
The facility	135
Good Teaching	135
Optimal Experiences Outside the Classroom	136
Need to Be in Control	136
Challenges	137
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative	137
Derek's Interpretation	137
Eclectic me in the classroom	138
Professional needs	138
View of colleagues	139
Personal selfish feelings	139
Judgmental	140
Acquainting	140
Negative and positive feelings	141
Discussion of the categories	142
My Interpretation as the Researcher	143

CHAPTER	PAGE
Derek's experiences and the core characteristics of flow	143
Derek's experiences and secondary characteristics of flow	146
Summary of My Interpretation	147
Concluding Thoughts Regarding Derek and His Experiences of Flow	148
Barrie	149
Description of the Key Themes Within the Interview Narrative	150
Conditions That Initiate the Experience	150
Connecting and students actively taking part	150
Teacher preparation and organization	151
Expectations	151
Specific Experiences of Flow	153
External Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow	156
Internal Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow	157
Challenge	158
Conditions That Sustain or Enhance the Flow Experience	161
Preparation or building a base	161
Being allowed to focus on teaching	162
Staff attitude	162
Conditions That Diminish or Stop the Flow Experience	163

CHAPTER	PAGE
Negative, destructive feedback	163
Excessive, disruptive student behavior	164
Loss of staff cohesiveness	164
Public opinion, over subscription, and pride as a professional	165
Philosophy	165
Responsibility	165
Expectations, purpose, and involvement	166
Rules, actions, and consequences	167
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative	168
Barrie's Interpretation	168
Indication kids are sensing this optimal feeling	169
Creating the positive learning environment	170
Outside hindrances to teacher performance	171
Students who take ownership for their own learning	172
Always a growing and learning experience	172
Understanding the environment necessary for the process [flow] to happen	173
Sensations felt	174
Student hindrances	175
Peer influence for my learning	176
My Interpretation as the Researcher	176
A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled	177

CHAPTER	PAGE
A structure with clear goals	179
Feedback	182
Focused concentration	185
Merging of activity and awareness	185
The activity is under the person's control	186
Distorted perception of time, temporary loss of self-awareness	187
Summary of My Interpretation	188
Concluding Thoughts Regarding Barrie and His Experiences of Flow	190
Dana	190
Specific Experiences and Situations	192
How Does It Start	192
What Keeps It Going and What Stops It	194
Physiology of the Experience	195
Dana's Philosophy	197
Connecting—Creating an Environment	198
Appreciation	200
Creativity	201
Autotelic Personality	202
Enhancers of Opportunities of Flow	204
Detractors From the Opportunity for Flow	205
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narratives	206

CHAPTER	PAGE
Dana's Interpretation	206
Creating a Family	207
Professional Needs	207
Creating Momentous Opportunities	208
Evolution of the Moment	209
Exceeding Expectations	210
Wow Experience	211
Fun	212
My Passion	212
Shining (Personal Growth)	213
Sharing and Reflection	214
Appreciation	214
Caught or Lost in the Moment	215
Discussion of the Categories	216
My Interpretation as the Researcher	217
Core characteristics of Flow	218
The balance of challenge and skills	218
Structure with clear goals	220
Immediate and relevant feedback	221
Focused concentration	222
Activity under the person's control	222
Distorted perception of time	223

CHAPTER	PAGE
Summary of My Interpretation	224
Nick	226
Nick's Descriptions of His Experiences and Thoughts	228
Philosophies and Beliefs	228
Lifelong learning	228
Healthy and ready for the world	229
Win/win	229
Striving for perfection	230
Goals	231
Assisting students to grow	231
Getting students to care	231
Providing real learning situations	232
Believing in self as learner	232
Being prepared for the unknown	233
Teaching for discovery	233
Becoming the invisible teacher	234
Working together to win	234
Finding personal joy and delight in teaching	235
Challenges	235
Giving his best	235
Lifelong learning	236
Student ownership and caring in learning	236

CHAPTER	PAGE
Student belief in self and confidence	236
Balancing student encouragement and challenge	237
Teaching for the aha	238
Knowing each other	238
Getting it right	238
From pen to computer	239
Summoning the energy	239
Patience as a challenge	240
Winning with respect	241
Preparation/Laying the Groundwork	242
Preparation	242
Groundwork	243
Connection	244
Expectations	244
Conditions That Enhance Flow	245
Witnessing growth	245
Planning for growth	246
Student pride, ownership, and responsibility for learning	246
Teaching for ahas	247
Win/win	247
Energy and performing	248
Conditions That Detract From the Flow Experience	249

CHAPTER	PAGE
Interruptions	250
Interruptions and the impact on body chemistry	250
Falling short of standards of success	251
Lack of time, energy, and self forgiveness	252
Joy zappers: kids who are disturbed	253
Heavy-handedness	253
Feeling disempowered	254
Self-doubt	255
Physiological Cues	256
Euphoria, being “new,” and sneezing	256
Ecstasy	256
Joy	257
Energized	258
Autotelic Personality	262
Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative	265
Nick’s Interpretation of Key Themes Related to His Experiences of Flow	266
What I see when kids are there/the high	267
On the way: output = input	267
Energy drain: laying the groundwork	268
Emotional rewards: energy gain!!	269
Intellectual beliefs	270

CHAPTER	PAGE
Why I teach: what I want kids to know/ understand about the world	270
Win/lose—losing energy	271
Energy required to seek optimal experiences	272
Preteaching	273
Students as energy drainers: negative thoughts (personal)	274
Nick's learning curve	275
I can see!	276
Discussion of the Categories	277
My Interpretation as Researcher	278
A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled	279
A structure with clear goals	280
A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback	282
Focused concentration of the participant	284
Merging of activity and awareness	285
The activity is under the participant's control	286
A distorted perception of time and temporary loss of self-awareness	288
Concluding Thoughts Regarding Nick's Experiences of Flow	289
Discussion of the Findings	291
Introduction	291

CHAPTER	PAGE
The Phenomenological Approach	291
The Interview	292
The Questions of the Study	293
Addressing the Research Questions of the Study	294
What Are the Experiences of Flow for Classroom Teachers?	294
Participant selection	294
General perception of the participants' experiences of flow	294
Specific episodes of flow for teachers	296
What Starts the Flow Experience?	298
Teachers' perceptions that students are experiencing flow	298
Positive learning environment	299
Seeing growth in students	300
Achieving goals and feeling successful	302
Being challenged	304
What Conditions Enhanced the Flow Experience?	306
Planning and preparation	307
Autonomy and control	308
Colleagues	311
Professionalism/teacher growth	313
Time	314
What Conditions Stop the Flow Experience?	315

CHAPTER	PAGE
Cessation of energy sharing	315
How Do Teachers' Experiences of Flow Compare With the Framework Drawn From the Studies of Flow Conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?	319
Dimensions of the Flow Experience	320
The Teacher Participant's Experiences of Flow	322
Finding Dimensions of Flow in the Participants' Experiences	323
A balance of challenge and skill	323
A structure with clear goals	326
A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback	327
Focused concentration of the participant	328
The sense of merging activity and awareness	329
The activity is under the person's control	331
Distorted perception of time	334
Temporary loss of self-awareness	336
Concluding thoughts about the participants and the dimensions of flow	339
What Are the Implications of This Study for Leadership Practice?	341
The dimensions of flow as guidelines for leadership practice	342
Implications for leadership practice of conditions that start flow	346
Implications for leadership practice of conditions that enhance flow	348

CHAPTER	PAGE
Implications for leadership practice of conditions that stop flow	358
Concluding thoughts of implications of flow conditions for leadership practice	363
Summary of Chapter 4: Presentation, Discussion and Analysis of the Data	364
V. SUMMARY OF THE STUDY	366
Conclusions of the Study	366
Teachers' Experiences of Flow	367
Conditions That Start the Flow Experience	368
Conditions That Enhance the Flow Experience	369
Conditions That Stop the Flow Experience	372
Comparing Teachers' Experiences of Flow With the Framework Drawn From Studies Conducted by Csikszentmihalyi	375
Beyond the Dimensions of Flow	376
Implications for Leadership Practice	377
Specific Implications	377
Implications That Relate to Csikszentmihalyi's Dimensions of Flow	379
General Implications for Leadership Practice	381
Building of Relationship	381
Belief in Lifelong Learning and Growth	382
Addressing the Hierarchy of Needs	382
Understanding the Power of the Dimensions of Flow	384

CHAPTER	PAGE
Recommendations	386
Methodology	386
Subsequent Studies for Further Investigation	387
REFERENCES	389
APPENDICES	395
A. INFORMED CONSENT FORM	396
B. GUIDELINE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATION	398
C. LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS	400
D. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM	402
E. CSIKSZENTMIHALYI'S INTERVIEW NARRATIVES	404
F. PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS	406
G. STEPS OF THE INTERVIEW SERIES PROCESS	408
H. CHARACTERISTICS/THEMES OF FLOW	410
I. LOUISE'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	412
J. HEATHER'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	416
K. DEREK'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	420
L. BARRIE'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	424
M. DANA'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	428
N. NICK'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW	434

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted investigating the issues of human behavior, human experience, and quality of life. Langer (1989), Hackman and Oldham (1980), Herzberg (1966) and others, have studied the mysteries of personal needs, satisfaction, motivation, and involvement in order to add to the existing knowledge base of human motivation and satisfaction. Of additional interest to many of today's psychologists and theorists is the issue of intrinsic motivation or "peak experience," as studied by Maslow (1968), and more recently, by Omodei and Wearing (1990). Both these studies were directed toward human experiences related to needs satisfaction and involvement in life. Omodei and Wearing's investigations specifically considered the motivation and satisfaction that is inherent in the nature of the activity itself. The theorist who began to investigate the concept in greatest depth and breadth, however, was Csikszentmihalyi (1975), who called the phenomenon of satisfaction inherent in the nature of the activity itself, "autotelic experience" or more simply "flow."

Csikszentmihalyi suggests that flow is a feeling that is described similarly by individuals from many walks of life. In Csikszentmihalyi's studies, the respondents' primary contribution is that they identified, through greatly different activities, a

similar sensation or experience they considered autotelic, satisfying and rewarding as a process on its own (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Csikszentmihalyi's respondents, who represent the arts, athletics, music, dance, science, industry, business, and academe, repeatedly referred to their common experience as having a flow-like quality. "To this state we have given the name of 'flow,' using a term that many respondents used in their interviews to explain what the optimal experience felt like" (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 29).

The Purpose of the Study

This study has three purposes. The first purpose is to examine and understand the phenomenon of flow as experienced by classroom teachers. The second purpose is to encourage teachers to describe the conditions that enhance the feelings of the flow experience. Within the literature, there appears to be little evidence of teachers' experiences of flow. Within Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen's (1993) investigation of flow related to learning, there was little stated about creating a flow experience for the teachers. Instead, the discussion revolved around creating optimal experiences for students. Investigating the phenomenon of flow, as it relates to teacher experiences, would serve to enhance the knowledge base of teacher satisfaction, motivation, and performance.

The third purpose of the study is to examine implications for leadership practice related to teachers' experiences of flow, that can enhance teachers' professional experiences. In reference to workers and management, Hackman and Oldham (1980) suggest job redesign to improve working environments. Regarding leadership as stewardship, Peter Block (1993) discusses distributing ownership and responsibility

among working members. Margaret Wheatley (1994) offers the aspect of relationship in a self referencing manner and with others as perspectives of leadership within our society. The different perspectives of leadership, or management, provide support for leaders who are seeking varied approaches to assisting workers/followers to increase performance and satisfaction on the job and quality of life in their work. Focusing on the flow experiences of classroom teachers will provide a pragmatic frame of understanding for educational leaders to use in enhancing teachers' working environments.

Research Questions or Objectives

The investigation addresses the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon of flow?
 - What conditions start the flow experience?
 - What conditions enhance the flow experience?
 - What conditions stop the flow experience?
2. How do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?
3. What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

Importance of the Study

Adding to the Knowledge Base

Much has been written regarding the experience of flow and quality of life in both work and leisure. Within the body of literature, there exists reference to the characteristics of flow being linked to intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, self-esteem,

satisfaction, and performance (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Bandura, 1982; Delle Fave & Massimini, 1992; LeFevre, 1992; O'Connor, 1991; Rhodes & Ogawa, 1992). One research perspective deals with teachers structuring the learning environment to enhance flow experiences for students (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Another study investigates flow experiences with dance teachers who are still performing professionally.

The literature regarding teachers provides a limited glance at flow within the teaching experience. This view is supported by Csikszentmihalyi who, through personal communication, has confirmed that in the work he has conducted and supervised, he has not discovered any investigations or literature related specifically to the area of flow among classroom teachers and its implications for leadership.

Enhancing the Understanding of Participants

I believe there is merit in exploring classroom teachers' experiences of flow. By providing opportunity for teachers to share these experiences, we can begin to create an understanding of the phenomenon of flow and its manifestation in the unique experiences that are held by classroom teachers. By encouraging individuals to understand further and to speak about their experiences, we involve them in the process of creating knowledge about the human experience.

Value Within Leadership Practice

The concept of leader involves the inclusion of individuals who are committed to the mutual growth of both the organization and the individual within the organization. The implications of leaders understanding the flow experience are far-reaching.

Politicians, superintendents, principals, teachers, mentor teachers, and student teachers are all responsible, in part, for the working environment of the organization and the professional growth of individuals within the organization. Illuminating the conditions that are related to teachers' optimal experiences of flow can assist leaders to support desired circumstances for enhancing the flow experience. Once classroom teachers know, understand, and can verbally express the conditions most conducive to the flow experience, they and their colleagues (other teachers and principals) can begin to build purposefully the desired factors of the flow experience into the work environment. From this can emerge a different and more positive philosophy about the concept of work. Work can be identified more with a sense of satisfaction, fulfillment, accomplishment, and well-being.

Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this inquiry and are defined as follows:

Flow experience. Flow has been defined from a number of different perspectives. The first definition is one from Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) relating to the more pragmatic perspective of human experience. Flow is an experience described similarly by individuals that suggests an order in consciousness producing a very specific and positive experiential state. For the powerful experiential state to occur, an activity must include the following dimensions: a balance of challenges and skills, clear goals, and feedback. The positive experiential state of flow may also involve more secondary and individually experienced attributes such as

focused concentration, temporary loss of self-awareness, and control of the action by the participant.

The evolutionary perspective of flow involves the relationship between extrasomatic and intrasomatic memory. When pieces of the two memories (i.e., challenge and skills) become balanced, a state of inner order or harmony results.

Autotelic experience. Autotelic experience is an experience that requires no extrinsic motivation and is rewarding in itself.

Autotelic personality. Autotelic personality is a term used to refer to people who seem to transform everyday, mundane, and even threatening situations (i.e., prisoner of war camps), into challenging and growth producing experiences.

Optimal experience. Optimal experience is similar to flow, in that it provides for opportunities of action, clarity of goals, feedback, and participant control of the situation. Optimal experience is accompanied by feelings of fulfillment, productivity and creativity.

Peak experience. Peak experience (Maslow, 1968) is an experience during which the individual feels great power, confidence, creativeness, effortlessness, and skill. Peak experience is viewed as a precursor to what Csikszentmihalyi now calls flow.

Psychic energy. Psychic energy is the focused attention that causes events to occur in the consciousness.

Psychic entropy. Psychic entropy refers to a state or states that conflict with existing individual goals causing disorder in the consciousness. An example might be feelings of dissonance after planning to go for a drive and finding your car will not start. Attention is called from other tasks to work with the conflicting information. Psychic entropy can take many forms including sadness, boredom, anger, or frustration.

Negentropic state. A negentropic state is a state opposite to psychic entropy in that the negentropic state results in a condition of balance between the consciousness and the environment. The negentropic state involves an harmonious focus of skills toward a difficult challenge. The focus of skills is a key condition within the concept of flow.

Teleonomy of the self. Teleonomy of the self refers to the goals of the self stemming from the genetic instructions of our biological makeup and from the cultural instructions embodied in our societal values. The main goal of the self is to ensure the survival of the self by reproducing positive states of the consciousness, as experienced in flow (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

Alienation. A human condition where people are constrained by social forces, such as rules and regulations, such that people's spontaneity and creativity are stifled. Individuals know ahead of time what they must do in a given situation regardless of their personal interests.

Anomie. Anomie is a state an individual experiences when there is uncertainty regarding the outcomes of certain behaviors. Anomie results when new situations and the experiences related to new situations are unpredictable, unstructured, and foreign. Individuals experience anomie when the effects of others' acts, as well as their own, are unpredictable.

Antiflow. Antiflow is perceived as the antithesis of flow. Antiflow is characterized by an extreme dislike for or frustration with an activity. Individuals experiencing antiflow describe situations where there is boredom and frustration. The experience of antiflow is "meaningless, tedious activity that offers little challenge; is not intrinsically motivating; and creates a sense of lack of control" (Allison & Duncan, 1992, p. 120).

Motivation-hygiene theory. Motivation-hygiene theory suggests that individuals are motivated by two independent categories of needs. One category of need is associated with the environment in which people are working. The other category of need is associated with the work itself. The first category Herzberg (1966) calls hygiene or maintenance factors. The second category he calls motivators.

Self-efficacy. This term is associated with Bandura's (1982) work in the area of self-perception and refers to the perception individuals have of their own capabilities to draw together the motivating forces, cognitive resources, and plans of action required to exercise control over the demands of a specific task.

Hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1968) theorizes that there is a specific order of human needs. The first level of need is physiological needs, followed by safety needs. Next is the need for belongingness, followed by needs of love, self-esteem, and finally the need of self-actualization.

Loss of ego. In this study the phrase loss of ego is used to describe a positive feeling of nonconsciousness or freedom from self-consciousness as experienced while in flow.

Expectancy theory. Expectancy theory by Vroom (1964) infers that individuals are motivated by both psychological (the satisfaction of a need) and environmental (the limitations of the environment) conditions.

Job Characteristics Model. The Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) suggests desire or motivation for performance is related to the meaningfulness, responsibility, and knowledge of results experienced by a worker.

Goal theory. Goal theory assumes that three caveats are required to enhance the effectiveness of goals as motivators. The three caveats are specificity of goals, difficulty of goals, and participation in the selection of goals (Rhodes & Ogawa, 1992).

Limitations and Assumptions of the Study

Limitations

Gadamer says, “when we interpret the meaning of something we actually interpret an interpretation” (cited in Van Manen, 1990, p. 26). With this in mind, it

becomes apparent that the understandings gained in this study will depend on the participants' own interpretation of their experiences and on my interpretation/analysis of the storied material collected within the interview process. This situation leads to a place where the strength of the study is imbedded in the accuracy and appropriateness of the participants' language as they share their stories, and my intuitiveness and meticulousness in analysis as researcher.

A second limitation is that teachers will be providing retrospective information which may affect the confidence that can be placed in the clarity of their perceptions and responses. No matter what the circumstances when working with individuals and relying on accounts of experiences through memory, the account is only as accurate as the recollection of the experience.

Assumptions

The primary assumption of the study is that classroom teachers experience flow. The intent of the study is to assist teachers to describe, and therefore understand more clearly, the personal experiences of the phenomenon of flow. In doing so, the phenomenon of flow experienced by teachers can be better understood by others.

The second assumption is that participants will discuss fully their experiences related to flow and, as much as they are able, will provide information regarding the circumstances associated with this experience of flow. A third assumption is that all participants will receive adequate guidelines allowing them to contribute in a way that is meaningful for them personally and relevant to the study. As well, an assumption made is that the guidelines will serve to provide support and encouragement for

individuals and not restrict the freedom the respondents need to explain fully their experiences.

The final assumption is that while all the respondents will be classroom teachers, they will be varied in terms of age, gender, years of experience, areas of expertise, and grade levels taught. These differences will enrich and add depth to the data resulting from the descriptions of teachers' experiences of flow.

Summary of Chapter One

Chapter one serves to introduce the issue of the experience of flow among classroom teachers and the implications of this knowledge for leadership practice. There are three purposes within the study. The first is to examine and understand the phenomenon of flow as experienced by classroom teachers. The second purpose is to encourage teachers to describe their own experiences of flow thus adding to the knowledge base of information surrounding the phenomenon of flow. This will also allow individual teachers to share their experiences in a meaningful way and thus create a better understanding and awareness regarding their own optimal experiences. The third purpose is to examine implications for leadership practice that arise as a result of the study.

Chapter 1 also includes the research questions that are addressed within the study. They include: (a) what are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon of flow, what starts, enhances, or stops the experience? (b) how do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi? and (c) what are the implications of the investigation for leadership practice?

The importance of the study is three-fold. First, there is little within the literature to suggest that this issue, classroom teachers' experiences and the implications for leadership practice, has been specifically addressed previously. Any study done in the area of classroom teachers and flow would add to the existing knowledge base. Second, by encouraging teachers to share their experiences, we allow them to explore and understand further, unique experiences within their lives. This adds to their knowledge about the human experience. Third, by encouraging teachers to describe and understand better their experiences of flow, we open up this understanding for leaders as well. This creates a valuable insight for leaders to utilize in creating a more optimal environment for teachers to teach professionally and enjoy their teaching.

The limitations of the study are stated and thus acknowledged and taken into consideration throughout the study. The limits of the study are that the stories told by teachers are reflections of their recollections, and that the accuracy of the narrative can be only as true as the researcher is able to interpret these stories.

The assumptions stated in this chapter are that classroom teachers experience flow, that they will discuss fully their experiences, that the guidelines provided during the interviews will assist and not restrict their telling, and that the backgrounds of the teachers will be varied.

The remaining chapters of this study will address literature related to the topic; research design and methodology used within the study; the experiences of participants and the interpretations of those experiences; and finally the discussion of the understandings gained from research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The area of study regarding the phenomenon of flow and classroom teachers has a broad range of related and interrelated themes. Each theme or concept adds depth to the area of investigation. Such themes include work and leisure, satisfaction and motivation, self-efficacy and self-esteem, performance, quality of life, intrinsic motivation and life-long learning, apathy, boredom, and job redesign. Although these themes continue to surface within the literature related to flow, a conceptual link appears to be missing from the literature that relates classroom teachers with flow. The evidence of investigations to date relates to teachers improving the condition of flow for students, and teachers experiencing flow through their own performance of the concept being taught (dancing and painting). A communication with Csikszentmihalyi (personal communication, October 12, 1994) reveals that he confirms the limited investigation done specifically in the area of teachers and flow and the implications for leadership practice.

This literature review addresses the interrelated areas of literature pertinent to the objective of the study, that of classroom teachers' experiences of flow and the implications of this knowledge for leadership. The interrelated areas will include experiences

similar to flow, the phenomenon of flow itself, studies of flow experiences of respondents in diverse walks of life, and relationships of flow to work.

It will also address aspects of leadership practice within education as related to teachers' experiences of flow.

Experiences Similar to Flow

Peak Experiences

Maslow is one of the first theorists to express interest in what he calls peak experiences. This perception is described by Maslow (1987) as a person becoming unified. It involves an out of this world sensation that overcomes restrictive fears and creates a sense of happiness, openness, and joy. He describes peak experiences as an epiphenomenon of self-actualization and depicted peak experiences in the following way:

One aspect of the peak experience is a complete, though momentary loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition, defense and control, a giving up of renunciation, delay and restraint. The fear of disintegration and dissolution, the fear of giving in to unbridled pleasure and emotion, all tend to disappear or go into abeyance for the time being. This, too, implies a greater openness of perception since fear distorts. It may be thought of as pure gratification, pure expression, pure elation. But since it is "in the world," it represents a kind of fusion of the Freudian "pleasure principle" and "reality principle." (pp. 163-164)

Maslow's peak experience is an episodal experience displaying many of the characteristics of self-actualizing people. Within the concepts of self-actualization and peak experiences, individuals find the opportunities for growth, motivation, creativity, and satisfaction (Maslow, 1968). In his work Maslow (1971) refers also to peak experience involving two components. The first one is the emotional aspect of ecstasy and the second is the intellectual one of illumination. He continues to discuss aspects of

peak experience and its relevance to education. Maslow (1971) expresses his vision of what education should be and states that an ultimate goal of education is to assist individuals to achieve self-actualization. He insists that education should support people in their quest to overcome cultural conditioning and to become “world citizens” (p. 184). Maslow (1971) is poetic in his statement:

One of the goals of education should be to teach that life is precious. If there were no joy in life, it would not be worth living. Unfortunately many people never experience joy, those all-too-few moments of total life-affirmation which we call peak experiences. (p. 187)

In his reflection of peak experiences, in relating to core-religion and transcendent experience, Maslow (1972) suggests that it is not uncommon within peak experiences for the universe to be perceived as an “integrated and unified whole” (p. 357). People who have peak experiences often feel that they are rightfully placed within that universal whole and have a sense of belongingness that is profound. He also implies that the cognition that takes place within a peak experience includes an intense concentration that does not usually occur. There emerges an intriguing tendency for things within the universe to be perceived as equally important. Maslow (1972) describes this total acceptance of the importance of all things as holding true for the perception of human beings as well.

Within this religious-like peak experience individuals perceive themselves to be detached from the external world. This is especially true of those things that we think of as being related to human concern. Maslow infers that individuals who have peak experiences become more objective and perceive the world in a more independent way. The experience as studied by Maslow (1972), allows individuals to be “ego-transcending, self-forgetful, egoless, [and] unselfish” (p. 359). Individuals within this

experience lose their egocentricity. They are drawn to the experience because of its intrinsic value. The religious peak experience is found to be so great that it justifies not only itself as an experience, but the experience of life itself. Finally, peak experiences, as described by Maslow, have a quality of timelessness and spacelessness.

They produce a picture of the world that is perceived as possessing true beauty, goodness, worth, and desirability. Within this perception is the acceptance of the dark side of life or a reconciliation between people and the evil in the world. In peak experiences, individuals have emotions such as wonder, awe, and reverence. Also common are feelings of humility, surrender, and a kind of worship of the experience. Individuals experience feelings of love and acceptance that may not have been present before.

Subsequent theorists investigating the area of heightened experience in human beings use terms such as autotelic and optimal to describe the phenomenon. These terms through their varied origins add a slightly different and yet no less enriched depiction of what Maslow called the peak experience.

Autotelic Experiences

Omodei and Wearing (cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) discuss autotelic theory in relation to their study of needs satisfaction and personal projects. Autotelic theories place most positive human experiences in the means or the activity rather than the ends or the achieving of a goal. The authors support the idea that well-being and satisfaction is found in the striving toward, as opposed to achieving, a specific goal. That is not to say, however, that end-states or the telic theory related to needs satisfaction is deemed unimportant. It offers a reason to be involved in an activity. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggests that by giving closure and purpose to an activity, the

boundaries of stimuli become narrowed allowing greater attention by the individual to the activity. This concept of total involvement by an individual is supported by Omedei and Wearing (cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) who conclude that a sense of involvement is desired and significant for over-all well-being. They strongly suggest that work and educational environments can and should be manipulated to create the conditions supporting the feeling of involvement. The authors find these conditions for involvement to be, “the provision of clear rules, clear goals, and clear feedback; the provision of a clearly identified and limited set of stimuli relevant to the activity; and, most important, the occurrence of a match between the person’s skills and the demands of the activity” (Omedei & Wearing, 1990, p. 768).

Lepper and Greene (1978), in their work of human motivation and reward, find that the exercise or use of any skill is what is rewarding and an end in itself. Lepper and Greene’s perspective of being intrinsically motivated by the task itself is supported by Callois (1958), who discusses intrinsic rewards that satisfy four human needs. In addition to the need for competition, control over the unpredictable, imitation or fantasy, and vertigo, Callois believes that humans are also motivated intrinsically by the opportunity to use skills in freely chosen and novel situations. Similarly, Lepper and Greene have outlined the following requirements in addition to challenges matched to skills and a meaningful context. Their research suggests these supportive themes:

1. The actor should be able to control the level of challenge.
2. The activity should have the quality of being isolated from interruptions from other stimulus if so desired by the actor.

3. The criteria for evaluation of performance are clear.
4. The feedback should be clear regarding the individuals' performance.
5. The challenges within the activity must be broad in range so that the individual can get increasingly complex information about the situation.

Lepper and Greene (1978) state that when the above criteria are in place within an individual's activity, they will experience optimal sensations similar to that described by Maslow (1968), Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) and others. These experiences include: "a contraction of the perceptual field, a heightened concentration on the task at hand, a feeling of control leading to elation and finally to a loss of self-awareness that sometimes results in a feeling of transcendence, or a merging with the activity and the environment" (Lepper & Greene, 1978, p. 213)

In examining peak experiences similar to flow, we begin to see some overlap in the characteristics of each experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1992) refers to other theorists' work in the area of optimal experiences and has collaborated with many researchers in projects to investigate further what he calls the experience of flow.

The Phenomenon of Flow

Csikszentmihalyi has been credited with pulling together the constructs or characteristics of flow into an examinable proposal by Omedei and Wearing (cited in Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The following characteristics have been described by many individuals as being inherent in activities where flow occurs: a balance of challenge and skills, clear goals, and immediate feedback. In addition, individuals describe secondary characteristic experiences such as, focused concentration, merging of activity and awareness, the activities or tasks being under the person's control,

having a distorted perception of time, and a temporary loss of self-awareness (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992).

The Evolution of Flow

Of particular interest is the evolutionary background from which Csikszentmihalyi draws his theory of flow. He proposes that by understanding ourselves and our evolutionary history, we can better understand what motivates us and what shapes our goals (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993). As a species, we are shaped by specific, natural controls that are part of our evolutionary composition. We are genetically programmed to regulate certain functions of our bodies and are instinctively driven to indulge in other behaviors, even if we would prefer not to be. The states of consciousness that are controlled by genes and instincts such as anger or sexual arousal, are at the same time constrained by outside forces such as cultural heritage, customs, and religion. Csikszentmihalyi suggests that knowledge of these forces, both evolutionary or natural, and those constructed by man, actually allow us to be free from them and acquire greater control over our own consciousness. Csikszentmihalyi (1993), in The Evolving Self discusses the importance of breaking out of the lethal acceptance of genetic or historical patterns and instead finding strength in the belief of control over one's destiny, self-assurance, and self-reliance. The concept of free-will he describes as a "self-fulfilling prophecy; those who abide by it are liberated from the absolute determinism of external forces" (p. 15).

All of this attention to evolution and free will leads to greater understanding of the power of the concept of flow which Csikszentmihaly and others have spent years

studying (Allison & Duncan, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Delle Fave & Massimini, 1992; LeFevre, 1992).

Self-Awareness and Quality of Experience

Csikszentmihalyi and Figurski (1982) report on the relationship between self-awareness and voluntariness to the quality of experience. The results of 107 reports by adults of thoughts and feelings over the period of 7 days reveals that the perception of voluntariness is associated with positive experiences. The study also implies that self-awareness (having the self as an object, being the knower and the known) is related to negative experiences. Although self-awareness is considered necessary for achieving full human status and developing individuality and personal responsibility (Diener, cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982) there are also reports that point to the relationship between self-awareness and negative experiences. Researchers argue that self-awareness inhibits creativity, readiness and openness to experience, personal reflection, fantasy, and enjoyment. Duval and Wicklund (cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Figurski, 1982) suggest that self-awareness results in self-evaluation and is therefore an aversive experience. Our world is filled with ideals with which we measure ourselves and others. This situation of aversiveness, Duval and Wicklund say, will motivate an individual in one of two ways. The individual will either avoid a situation that produces a state of self-awareness or will strive to close the distance between the standard and the reality. This last option, although sounding positive, is short-lived as standards by nature in our world tend to increase and surpass recent achievements relatively quickly. This constant striving to keep up each time an individual has moments of self-awareness is the basis of Csikszentmihalyi and

Figurski's perspective on the negative relationship between self-awareness and aversive experience in everyday life. In their study, Csikszentmihalyi and Figurski suggest that self-awareness inhibits the experience of flow by focusing the attention of the individual on themselves instead on the activity itself. In the circumstance of voluntary activities the intrusion of self-awareness is greatly reduced as most voluntary activities involve characteristics that make them intrinsic or autotelic. Included in their discussion of the results is the converse possibility that even a voluntary activity can lose its positive appeal for some reason and in response, individuals may move into a mode of self-awareness in efforts to correct the situation.

Consequences and Benefits of the Flow Experience

Through varied studies information relating to the consequences and benefits of flow begins to unfold. Creativity, peak performance, talent development, productivity, self-esteem, stress reduction, clinical applications, and overall improved quality of life are evidenced in the work conducted in the area of flow. Flow is a complex phenomenon requiring delicate balances of goals, challenge, skill, and feedback, as well as a kind of consciousness that is aware of the power of the feeling (Csikszentmihalyi, 1993).

The Dark Side of Flow

Stemming from the acknowledgement of the power of the phenomenon of flow, there is discussion of the dark side of the flow experience. Similar to more feared and well known dependencies such as alcohol or drug addictions, individuals can become addicted to the optimal feeling and the experience of flow. I need only to think of

individuals I have known who have become fanatical about a particular activity to understand this concept. Workaholics, runners who cannot go a day without running, and students who cannot find pleasure in any activity outside their studies are all examples of individuals who have found a sense of flow (which includes fulfillment, satisfaction, self-esteem) in their specific area of interest, but cannot leave it alone. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) addresses this issue and stresses that quality of life involves a balance of different activities, sensations, feelings, and involvement with others. This balance is easier for some individuals to achieve than others.

Flow in Work Situations

Large Companies: Work Versus Leisure

Throughout the literature there is reference to the flow experience as being related to enhanced quality of experience in both work and leisure (LeFevre, 1989). In her study of "Optimal Experience in Work and Leisure," LeFevre uses the channels of motivation, activation, concentration, creativity, satisfaction, and affect to determine quality of experience. LeFevre's (1989) study includes individuals from five large Chicago companies. The respondents' work roles involve duties related to management, clerical, and blue-collar jobs. Her findings suggest that quality of experience is enhanced when the person involved in the activity can control and approximate the conditions of flow. She further explains that this quality of experience can be enjoyed whether in work or leisure but that for all respondents the amount of flow experienced in work occurs three times more often than in leisure. LeFevre also indicates that activities of a more challenging nature tend to lead to more flow experiences than activities that are routine. It should be kept in mind that the experience of flow in

LeFevre's investigation is not of the same intensity or nature of experience that Maslow (1972) speaks about in his discussion of the core-religious peak experience. LeFevre (1989) instead refers to the flow experience as resulting in workers having increased levels of, "affect (happy, cheerful, friendly, sociable); potency (strong, active, alert, excited); concentration; creativity; motivation; satisfaction; [and] relaxation" (p. 820). The presence of balance of skill, clear goals, and relevant feedback again appears to be the determining factors in the overall rating of the experience.

An important aspect of her study implies that individuals who are more motivated in situations of greater challenge and requiring greater skills have increased positive feelings about working. This parallels what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) indicates about individuals who possess an autotelic personality. These people tend to find good and challenging aspects in whatever they attempt.

One of the most interesting elements of LeFevre's (1992) investigation is the suggestion that there is also a link between flow and performance. "Since flow enhances activation, concentration, and creativity, it is likely that performance would improve by increasing the amount of time spent in flow" (p. 318). She suggests that restructuring or redesigning jobs will benefit all workers. The research being done on job restructuring can have a pragmatic implication in adjusting or improving environments to allow individual workers to experience greater quality of life in the work they are doing.

LeFevre (1992) investigates another perspective of quality of life experiences, the respondents' lack of flow experiences in leisure. She suggests that this anti-flow is a result of specific individuals' "inability to organize one's psychic energy in

unstructured free time” (p. 821). LeFevre implies as well that this situation may be due to a lack of autotelic personality inherent in the individual worker.

In summary, LeFevre suggests two interventions. The first is that individuals could increase the overall quality of their lives if they recognize the negative feelings they are experiencing in their leisure time and make a conscious effort to enhance the conditions of flow during this free time. The second is for people to shake the cultural biases they have regarding work and the expected negative impressions we have come to accept as truth and instead realize that work can be exciting and fulfilling when we consciously strive to create more positive outlooks related to our work.

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) contemplates that whenever the quality of human experience is at question, flow becomes relevant. The phenomenon of flow helps to clarify why individuals find pleasure in their work and leisure. Within the explanation is also an interpretation of why in some situations, individuals are bored, apathetic, or anxious. Csikszentmihalyi posits one explanation for the despondent situation resulting from boredom, apathy, and anxiety:

So we have learned to make a distinction between “work” and “leisure”; the former is what we have to do most of the time against our desire; the latter is what we like to do, although it is useless. We therefore feel bored and frustrated on our jobs, and guilty when we are at leisure” (p. 3).

Therefore, the theory of flow offers an account for the alienation and apathy that underlies the boredom experienced by many members of today’s society. The theory also provides a potential explanation for why many people have an especially difficult time finding pleasure in work. Tom Sawyer, as one of my favorite critics of labor, has been quoted as saying “work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and play consists of what ever a body is not obliged to do” (Davis & Chern, 1975, p. 259).

Generations of Agricultural Families

Delle Fave and Massimini (1992) site findings from their study where three generations of families are interviewed regarding their attitude toward their work. They find that there was great contentment regarding work among the oldest members of the family but very little motivation or fulfillment existing among the younger members. Delle Fave and Massimini express this observation in the statement, “finally, the youngest generation rated their work as much more boring, full of effort, distracting, anxiety producing, and as less involving” (pp. 202, 203). This situation raises questions about why there are such disparate views within the same family residing in the same geographic location and laboring at the same type of work. The younger family members’ attitudes toward work and the questions that result become especially interesting when considered alongside the attitudes of some members of the teaching profession. As in other occupations, there seems to be a great disparity between teachers who are incredibly motivated and satisfied with their jobs and teachers who appear to be apathetic, unmotivated, and dissatisfied. The question begs addressing. What is responsible for the difference expressed regarding individuals’ fulfillment in work, and satisfaction in their quality of life?

Delle Fave and Massimini (cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992) suggest that in the Occitan society (the site of their study) technology and advanced standards have changed peoples’ perceptions of daily tasks. No longer does work offer the variety of opportunity and challenge, nor the clarity of goals and feedback of years ago that enhance the conditions that can lead to flow. In their study, Delle Fave and Massimini find that the younger generation members of the Occitan village are

seeking these fulfilling conditions (challenge, feedback, and goals) outside of the work context and in their leisure time. The implications of this situation (individuals unable to find conditions conducive to flow in the workplace) are that these younger generation individuals experience less flow and more alienation in their work.

The educational system is an area that Delle Fave and Massimini (1992) feel can be targeted to help change this unfortunate circumstance of alienation in work. They suggest that by emphasizing intrinsic instead of extrinsic values as goals for the future, educators can steer youngsters away from the values associated with material possessions and toward the more optimal experiences embodied in improved quality of life. They emphasize the importance of this suggestion with the statement, “the possibility of educating people to build flow into their lives opens up a very broad range of social implications. It is the key for improving the quality of everyday experience” (p. 212).

Developing Talent in Teenagers

Not surprisingly, Csikszentmihalyi et al.’s (1993) work regarding talented teens and the experience of flow indicates that the link between a student and an exceptional teacher is very important in the achieving of flow for the student. The authors imply that most teenagers lead lives that are uninspiring, waiting for weekends that are equally “passive, uninteresting, and fleeting” (p. 184). When optimal experiences do occur for teens in the educational environment, it seems to be during times of socialization with peers and occasionally when in the presence of an inspiring and skilled teacher. Csikszentmihalyi et al. concur that what allows students to experience flow related to the actions or presence of a specific teacher is that the teacher creates “safe

havens for flow learning” (p. 191). They suggest some ideas to enable teachers to create flow experiences for students within a classroom.

1. Flow teachers nurture their own interest and convey that interest to others. They choose to be involved in their special interests outside the classroom. They keep their own interests (the ones that attracted them to their specialty in the first place) alive throughout their career. They challenge their own abilities and are constantly seeking ways to become better at what they do.

2. Flow teachers attend to the conditions that facilitate the optimal experience. They reduce extrinsic pressures for their students such as competition, grades, and needless rules. They center students’ attention and efforts on the challenges and intrinsic pleasures of learning. To do this, they utilize outcome oriented feedback and informational feedback.

3. Flow teachers read the shifting needs of learners; they monitor and adjust. They provide the learners with choices, clear goals, an environment that encourages lack of self-consciousness, and a blend of action and awareness (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993, pp. 191-193).

The work of Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1993), however, tells us little about the disparity in teacher motivation, satisfaction, and performance, as their research perspective focuses on how the teacher creates a flow environment for students. They state “only those teachers who translate their own interest into flow conditions for students will succeed in catalyzing talent development” (p. 185). The study indicates that to create a flow environment for students, teachers must attend to the conditions that facilitate the optimal experience. The investigation, although suggesting some

valuable ideas to enhance optimal learning and experience conditions for students, does not specifically delve into improving optimal experiences for teachers.

Job Redesign and Flow

Hackman and Oldham (1980), without specifically addressing the phenomenon of flow, suggest that there is leverage for changing and improving the attitudes of individuals on the job. The traditional method of achieving a fit between people and jobs was to make the person fit the job. To make the peg (the worker) fit the hole (the job) organizational managers used recruitment of personnel, selection of the best suited individuals, placement in the most appropriate positions related to the individual's skills, and development or training and supervising of workers. All the traditional methods of trying to get the peg to fit the hole focused entirely on the individual worker. The result was that some pegs fit the holes nicely, and others, no matter how much hammering and reshaping, never achieved the desired articulation. Hackman and Oldham suggest that another way to achieve the smooth and comfortable connection between worker and job would be to change the job. The concept of redesigning jobs and changing the work environment parallels the ideas of other contemporary theorists such as Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Bandura (1982), LeFevre (1992), and Allison and Duncan (1992). The studies conducted by these theorists in the area of work and its relationship to attitude toward work, sense of achievement in work, fulfillment or unfulfillment in work, is reflected and supported pragmatically, in the ideas of Hackman and Oldham regarding job redesign.

Professional and Blue-Collar Jobs and Flow

Allison and Duncan (1992) conducted a phenomenological study of working women in professional and blue-collar jobs. The researchers find that women in both professional and blue-collar jobs experience antiflow that occurs when tasks are tedious, simplistic, and routine. The tedious, simplistic, and routine activities result in frustration and boredom and it is revealed that boring activities can be found in both work and leisure. An interesting outcome of the Allison and Duncan study is that women in both professional and blue-collar groups develop very effective coping strategies to endure antiflow experiences. The restructuring of cognitive focus seems to be effective over a short term, but redesign of the job would appear to be necessary for more permanent relief of antiflow.

Implications for Leadership Practice

Investigation into the experiences of classroom teachers and their involvement with flow holds importance for leadership practice within education. A more comprehensive understanding of the circumstances that enhance or detract from the flow experience will allow for aspects of the environment to be shaped and supported in such a way as to increase the experiences of flow within the teaching realm. In relation to this idea, the following review provides a look at the areas of leadership theory and its link with satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work.

Perspectives of Leadership Theory

James MacGregor Burns (1978) discusses the leader's responsibility to not be continually at odds with the wants of the followers without good reason. He states,

“authentic wants express an autonomy and an individuality within a person that should not be hammered into nonexistence by social forces or manipulated to death by political ‘leaders’” (p. 64). The implication of this view is that if individuals can identify needs related to optimal experiences, opportunity can be taken by leaders to fulfill those needs resulting in enhanced conditions for flow experiences.

Wheatley (1994) embraces leadership as a concept that reflects the ideas of “new science” or quantum science. Within this comparison, her references suggest that much of what is critical for leaders to acknowledge as good leadership is also critical to attend to when striving to create environments that are conducive to optimal, peak, or flow experiences. She cites incidents where chief executive officers of large companies are using scientific language like “electronic network” and “connectivity.” Levi Strauss leader Robert Haas talks about society and business as being, “at the center of a seamless web of mutual responsibility and collaboration..., a seamless partnership, with interrelationships and mutual commitments” (Wheatley, 1994, p. 140). Wheatley looks to relationship as being one of the keys to leadership. She reminds us that the participatory nature of reality has science focusing its attention on relationship. Relationship, she suggests, is the mainstay of all that occurs in nature and science. Relationship is also a mainstay to achieving flow. Within the phenomenon of flow there is relationship with others and relationship between the actor and the action.

Wheatley also emphasizes the importance of the role of participation and its connection to creating reality. Managers and leaders of today, recognize that they have human individuals working with them. These individuals have strong needs for recognition and connection. Imbedded in this element of relationship is a host of

related questions or problems that a leader must address, such things as getting people to work together, honoring diversity, and resolving conflicts. These are all situations that directly or indirectly affect individuals and the way in which they can carry out their responsibilities. When these situations are not in harmony, individuals' attention is directed away from the task at hand and optimal experiences or flow experiences may be interrupted.

In addition to participation and relationship, Wheatley (1994) discusses the importance of free exchange of information. She states that "information—freely generated and freely exchanged—is our only hope for organization. If we fail to recognize its generative properties, we will be unable to manage in this new world" (p. 145). For many individuals who have had flow experiences, the aspect of control and challenge is foremost in their minds. These elements of control and challenge cannot be achieved without feedback which involves the exchange of information.

Lastly and most importantly, Wheatley refers to the scientific principle of self-referencing as being the critical tool for moving beyond the industrial perspective of management. She emphasizes the role self-referencing will play in "solutions to so many of the dilemmas that plague us: control, motivation, ethics, values, [and] change" (p. 146). By encouraging individuals within an organization to look back upon themselves, to be autonomous and comfortable with change, a leader can move his or her people forward into a new understanding of the positive possibilities of work and quality of life.

Satisfaction, Motivation, Performance, and Quality of Life in Work

Much of what is written regarding quality of life in work weaves and intersects throughout the areas of satisfaction, motivation, and performance. In reviewing the literature of these different though related aspects of human existence, some common themes keep surfacing. Such characteristics as creativity, introspection, productivity, freedom, autonomy, self evaluation, absorption, joy, and newness or novelty of situation are continually included in descriptions of the attributes found in the literature pertaining to satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work (Argyle, 1987; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Champagne & McAfee, 1989; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Privette, 1983). Similar attributes are also found in the work of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) when he interprets the stories of individuals' experiences of flow. Individuals experiencing flow report feelings of joy, intense involvement, a feeling of control, a conscious awareness, immediate feedback, and feelings of power. For this reason, I perceive the areas of satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work to be related closely to the phenomenon of flow. Reviewing the literature within the areas of satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work as they relate to leadership practice would be of assistance in understanding the relationship of flow in teaching and its relationship to leadership practice.

Morf (1986) discusses quality of working life as the amount of opportunity an individual has within work to experience satisfaction. He implies a direct relationship between the actions a leader can take to redesign a job or work environment and the degree of opportunity for satisfaction offered within an individual's work. Morf suggests that the essence of work performance is quality of life. His reasoning revolves

around the ideas that the ultimate consequence or impact on quality of life is a result of any human effort and that quality of life often indirectly determines the level of future work performance. Morf states that satisfaction in work is the most easily discerned indicator of quality of working life.

This view of satisfaction and quality of work life is supported by Argyle (1987) whose work in the area of happiness in work leads to the view that “job satisfaction affects overall life satisfaction, as well as health and mental health” (p. 50). Argyle’s work investigates the emotional dimensions related to the area of positive moods. These include joy or elation, excitement or interest, and finally depth or intensity. He links these dimensions to the work of Maslow (1968) and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) regarding peak experiences, and flow. Within his work Argyle discusses the impact that positive moods have on individuals’ perceptions of self, and that these dimensions of joy, excitement, and depth can be enhanced by an opportunity to be involved with personal projects and utilizing short-term goals. This suggests that leaders could create environments that support positive emotional dimensions in work, leading to greater quality of working life.

Argyle (1987) draws from Hackman (1969) when he proposes that the following aspects of job design highly correlate with job satisfaction:

1. Task identity—completion of a piece of work.
2. Task significance—the degree of impact of the job on the lives of others.
3. Skill variety/autonomy—freedom to make job impacting decisions.
4. Feedback—the availability of information regarding effectiveness on the job.

Hackman and Oldham (1980), in their work within the area of job redesign, support the theories of Argyle (1987) and Morf (1986) related to happiness and quality of work-life. There is concurrence on the idea that satisfaction, motivation, and quality of work-life (characteristics of which are related to the experience of flow) can be enhanced by reshaping the working environment and the job context. This can be accomplished by a leader who understands the needs of a specific worker.

Sergiovanni (1990) draws together ideas from psychologists who have agreed that there are certain job characteristics conducive to enhanced intrinsic motivation. These attributes are also the actions and conditions implied by Csikszentmihalyi (1975), Hackman and Oldham (1980), and Maslow (1971) to lead to heightened satisfaction, enjoyment and enhancement of quality of life in work. They include:

1. Having opportunity for discovery, exploration, variety and challenge.
2. Allowing for high involvement and identity with the task, leading to work being considered important.
3. Encouraging active involvement by workers.
4. Striving for common understandings of purposes and values that pull people together in work.
5. Outcomes that are established by the worker and are broad in purpose.
6. Stressing autonomy and self-determination by workers.
7. Allowing individual workers to be determine and control their own behavior.
8. Reinforcing feelings of control, competence and efficacy (Sergiovanni, 1990).

Senge (1990) discusses the learning organization within education and the conditions that have to be in place for individuals within the organization to feel free to risk and learn. This freedom to risk enhances the opportunity for creativity and feelings of accomplishment and efficacy for the individual worker.

Block (1993) reiterates the importance of establishing a culture and vision that encourages workers to be autonomous and yet feel in partnership with each other. He goes on to quote Greenleaf (cited in Block, 1993) who says, "The first order of business is to build a group of people who, under the influence of the institution, grow taller and become healthier, stronger and more autonomous" (p. 22). Again a common thread of control and autonomy, that is running through the relationship between optimal experiences and leadership practice, is exposed through the words of various researchers in the area of leadership.

Related to what Wheatley discusses about relationship and participation, Crook (1980) brings to the fore the perspective that autonomy of the self is greatly linked to "intersubjective relating of people." Cognitive ethologists, according to Crook, must begin to accept that an optimistic belief in oneself, a sense of freedom and autonomy, a sense of internal locus of control, leads to sincere displays of "balanced warmth and concern for others" (p. 270). This parallels the beliefs of other researchers (Mitchell, Ortiz, & Mitchell, 1987; Morf, 1986; Privette, 1983) who emphasize the importance of building strong culture within an organization to enhance overall quality of life in work.

The connection between the experience of flow and individuals' sense of satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work creates reason for

leaders to reinforce the circumstances related to the optimal experience of flow. Possession of information regarding circumstances of flow among classroom teachers will assist leaders to support teachers' experiences of flow, as well as their own. I find inspiration in the words of Csikszentmihalyi (1990) who states: "It is true that if one finds flow in work, and in relations with other people, one is well on the way toward improving the quality of life as a whole" (p. 144).

Summary of the Review of the Literature

The literature review within this chapter, pertaining to the issue of classroom teachers' experiences of flow and the implications for leadership practice, takes a somewhat narrowed focus. It reviews the areas of experiences similar to flow, namely Maslow's (1968) theory of peak experience and Omedei and Wearing's (1990) work in the area of optimal experiences.

The review then provides an explanation of the phenomenon of flow as defined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and researchers following his lead. Some theorists have implied that the circumstances or factors related to the experiences of flow could be in the control of the actor within the experience or be effected by an outsider responsible for the conditions of the environment.

The discussion of literature regarding flow in situations of work is developed as well, referring to studies done with workers in diverse kinds of vocations.

Finally the review pulls together literature related to the area of flow in work (satisfaction, motivation, performance, and quality of life in work) and the potential implications for leadership practice. The work conducted in the area of flow and implications for leadership practice is very limited. What is found instead is the

implication for leadership practice as it relates to satisfaction, motivation, performance, leading to quality of life in work. I believe the connection between the two realms of quality of life in work and flow in work is very close. Studying the area involving quality of life in work and the implications for leadership practice can only serve to provide information related to flow in work and the implications for leadership practice.

The implications of understanding teachers' experiences of flow and the circumstances that effect them is critical for leaders' success in supporting teachers in their work. By enhancing conditions and relationships within teachers' work environments that support flow, leaders can be in partnership with teachers as they seek satisfaction, fulfillment, and quality of life within their everyday work experiences.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The intent of this inquiry is to develop a more meaningful understanding of the experiences of the phenomenon of flow among classroom teachers and the implications for leadership practice. Members of the education profession, specifically classroom teachers and educational leaders, can benefit from furthering the knowledge associated with understanding and enhancing the flow experience for classroom teachers. By learning more about the optimal experience of flow and its relation to the teaching environment, educators will be more able to recognize the experience and enhance the conditions conducive to achieving the state of flow in the classroom. There are implications for teachers in the way they understand their own consciousness from moment to moment as well as for leaders in the potential for designing or redesigning the work and working environment of classroom teachers.

The appropriateness of research methods depends on the purpose of the study and the questions being posed. This study includes the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon?
 - What conditions start the flow experience?
 - What conditions enhance the flow experience?

- What conditions stop the flow experience?
2. How do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?
 3. What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

To address these questions, a phenomenological study is conducted. This approach assists in focusing on the essence of the experience of flow among classroom teachers. Seidman (1991) suggests that this kind of "subjective understanding" is best approached through interview (p. 5). Addressing this suggestion I utilize focused in-depth interviews to address the qualitative needs of studying the human experience of flow as experienced by classroom teachers. Selected classroom teachers are interviewed for the purpose of gathering detailed descriptions of their flow experiences and their interpretations of those experiences.

Qualitative Methods

Qualitative methods fall within the naturalistic frame of research which utilizes strategies of discovery and emergent evaluation. Proponents of qualitative methodology also perceive that reality is not absolute but multiple, interrelated, and divergent (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Van Maanen (1983) discusses qualitative methods as those techniques that strive to "decode, describe, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency of, certain more or less naturally occurring phenomenon in the social world" (p. 13). Merriam (1988) argues that quantitative or traditional research is based on the assumption that there is one predictive, objective reality that can be quantified. Qualitative investigators assume that the world is not an objective

entity but “a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring” (p. 17).

Qualitative examination requires the engagement of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). That narrative involves both phenomenon and method is substantiated by Connelly and Clandinin (1988) and Mishler (1986). Within this view narrative describes the constructs or qualities of the experience to be investigated and the process of inquiry to be used. The story, in turn, is the phenomenon. Hence Clandinin and Connelly’s (1994) explanation that “people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience” (p. 416).

Janesick (1994) and others offer the conception of bracketing as a strategy of inspection for qualitative narrative. The following steps describe the critical aspects in the bracketing process:

1. Locate within the narrative, key phrases that relate directly to the phenomenon being studied.
2. Interpret the meanings of these statements.
3. Look to the participants for these interpretations, if possible.
4. Scrutinize the interpretations and meanings for what they tell about the critical recurring aspects of the phenomenon being studied.
5. Create a tentative description or definition of the phenomenon as related to the critical repeated features identified in step four.

Moustakis (1990) offers an approach to organizing the discipline of analysis that includes five phases similar to the five phases presented by Janesick. These phases are:

1. Immersion and induction of the researcher in the setting.
2. Incubation for thinking, achieving understanding, expanded awareness.
3. Description and explanation.
4. Creative synthesis.

The process of analysis within the study of flow among classroom teachers will utilize a blend of the frames Janesick and Moustakis offer as an approach to analysis of the data. Through this process, I address the importance of integrity within disciplined research.

Credibility

Within the qualitative research literature, there exists many useful references substantiating the issue of credibility of the qualitative research effort (Eisner, 1991; Janesick, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 1990; Seidman, 1991; Van Maanen, 1983; Wolcott, 1990). Authors concur that a credible qualitative study responds to the following three questions:

1. What strategies and methods of inquiry were utilized to secure the integrity, validity, and accuracy of the findings?
2. What experience or qualifications does the investigator bring to the study?
3. What are the assumptions that underpin the study?

In answer to these questions of credibility, I begin by stating that the method of inquiry involves a series of semi-structured open-ended interviews. The transcriptions

of the interviews were given to participants, requesting that they check the narratives for accuracy. The interpretation and analysis of the material involved identifying themes, clearly marking transcripts throughout the process of analysis, collecting, organizing, and storing material so that it can be easily retrieved and checked by others. The analysis profile of the material was presented to the participant as well as colleagues for feedback regarding interpretation and consistency of themes.

As an investigator, I address the issue of experience by referring to the hundreds of observations and conferences I have conducted as a professional developer within my own school district in Canada. My role as consultant in the professional and staff development milieu involved observing, listening, conferencing, and anticipating within the process of assisting entire staffs, administrators, and classroom teachers to achieve their professional goals. This role required a respect for the individual as learner and professional. My intent within the situation of working with other professional educators and colleagues was to assist them to achieve their own goals in a way that was productive, growth enhancing, and supportive for them. I have utilized the experience resulting from this collaborative work in my role of researcher, and more importantly, interviewer within this study of the experience of flow among classroom teachers.

In addressing the second reference related to credibility within a qualitative study, I review the assumptions germane to this study. The first and most basic assumption is that classroom teachers experience flow. A second assumption related to the study is that through the interview process participants felt encouraged and provided detailed information regarding their experiences of flow. A third assumption

is that all participants felt guided and not restricted by the process and protocol of the in-depth interviews which enabled them to explain more fully their experiences of flow.

Validity, Generalizability, and Reliability

The cornerstone of qualitative study is its description of people, settings, and events. Janesick (1994) suggests that the descriptive narrative of qualitative research supports the essence of validity so valuable within investigative work. Validity within qualitative study is related to whether a given analysis or explanation fits the given constructs.

Donmoyer (1990) debates that traditional ways of viewing generalizability are inadequate and inappropriate with qualitative methodology. Eisner (cited in Pitman & Maxwell, 1992) discusses the perspective of generalization within qualitative work as being determined by the reader. He goes on to say that this view is not “an invitation to irresponsible description, interpretation, or evaluation, but rather as reflection of the realization that generalizations are tools with which we work and are to be shaped in context” (p. 749). Generalization, as Eisner views it, is a pattern for transfer of learning. Merriam (1988) suggests that the issue of generalizability be reframed to reflect the assumptions of the naturalistic inquiry. The reconceptualization of generalizability could take the form of a “working hypothesis, concrete universal, naturalistic generalization or user/reader generalizability” (p.174).

For this study, the concept of a working hypothesis lends itself to the research design. Cronbach (cited in Merriam, 1988) discusses the attributes of a working hypothesis as giving equal attention to controlled and uncontrolled variables alike and

to unique events that occur throughout the investigation. He states, “when we give proper weight to the local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis not a conclusion” (p. 175). Patton (1980) supports the idea of generalization within qualitative research providing “perspective rather than truth” and “context-bound information rather than generalizations” (pp. 282-283).

A second means of addressing the generalizability issue within this investigation is through concrete universals. Concrete universals are obtained through the detailed study of the specific situation being investigated and are then compared to other studied situations involving equally detailed investigation (Merriam, 1988). In other words, within interpretive investigation the goal is not to achieve generalizable knowledge from statistical generalizations, but to discover specific and detailed knowledge useful in comparison with other detailed information gleaned from similarly specific situations.

A third perspective of generalization considered within the proposed study is that of naturalistic generalization. Naturalistic generalizations are arrived at by distinguishing similarities within situations both in and out of context. Paying close attention to ordinary patterns of a particular context allows for recognition of similar patterns in new situations. These generalizations are drawn from experiences and can guide, but not foretell one's actions.

A last perspective of generalization recognized within this study is that of reader/user generalizability. The reader/user view places the responsibility of determining the extent to which the study's findings are generalizable with the people reading or using the study. As in medicine and law, specific situations and findings are

interpreted by the reader (other practitioners) and the readers decide if the investigative situation applies or is informative to their specific circumstance.

I am immersed in the study of flow experiences among classroom teachers and adhere to meticulous methods of interview that strive to uncover meanings within individuals lived experiences. I have involve participants and colleagues in the process of capturing the descriptions of teachers' experiences and of interpreting the meanings within those descriptions. I draw upon my passion for people, communication, and understanding to enable me to make sense of what I learn and offer this new learning to the realm of professional educators.

Ethics in Research

Ethical codes, although they guide research behavior, do not determine the degree to which research is or is not ethical. This suggests a combination of broad ethical guidelines as well as room for personal ethical choices made in relation to the situation.

Within any form of inquiry, there is opportunity to reflect on one's motives, beliefs, values, and philosophies. In qualitative study, beliefs and values can be explored by both the researcher and the respondents. It is especially important that the investigator be concerned with the strategy of the study and the morality of the intent. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) express the idea that the researcher "needs both strategy and morality. The first without the second is cruel; the second without the first is ineffectual" (p. 146).

Seidman (1991) offers a perspective of ethics within research in his discussion of the purpose of interviewing. He stresses that the purpose of in-depth interviewing is

not to retrieve answers to questions or to test hypotheses, but to understand the experiences of others and the meanings they make from those experiences. The essence of interviewing research is concern with individuals stories and the importance of the teller and the told.

Punch (1994), within his essay on politics and ethics in qualitative research, raises many ethical issues. These fundamental issues include concerns revolving around harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data. In addition to these issues which must be considered carefully by all researchers, Punch discusses the more subtle yet no less impacting issues of trust and betrayal. There is a quality and integrity within consistency that is impossible to obtain when one does not “walk the talk.” In other words, researchers must do what they say they will do. If promises are made, they must be kept. If respondents are told they can withdraw from a study at any time, they must be able to do that without coercion from the researcher to stay or feelings of guilt if they decide to withdraw.

Paramount to the investigation is concern for the individual involved in the study. Within qualitative study, ethical considerations also involve the sense of importance for the respondents to have opportunity to tell their stories or share their experiences and the meaning they make of those experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) discuss ethics within the realm of personal experience methods or narratives. They hold forward the significance of the relationship between researcher and participant. When we create researcher-participant relationships and request participants to tell their stories, we must take great care within the relationship and the way in which we portray the respondents experiences. Close attention must be paid to the role we

play in their stories, for with our involvement in the hearing of the experience, we become part of it.

Lightfoot, referred to in Clandinin and Connelly (1994), expresses solicitude in the way we move from field texts to research texts. As personal experience researchers we must take great care and be responsible toward the participants in our studies, for our involvement in the researcher-participant relationship and our interpretations of their experiences affect their lives.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) discuss ethics in terms of the resulting perspectives of moving toward a next generation of qualitative research. The former moment of qualitative research, “failed to examine research as a morally engaged project” (p. 561). What we can be party to in the next generation of qualitative research is the understanding that we study others to learn about ourselves. Denzin and Lincoln continue in their view that we will seek the support of those involved in feminist, ethnic, and cultural studies as a way of moving closer to “a sacred science of the moral universe” (p. 561).

Design and Methodology of the Investigation

The Ethical Process of This Study

Respondents in this study were involved on a voluntary basis. Information explaining all aspects of the investigation methodology was provided for all individuals considering involvement in the study.

During the course of the investigation, respondents were not placed in any situations of risk.

Respondents were asked to sign an informed consent form which explains the purpose, process, and expected risks/benefits of their participation (see Appendix A). The consent form explains, as well, that participants may withdraw from the study at any time during the investigation. An opportunity was provided for respondents to read the transcripts from the interviews and to make changes or additions before the notes were finalized for submission or publication.

The participants' rights include the assurances of confidentiality and anonymity. Confidentiality will be achieved through pseudonyms and the deletion of any information that would positively identify the participants.

The Pilot Study

Permission from school districts to conduct the investigation was obtained by the end of the second week of September. Once permission had been established from the districts and the submission to the Human Subjects Committee had been approved, the remaining weeks of September were utilized to conduct pilot interviews. The pilot interviews were conducted in the same manner as previously outlined for all respondents regarding involvement in the study of their own volition, the obtaining of written consent, and explanations of the study. The pilot study allowed for opportunity to judge the appropriateness of the language used by me during the interview as well as the sequence and clarity of the interview questions. Although the constructs of the concept of flow are clear and provide helpful guidelines, the context of the descriptive narrative paragraphs previously used by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) to depict the essence of a flow experience were altered to suit the frame of the teaching profession. Since some of the narrative quotations were constructed from

experiences of rock climbing, sailing, and artistic endeavors, the wording may or may not have been relevant for the respondents in the sample. A sense of time for each interview was gained and through analysis of the transcript, ideas for additional probing questions surfaced. The respondents' descriptions of optimal experiences during the pilot interviews have been analyzed and are included in the study.

Participant Selection

Written permission to conduct the study was requested from two school districts. Upon receipt of permission, administrators of schools were contacted and asked to identify classroom teachers who, by reputation, may experience some of the attributes inherent in the phenomenon of flow. Criterion with which to guide administrator suggestions was provided (see Appendix B). Contact was made with the recommended teachers and those teachers wishing to be involved in the process were given a general outline of the study and asked to provide some demographic data (see Appendices C and D). This contact served to clarify further the intent and process of the study, to answer respondents' inquiries, and to glean further information with which to make final choices of interviewees. The number of teachers selected for the study was to include at least six with the maximum number being determined by the way in which themes were drawn from the data. Prior to the initial interview cycle, arrangements were made to meet with the subjects to provide additional information pertaining to the study and to explain more fully the importance of their contribution. This meeting finalized arrangements and reassured the teachers of their rights through the explanation and signing of a formal consent form.

The Interviewer as Instrument

Within this investigation one hopes for the potential to capture the richness or starkness of classroom teachers' work experiences. This kind of reality, how a person thinks and feels about an experience, however, is something that is difficult to portray accurately. Massimini, Csikszentmihalyi, and Delle Fave (1992) agree that this kind of phenomenological data is best collected in a manner other than questionnaire or survey. The kinds of questions asked relating to the flow experience are difficult to answer succinctly and are answered more completely through an interview of inquiry.

Following the lead of many other researchers in this area, I chose to collect data through in-depth and semi-structured interviews. I realized that I would never conceive completely accurately the feelings and thoughts of another person. I undertook, however, to get as close to knowing and recording human meanings as possible. The interview questions and protocol were flexible and were monitored and adjusted after the pilot study had been completed as well as throughout the process of the interview series.

Data Collection

Interviews

The methodology used takes the form of a series of three in-depth interviews. An individual contact was made with all participants, before the interviews began, to allow for clarification of the process, questions by the participants, and authorization of the consent form. The introduction meeting was followed, over a time of approximately 3 weeks, by three individual interviews. Arrangements for the interviews were made in advance and were held at a place of ease and comfort for the participant.

Permission to audio-tape each session for transcribing purposes was requested during the consent process.

The initial interview closely followed the protocol of other studies in the area of flow. After a period of getting to know one another and establishing an essence of trust, the participant and I engaged in dialogue where the teacher was asked to tell about him or herself and teaching. Following the initial component of the interview, the teachers were asked to listen to three narrative quotations describing the flow experience. The narrative paragraphs had been constructed in such a way as to provide a theoretical sampling of the constructs of flow. The respondents were encouraged to describe any similar experiences in as much depth and detail as possible. The respondents' descriptions were followed up with interviewer questions regarding frequency of the experience, degree of intensity, and factors that may have facilitated or detracted from the experience. The interview was transcribed and provided to the respondent as a check of accuracy before the following interview.

The subsequent interview sessions attempted to expand the initial participant narratives by asking for feedback regarding the transcript accuracy of the first interview. The subsequent interviews also encouraged additional reflections regarding the teacher's optimal experiences in the classroom. The interview process was augmented by providing the teacher with anonymous descriptions of optimal experiences of other respondents. Incorporating other respondents' descriptions into the interview process enriched the descriptions of teachers' experiences by providing additional portrayals of other classroom teachers' experiences of flow. Erikson, Erikson, and Kivnik (1986) have supported the effectiveness of this process. In Vital Involvement in Old Age,

they describe the number of elder respondents who were able to add to their haunting descriptions of grief and loneliness related to the loss of a spouse, after having heard descriptions of other respondents in similar situations.

The interview protocol was open ended with the intent of working through the layers of complexity of respondent replies. Guiding questions for the protocol and a sample of the constructed narratives created by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) are included in the appendices (see Appendix E). Modification of these constructed narratives describing flow or the guiding questions used in this study occurred throughout the study. The pilot study interview protocol appears in the appendices as well (see Appendix E).

Data Analysis

The stories collected from the interviews were analyzed using an inductive strategy. An inductive strategy starts by uncovering or discovering small pieces of data that can later be grouped into clusters or themes (Patton, 1980). I examined each narrative transcript and pulled from it key ideas and phrases. Each participant was given a copy of his or her first interview transcript for perusal, the intention being to check for accuracy and to look for interesting areas within their discussion. At the second interview the participants were asked to discuss any reflections, key ideas, or themes that seemed to stand out in the first narrative. I offered additional observations that I had drawn from the narrative and these individual ideas (mine and theirs) were written on small pieces of paper. The participants were asked to read through all the words and phrases as they were placed on a large table, and to reflect on the meaning and essence of each. The participants were then asked to begin to cluster the ideas

together according to common meanings, characteristics, and attributes that were inherent in each. The groups could be as small or as large as needed. The participants were encouraged to verbalize their thinking and to feel free to change their minds as often as necessary. They were also instructed to try to group the ideas without pre-naming the group. Premature categorizing can lead to the overlooking of important differences in ideas because they are associated with key words used to name the category. At the completion of the thinking, reflecting, and clustering process, participants were asked to label or name each group of concepts in a way that described the contents of each group and the context. Participants continued to be encouraged to verbalize their thinking and to freely move ideas from one cluster to another. The intent of this inductive process was to insure a thoughtful analysis of the data collected from each interview, first by the participants and later by myself. It served as well, to create a context within which the data from all respondents could be compared and contrasted with each other. These units of meaning were then reviewed for their relevance to the research questions within the study and to the preexisting themes that are germane to the experience of flow (see Appendix H).

My interpretation and analysis of the told experiences of flow and the participants' interpretations of their own described experiences were provided to each participant as a form of validation. Each person's self-interpretation, as well as my interpretation of their told experiences, were written up and given to the respective participant to scrutinize for accuracy. They were later contacted by me for their input regarding the overall exactness of their transcribed interpretations of the key themes

drawn from their experiences. They were also asked to validate the accuracy of those same experiences having been interpreted and analyzed by me.

Preexisting Themes

Max Van Manen (1990) discusses fundamental existential themes as the structures of meanings within a lifeworld. When considering the most basic level of the lifeworld within humanity, we can identify the fundamental themes of time, space, bodily presence, and relationship. These existential themes belong to the ground in which all human beings exist within our world. Within a phenomenological kind of experience, “within our world” means immersed in the experience as opposed to being “spaced out” or lost in our imagination. Runners speak of “hitting the wall” as an example of a phenomenon that exists within the world of a runner. When inquiring into particular lived experiences, however, there needs to be a determination of more distinct themes that are specific to that phenomenon or lived experience and are essential meanings to that phenomenon. Van Manen (1990) states: “In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme our concern is to discover aspects or qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (p. 107). To teach for example means to be in a particular time, place, and relationship that is specific to teaching. On reflection of gathered data and interpretations, one could ask the question: Does this lived experience without this specific theme or category lose its fundamental meaning? Implications of this question are related to specific themes that may emerge from the analysis of classroom teachers’ experiences of flow. It may be that some emergent themes fall outside the general frame of constructs that Csikszentmihalyi has developed. If outlying themes emerge

from the data shared by classroom teachers, continued and varied investigation beyond this proposed study would be recommended.

Summary of the Chapter

Research design and methodology are two of the most important elements within an investigation. There must be evidence of thoughtful decision making regarding the chosen design and method of study. The research design and methodology must address the questions inherent in the inquiry and complement the type of investigation being conducted. To begin this chapter, I take some time to discuss aspects of qualitative study and the issues of credibility; validity, generalizability, and reliability within qualitative work; and ethics.

The second part of this chapter addresses the phenomenological approach utilized for the specific investigation within this dissertation. A phenomenological approach was taken in order to address the understanding and interpretation of a specific phenomenon by both the participants and me. The phenomenon or experience investigated in this study is flow as experienced by classroom teachers.

What is important within this investigation is not only the descriptions of teachers' experiences of flow but also the meaning that they make from those experiences. To accommodate this aspect of the inquiry teachers were asked to reflect on their comments from the first interview and begin to interpret specific meanings gained from the text of the interview narratives. This analysis and reflection by the participant is a key element within a phenomenological approach to study.

Included within this chapter is the step-by-step procedure conducted throughout the investigation including ethical considerations, the pilot study, participant selections,

the interviewer as instrument, data collection, the protocol of the interview series, and data analysis.

CHAPTER IV
PRESENTATION, DISCUSSION, AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE DATA

Purpose and Questions of the Study

The purpose of this study is three-fold, to examine and come to an understanding of flow as experienced by classroom teachers, to encourage teachers to describe the conditions that enhance the feelings of flow, and to examine implications for leadership practice related to teachers' experiences of flow. The investigation addresses the following questions:

1. What are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon of flow?
 - What conditions start the flow experience?
 - What conditions enhance the flow experience?
 - What conditions stop the flow experience?
2. How do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?
3. What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

The basis of this chapter is to provide a description of the experiences of flow among classroom teachers as explained by the teachers who were interviewed. I will draw from their verbal accounts, themes, or patterns of key ideas and constructs of the

experiences of flow embodied in the descriptions of their experiences. The key themes will be analyzed in order to interpret their meaning and relationship to the phenomenon of flow. In addition, there will be discussion of the meaning and analysis of the participants' experiences as interpreted by the participants themselves.

Explanation of Data Collection and Interpretation

Each participant was asked to take part in a series of three interviews. During the interviews, the participants readily described their optimal experiences within their classrooms and teaching lives and tried to make sense of those experiences. I used the phrase "optimal experience" or "ultimate experience" during the interviews to refer to the characteristics embodied in the phenomenon of flow. This was done to allow participants to speak of their experiences without any preconceived notions surrounding the label of flow experience. The first of the interviews created the basis for the protocol for the remaining interviews. The transcript for each interview was returned to the participant to be validated for accuracy and reviewed for meaning.

The second interview involved an inductive process that allowed the participants to reflect and verbalize their meanings reflected in their discussion during the first session. Within this reflective process, participants were asked to work with all the key ideas from the first interview in an attempt to organize, interpret, and understand the key concepts within the described experiences. I will attempt to capture these descriptions within this chapter and, in doing so, set the stage for interpretation and understanding of the teachers' individual experiences of flow.

The final interview involved the participants in clarification of the previous anecdotal transcripts. The third interview also culminated the interview series with

questions relating to the teachers' experiences and understandings of flow in their own teaching and the relationship of the experiences to and implications for leadership practice.

Some of the teachers' exact narratives will be utilized throughout this chapter in an attempt to retain the essence of each of the participant's specific situations, stories, and understandings of the experiences. The themes identified by both me and the participants will be presented in order of strength or importance to the phenomenon of flow as experienced by classroom teachers.

Louise

Louise teaches in a middle school within a community that would be considered a middle to upper-middle, socio-economic area. She is in her forties and took time away from teaching to stay home and raise her children. She recently returned to teaching and was recommended by her administrators to be a candidate for this study. Candidates were recommended based on a set of criteria that outlined characteristics displayed by individuals who have experiences of flow (see Appendix B). Louise is a very thoughtful individual and found the interview process positive although intensive. Through the process of recalling and describing moments of optimal experiences within her classroom, she touches on areas of personal sensitivity that have been buried and are sources of vulnerability. These themes are important and are discussed along with the other themes which were discovered in the narration of her experiences. Presently, Louise is working as a full-time teacher and works with middle school students predominantly in the area of language arts/English.

Specific Experiences and Situations

Personal Outlook on Life

Louise begins her involvement in the study by letting me know that she is eager to tell her story and be able to hear it back. She looks forward to interpreting the meaningful times in her life as a professional and putting it all into context. She exclaims, “the opportunity to do that [interpret and put into context] fascinates me. I think I touched the spiritual part of having a greater vision in life.”

Louise is a strong member of her community and church. She loves to organize events and work with people. She assists youth groups and works with adult groups through various organizations. She talks about these connections in an emotional way. “I love to organize things. Help people touch something inside of themselves. It gives them a feeling of close to something really good. I’ll put together big programs where people come and do things and have that family feeling.”

As we speak throughout the interview, Louise refers to her gift of relating to people, especially children. Her gift is something she cherishes and Louise knows that her gift is an important part of who she is. This gift is demonstrated when she works with her students, and in essence, each demonstration of the gift represents her personal outlook on life. An example of this outlook is embodied in her view of children as writers. “I say that every child is a writer waiting to be born and we have our moments that we are birthed and we celebrate that.” She carries that attitude within herself as well and describes it in the following way: “I have a joyous attitude about everything and nothing is too great a challenge to attempt it.”

Connection With Students

Within her description of optimal experiences or moments of flow within her teaching, Louise discusses not only the experiences themselves but the situations leading up to the moments as well. In her soft and gentle way, she speaks strongly, passionately, and frequently about the importance of connecting with students. Connecting, she feels, though not done to achieve flow specifically, is always in place when she does experience flow. She describes interactions with students as well as situations where she creates environments that allow her students to explore their own creativity. She speaks poignantly about affirming the students' sense of self and encouraging them to reflect this in their writing. Louise explains in the following way:

You've opened a window for them to see something that touches a truth for them inside of themselves. Not of the world of truth, but they see something in themselves. I mean you might say into their soul if you want to use that word.

This is the essence of what Louise believes when she talks about connecting with her students. She is almost embarrassed when asked to discuss her ability to relate with students. This ability she considers a gift that keeps giving to herself and to her students.

The more we discuss what is imperative to have in place for Louise to experience optimal moments (flow) in her teaching, the more she reveals that this connecting with students occurs only after she has created a sense of trust and respect between herself and the students and among the students within the class. The concept of preparation overlaps with professional strategies (to create the atmosphere within the class that enhances learning for students) she feels are important for teachers to have,

but is perceived by Louise as absolutely critical in order for her to work with students in a way that allows her to experience flow.

Within the area of interacting or connecting with students, Louise refers to other supporting subsets of attributes. These attributes include: a feeling of spirituality, a feeling of family, an acknowledgement of a personal life journey, a sense of vision, a sense of uniqueness for herself and her students, the importance of celebrating, the importance of relating on a personal level, a sense of community within her work, and finally an essence of building trust and respect. These concepts resurface in her descriptions of the environment and atmosphere associated with moments of flow.

Louise speaks about optimal experiences being tied directly to her work with her students and describes the intellectual and emotional sensations in the following way: “lost in my work, caught up in what they [students] want to produce, you lose yourself in the moment with the kids, it’s creating the best teaching moments for the kids, bringing the kids totally into the lesson.” When asked about the optimal experience and the affect it might have on the students, Louise explains carefully:

You and the students are in another world together. And it’s a very special time. It’s always literature or writing where you’re talking about a theme in life. One of those beautiful themes in life. Its like it slowly evolves because your conversation with the kids is going on and then you get to the real heart of whatever it is that you’re discussing [pauses] and you look out and they’re right there with you. When that happens it’s obvious that I have planned, but it isn’t something that is a step-by-step thing. It just happens in your presentation and the ability of the students that you have at that time to go with you. To allow themselves to relax enough to go with you. I’m conscious enough of the fact that we’re moving into that [a flow experience] at the time to respect it and to work with it. It [flow] just has its own natural life and it just ebbs away. Its so unconscious a thing that you don’t control it. It just comes and goes. The kids all know I think that they’ve been there with you too. That doesn’t happen every day. It just happens now and then.

Louise talks a great deal about interacting and connecting with her students.

Interwoven throughout this theme, however, is also the idea of building an atmosphere of safety and willingness to risk for her students and the role of this atmosphere in enabling her to experience flow. She discusses the place this atmosphere of safety, trust, respect, and risk holds in her view of herself as a teacher and a professional.

Louise explains her perspective:

For me excellent teaching moments are of course when you have their attention which in junior high is always a major point. But when you're at the quote, "height of your profession," and you know, you've put a lot of things together in your profession, you know what needs to go into the planning and structure to create the best teaching moment for the students. I had built a program through the year that built to this moment for my students and it was stretching them to their goal, their limits, to work on an editing kind of situation. So that's one thing that's in place. That very personal kind of connection that I try to build all year long with the kids. Their lives, their situations, their stories, and so that's what I do. I think the word is probably community. You build a community of learners and when you finally have that in place, then those moments [flow] come more and more often.

Celebrating Success

Another example of Louise's personal outlook is manifested in the way she responds to her students' successes. She describes her feelings, resulting from a student's heartfelt response to a poem, in a most poignant way:

Because it's so early in the year for a student to do that. But I feel humbled and thankful, and appreciative, that's the right word. You asked me how I felt and for me it's, "oh thank you." And I want to go out and tell the world, not that I did something, but that this wonderful occurrence happened. It's got to be exciting for a child to be able to do that.

Searching Out the Needy

In addition to this thankfulness and appreciation for the successes of her students, Louise also feels drawn toward specific students—a sensing that they have a special

need and that she can address that need. She has an intuition that there is “something in there calling to you.” The calling is a subconscious beckoning that draws her to certain individuals. She states that “that person needs extra attention, or help, nurturing, or love, or whatever it is but I recognize that pattern in my life because of the people I go after.”

Connection and Creativity

Part of Louise’s personal outlook is exemplified in the way she views her ability to connect and be creative. She returns to the spiritual side of her existence and describes an experience with a colleague:

We were just talking and before I knew it all these ideas were just flowing out of my mind and she was so appreciative of them and I walked away and I thought, “How do you do that?” You know, I was sort of shocked at myself. “How does that just come [pauses] come out of you like that?” I kind of have this humble feeling. It’s a [pauses] thank you God, kind of feeling. It’s there, it’s a gift [creativity] and it’s a part of me that when it’s kind of dormant or quiet, I get scared that it’s gone [laughs]. I know right now that my physical presence reflects that I’m right there again and it feels good inside. It feels creative and alive. Energy.

Being Professional

Another interesting aspect of Louise’s personal outlook is the way in which her personal outlook and professional life are related. She stresses the importance of “centering” on the profession of teaching and explains in this way:

I look upon teaching as a real profession. I love to represent it to the optimum. To be able to tap into whatever resources, energy, research, professional growth I can tap into to take it to the highest level it can be in my classroom with me, is really important to me. I spent some time away from the class and came back and just immersed myself in professional growth because I have this need to be on top of what I’m doing.

As we talk about this need to be on top, Louise relates her feelings about remaining in the profession if being on top were not possible. She refers to the feelings she has as a teacher doing a good job (creating optimal moments for students, knowing where you're going, what you're doing, what your goals are so you can achieve them with your students) and her feelings about losing the ability to be a good teacher. Louise recalls a time in her career where there was no joy, no success, no achieving; a time when she was at risk of quitting the profession. She believes "that feeling that I described to you [knowing I'm doing a good job] is so critical to my interpretation of myself as a successful and contributing teacher. If I can't do that, then I don't belong in the profession."

Louise understands that she is able to recover from difficult times in her career because she has a grounding of success as a teacher and a strong sense of self. The strong sense allows her to actually benefit from difficult experiences as she explains about a time when she struggled to be successful with a group of students who were difficult to reach, possibly dysfunctional. "So just like everything, if you look for good things out of bad [pauses] I got a lot of good things, good professional growth kinds of things out of my bad experience."

Louise is creative and thoughtful regarding her views of professionalism. She utilizes images and metaphors in her explanations of her experiences in teaching. She shares with me a very precious story about a child who is given a gift in a box. When the box is opened, the child realizes that the gift is the ability to teach and that there are many boxes within the first box. Louise carefully explains,

And you work within this first box and it's a wonderful gift. And you know that it's unending but you don't go to the next box. You have to thoroughly explore

this first one. And then if you want to you go to the next box and you've added another level of experience in teaching or whatever your profession. My profession to me has always been enriching and fulfilling, but it's just getting deeper and deeper into these boxes now, where I'm learning more and more about strategies and techniques to be an effective teacher. To me each one is a gift because it gives me so much more.

Within the second interview, when Louise has the opportunity to reflect on her thoughts from the first interview, she speaks with passion and with certainty about herself. I believe this last excerpt from the transcripts regarding her personal outlook on life and her work paints a beautiful picture of Louise as an individual. It becomes easier to understand how her unique personality plays such a significant role in her experiences of optimal moments or flow in teaching. When Csikszentmihalyi (1975) discusses the concept of the autotelic personality, he could not have found a better model than Louise. The following is the monologue she conducted while struggling with her thoughts regarding a group of characteristics describing herself. She was trying to make sense of them and put them into context within her personal and professional life:

Ok. This is when it's hard for me to talk about this. It's like, talking about yourself. I'm trying not to think about myself. These are my gifts, the way I'm created. When I use or allow them to be used to their ultimate by being joyous, by figuring out how to make good things out of bad, to recognize that it's all a life journey, that their stories are part of their creativity, that I'm sensitive and I'm an individual and that I'm emotional and cry in front of the kids, not often, but once in a while [pauses] that I have a tremendous amount of energy. All of this brings, I feel, an energy to my classroom, that allows [pauses] for the attitude of harmony. There's a lot of it that just gives an energy to be creative. And some of it is [pauses] me. The holy, spiritual part of me is part of this here [points to a category involving window, mirror, truth] because I look in on myself a lot. Because I look in on myself, maybe I'm more in touch with themes that will allow them [students] to look for themes in their lives that they may not look at otherwise. This personal outlook, who I am [pauses] I said that to you personally the other day [pauses] I'm strongly identified with the profession of teaching. There's a total overlap of that role and me as an individual.

Creativity

A third theme associated with flow that echoes throughout Louise's story telling is that of creativity. This characteristic is discussed as an entity on its own as well as an attribute of other themes. Louise first talks about creativity in her reference to the school and her colleagues within the school. She explains:

There are people who [pauses] they give you your own space. They let you be as creative as you want to be, and I have been in situations where that hasn't been the case. I really appreciate the ability to be who I am in teaching and not be so worried that someone is going to be upset with what I'm doing.

Inhibition and Creativity

Although not stated explicitly, Louise refers to creativity in her discussion of its inhibition as a result of a negative [anti-flow] teaching situation. She relates a story about being a first-year teacher and feeling restricted in creativity and not valued for her ideas. She could not help but feel the negative energy that was circulating throughout the staff of the school she was teaching in and this affected her overall feelings regarding herself as a teacher, and her confidence. She was surprised and disappointed at the way individuals on staff tried to block new ideas, good ideas like peer support teams. She was amazed at people's reactions to new ideas and believes that "it definitely inhibited the bigger picture" within the school. She explains "I remember the shock of having people trying to stop the creativity. I didn't stop and that's when the trouble started. I remember the hurt that I felt then." Louise recalls the following incident:

I was such an idealistic young lady [laughs]. I came home to my husband, "I didn't know people could be like this." Stories and rumors and the principal being accused of playing favorites. It was awful. So that was my first experience of being creative in teaching. I remember vowing to myself that when I

was forty years old and a new young teacher with creative ideas, and energy and enthusiasm, and love and all that, came onto staff, I was going to support that teacher!

Collegial Support for Creativity

The next reference to creativity involves the people Louise works with; her colleagues and her administration in the junior high where she presently teaches. It is critical for Louise to have the encouragement and the resources to be creative. Part of the resource she talks about is simply the support from others in her school. She explains: “Last year I had a need to start stretching. I put the tables like this [refers to the groupings in her classroom]. I had tried it twice and taken them out because in junior highs you don’t do this [laughs].” As she continued with her venture of reorganizing her classroom she received support from her team partner and others in the school who, no matter what kind of change a teacher tries, are always supportive. For Louise, communicating with peers is an important part of her ability to be creative. She states “we dialogue a lot. One of the reasons I am allowed to be who I am is that I just keep talking to my peers. They keep saying, ‘go for it, try it.’ There’s this wonderful accepting attitude.”

Administrative Support for Creativity

Louise discusses, as well, the faith that her administrators have in her that allows her to risk and be creative. She explains it by describing the behavior of her principal. “And then she gives me space. She doesn’t come in to see. ‘Well is it working or not?’ She leaves me alone for a long time and then she’ll wander by. They don’t peer over your shoulder to make sure.” Louise refers to the amount of support for

creativity and challenge she receives from her administration. In her eyes, she is fortunate to have people who push and encourage her while supporting her in taking risks. She expressed this sentiment to her principal by saying “You support my energy. You know I have this need to try new things and go in new ways and you allow it. I really appreciate that.” Louise knows what she requires to be happy in her work. She explains, “if I didn’t have that [freedom to try new things] I couldn’t stay here. I’d have to go somewhere else and be challenged and allow it to happen. I have them [people/mentors] in different areas, pushing me and supporting me.”

Creativity and Personal Outlook

A portion of Louise’s creativity seems to originate from her personal outlook on life. This kind of autotelic personality drives and supports her need to “be on top” and is also partly responsible for her need and ability to be creative. Louise recalls her first years in teaching and times when the creativity just “flowed.”

I have these times in my life when the creativity just flows and I remember the first time it happened, when I was first teaching. I went to some kind of workshop and it caught my imagination and I came back and I developed all these learning centers. By the hours at night I would create these things and there was no end of ideas that flowed out of my mind. I’ve experienced that, where I’m awake at night because my mind won’t shut off. It has all these ideas flowing out of it, creating this or that or the other thing.

Creativity and Anger

As the interview series continues, Louise determines that within her career, anger has played an important role in her feelings of creativity. She discusses anger as one of the ideas that surrounds the concepts of negative energy and focus. “To me the

anger and the hitting bottom come in both of these. Creativity and professionalism. If there's anger then there's no creativity."

Creativity and Connecting Through Writing

Some of Louise's most fulfilling times related to creativity and flow are when she is teaching writing. As she reflects on this discovery she decides it is because writing is a way to connect to the students. She adds, "I never realized how much fun it was for me, because I love to be creative and I get to watch them produce creations." She continues by referring to her ideas about what needs to be in place for her own creativity and optimal moments to occur.

If you have harmony in your classroom, you can have the creativity. Not if, you must have it in order to get to the creativity. Then you have these special moments that come about. You can not have these moments without harmony. If you are lucky enough to get to the truth, then you're really touching the creativity. Your creativity is totally released.

Support From Colleagues and Administration

From the beginning of Louise's involvement in the study, it is apparent that support from her colleagues and administration is an important part of her success. When asked on the demographic information form why she had chosen to be involved in the study, she states that she greatly trusts the opinion and judgement of her vice principal, who had suggested her for the study. She carries this theme into the interviews where she continues to identify her administrative team (principal and vice principal) as being critical to her success and fulfillment as a teacher. Much of this

fulfillment revolves around Louise's need and opportunity to be creative. She recalls this situation:

I have to say that the administration supports me so much. I went to Teresa [principal] last year and I said, "I want to try using technology in my classroom. I might make mistakes, but I think I know where I want to go and I want to try it." And before I knew it she had four computers in here for me. Then this year I went to her and I told her where I wanted to go this year and she walked up to me the other day and just said, "go ahead and order those things."

Administrative support. Louise is very conscious of her professional commitment and talks about the support her administration provides for her that allows her to stay at the school:

If I didn't have that I couldn't stay here. I'd have to go somewhere else and be challenged and allow it to happen. Leo [vice principal] is the same way. He brings me things. He said I needed to go for being a mentor. I would have never done that. He said, "You need to go for this." I have them in different areas, pushing me and supporting me. Leo pushes and Teresa supports me.

Collegial support. In addition to her administrative team, Louise refers to her teaching colleagues as being an integral part of her optimal experiences in teaching. Their support enables her to take risks and challenge herself. Louise extols the professional virtues of her teaching faculty:

There's so much here professionally, ethically, and at a personal level. I'm a very social person and I need a lot of support to function well and by support I don't mean, "oh you're doing a good job," but that level of comfort that comes when you are accepted as a unique person who has their own way.

The Facility and Connecting With Others

Louise considers the structure of the school as well, and comes to the conclusion that the open structure of the facility is something that suits her. The open structure

lends itself to her need for connection with her colleagues. Although there are rarely moments of quiet within the building, Louise believes that the open structure is part of what keeps her at the school and enhances her creativity. She recalls a time when she was in a school with a more common facility set-up of rooms with doors that could be closed to keep classroom noise in and hallway noise out. She felt shut off from the outside world and talks about being, “locked in this room. It was scary for me.”

Louise utilizes the open style of facility to observe how others are dealing with situations. From her classroom, or if she happens to be in the hall, she can see other teachers in their classrooms. She sees how other colleagues work with some of her students and is intrigued. She has reflected on this aspect of her work situation and finds that, “having just the open feeling, I found that I think it actually serves my inner psyche. I’m afraid of closing myself in a room with four walls. I have a huge support system here for my creativity.” When asked what role the support system plays in how she is able to achieve optimal moments or experiences in her classroom, Louise responds in the following way:

I don’t know how it directly affects that other than you’re happy in your work. That’s major. You come to work happy, prepared to work, prepared to be the best you can be, not burdened about the political issue that’s going on down the hall. You can center on the professional job which to me has always been really important. So yes, to come here where the staff is highly professional, highly trained and extremely supportive that releases you to be the best you can be. And I have been on staffs that I have considered to be totally dysfunctional [laughs] where to be the best you can be is a struggle everyday because you’re dealing with all that other stuff.

A Good Place to Work

Louise brings the first interview to closure with the following words:

I don't know where you could find a better place to work. I see that with other new teachers that come on the staff. They're always welcome. I really think it's got something to do with the building and the dynamics and security the teachers have on the staff. It's a special place. They all know it too [laughs]. When I first came, I would just walk around in awe and I would say, "This staff is incredible." And they'd say, "We know it"! [laughs]

Internal Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow

During the interview series, participants are asked to describe the experience of flow. The descriptions of cues accompanying the phenomenon of flow I receive from Louise, seem to fall into two categories. The first category is the internal cues she receives when in flow. These are physiological, emotional, and intellectual sensations that she is cognizant of experiencing during the moments of flow.

Lost in work. Early in the interview series, Louise describes a feeling of "being able to get lost in my work with kids because I'm so focused on them." She laughs at herself as she recalls how often she will be working with a class and is startled when the bell goes. Even though she is a thoroughly prepared teacher, there are times when she is so absorbed in the work of the students that she loses track of time.

It's when I get into their writing, when they're writing and I want to help every student. I want to get to every child and help them accomplish whatever it is they're working on and I have to force myself to move from one to the next because I can get so caught up in what they want to produce, in trying to help them. So I was moving quickly through the room and I was over here at this desk and I had been watching the clock and I knew that I only had two minutes left and I forgot. I didn't know and the bell went off.

When I ask her how those moments of losing oneself in work feel, Louise describes the sensations in the following way. "I feel good inside. And I just, I

almost, it's scary. You realize you've got them, like they're with you and I honor that experience and wonder. It's a feeling of wonder."

Consciousness of the moment. She continues to explain the consciousness of the optimal moments and, in doing so, describes her awareness during these times.

"You think, 'What am I doing that's doing this?' And it happens enough that you know that it's a part of you and your experience and you sit back in awe of it." She has analyzed these moments and decides,

part of it is just when you are, you lose yourself. You don't think about who you are or anything. You just lose yourself in the moment with the kids and if it's a piece of literature, I'm probably relating on a very personal level with the kids. I think that's key for the children who are investing in relating and it's key to you because sometimes when you immerse yourself in the subject matter, there's a loss of consciousness of what's around you. You're very focused. It's like an art form and that's part of what we were talking about with the skills.

Overall wellness. As Louise describes the specific feelings related to her experiences of flow, it becomes apparent that there is an underlying feeling of overall wellness that is in place for her at this time. She explains,

I'm a very emotional, sensitive kind of an individual, so when I'm having that kind of a moment [pauses] Well I'm having them regularly right now. Right now in my profession, I'm happy. I feel inside this happy feeling. I walk with a stature that reflects that I'm feeling very confident and good about myself. I'm really analyzing it which I don't do very often [laughs]. I have a joyous attitude about everything and nothing is too great a challenge to attempt it. But the overall physical feeling and presence is just very, I can tell I am just "up."

Trust, lack of tension, and joy. After some deeper reflection, Louise feels she needs to clarify and add to her description of the physical feelings associated with the experience of flow. She remarks "you feel filled with joy, you feel relaxed. It's just, there's less tension in the room." For Louise, that whole feeling of relaxation or lack

of tension is related to a feeling of trust. She makes some notes for herself and shares those with me. “I wrote here on the side that trust is critical. And that starts with day one and I tell the students that I respect them and expect that they will respect me.”

Spiritual and sacred. As Louise continues to explain the feelings she experiences when in flow, she returns to the spiritual side of her being and the importance of connecting with people she is working with. “You get to a point with people where you’re just there connecting with them. It’s almost what I call a holy or sacred moment in time. It’s very special.”

External Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow

The second category of cues accompanying the phenomenon of flow involves the external cues Louise notices when in flow. These are indicators that become noticeable to her within the teaching environment. Many of these cues involve visual and auditory indicators associated with the individuals with whom she is working. She recalls, “I will be presenting something to the students and I will see every eye on me and not a sound in the room. And I just, I just, it’s almost scary.” She refers to the reactions of her students and explains, “It’s like it slowly evolves because your conversation with kids is going on and then you get to the real heart of whatever it is that you’re discussing, and you look out and they’re right there with you.”

Connection and external cues. Louise believes these moments of flow cannot happen unless the students are connected or are in relationship within the lesson.

Louise talks about the building of trust and respect within her classroom but also

recognizes that the moments of flow for her as a teacher do not occur unless the students she is working with are in a kind of flow as well. These moments of flow for her students do not happen unless there is a personal connection for the students, to the situation or work with which they are involved. Louise explains one kind of connection. "To me you're just teaching an ordinary lesson and it's never grammar! It's always literature or writing where you're really talking about a theme in life. One of those beautiful themes in life."

A second kind of personal connection or investment that allows students to be in flow with the teacher involves anticipating their own progress in the class. Louise provides an example of this type of involvement by her students:

I tell my students that they are going to be writers. And that when they leave my class they will be able to write for any teacher in the future because we are going to go on this journey together. And then I just start with activities from day one to show them that and build on that. In one of my classes I did an activity with them and then we did it again. It was a "power write." You write as much and as fast as you can. You get a score and then we do it again and it always goes up. And then I say, "Now, this is day one and in another month you will be writing at least X number of words." There was this audible "aah" in the classroom. It was one of those moments. They had just bought in completely, they were with me and they were so excited. So that's how you get [pauses] they're more willing to engage themselves because they know [pauses] they feel that confidence and respect. So those moments [flow] are more open to you because of it. If they don't respect you, forget it. They're never going to go with you. They'll spend all their energy destroying your program. I've seen it. I've seen it in classrooms and you just ache for those kids and that teacher.

Louise provides another example describing external cues related to flow, only this one involves a specific student instead of a whole class. She describes the feelings she has during the flow experience as well as the external indicators or observations she is able to make within the moment and the environment.

This one young lady in my classroom, another student, you know [pauses] you would never guess, raised her hand after we were all done and she looked at me

with these eyes. I couldn't take my eyes off of her and she was talking to me and telling me her heart's feelings about this poem and just everything she felt about it. The whole class went dead silent. They all were looking at her. They didn't know what to think of this student just suddenly blurting out, because it was like blurting out. Words just came tumbling out of her mouth [pauses] the connection was riveted. And you could hear the titter of the laughter and that happens every time a student is sharing and they go all the way in and feel their soul. The kids get so uncomfortable. They know it [that something special is happening], they're nervous. They started to laugh in that way so I kept my eyes on her and in that way kept validating. And I validated her sharing and I didn't say anything after because the minute she finished she was embarrassed. But she didn't feel that she was being laughed at by her peers. It [the laughter] quit just like that, because they realized it was inappropriate. But they were nervous.

Silence as a cue. After some further reflection, Louise discusses the aspect of silence and its role in the phenomenon of flow.

Silence, silence is a part of it. There is this silence that settles between you and the person or you and the room when those moments [flow] happen. That's momentary [laughs] but definitely a silence and that's what happened with Dixie and that's what happens with a very special kind of child.

These descriptors or cues, both internal and external, all lend themselves to the enhanced understanding of the phenomenon of flow by the individual experiencing optimal moments. By allowing individuals to reflect and take time to analyze, understand, and recognize the moments more fully, they may extend the specific optimal feelings to the rest of their lives. Louise discusses how these special moments with her students spill over into the well being and positive outlook in the rest of her work life.

Some days I just feel so honored. It's just such a wonderful feeling to have. It's just serendipity I think. To me though, that doesn't happen if you haven't built these things [respect, trust] in. I'm feeling so appreciative because in the halls, the kids are saying "Hi." You've been there long enough. You've been through four years with these kids. They've seen you before. They've had you. And it makes you feel really good that the relationship didn't end just because the class ended. They see you across the school [pauses] they call out and wave

to you. I celebrate every one of those hellos [laughs]. Thank you very, very much for that.

Enhancers and Detractors of Flow

As Louise progresses through the interview series, she speaks of many issues important to the core of the investigation. Within these issues she addresses quite naturally aspects of her environment and situation that either enhance the opportunity and intensity of flow or detract from the opportunities of flow. Most of these specific ideas have been discussed already and so will be summarized at this point. From the interview sessions I was able to draw some key ideas that answer the question, “What conditions enhance the flow experience?” Louise discusses the following ideas as being important in enhancing optimal experiences or conditions of flow in the classroom:

1. The support of the staff and administration allowing her to exercise her creativity.
2. Connecting with others (especially students) and creating relationship.
3. Openness and communication with peers and students.
4. Professionalism among staff and administration.
5. Creating optimal moments for students.
6. Becoming immersed in professional growth herself.
7. Having a grounding of success which creates confidence to risk or overcome difficult situations.
8. Having a personal outlook on life that supports positive well being.

Louise describes the conditions that detract from her experiences of flow in the classroom in the following way:

1. Lack of support by colleagues. Destructive and negative attitudes within a staff.
2. Creativity being stifled by negative conditions within a staff or classroom
3. Inability to use skills and strategies to teach because of conditions beyond her control (lack of support, resources).
4. Unrealistic expectations leading to feelings of being unsuccessful and not contributing professionally (too many special needs students at once).

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative

Within phenomenological study it is important to draw from the narrative not only an interpretation of the meaning from the perspective of the researcher, but from the perspective of the participant as well. This section of the description and analysis of the interviews conducted with Louise will involve Louise's interpretation of the experiences and ideas as they relate to optimal experiences (flow). Following Louise's interpretation, I will present my interpretation of Louise's narratives. Louise's interpretation of the meaning of the key ideas evolve from her own experiences within her classroom and school, her understanding of what is important in her personal and professional life, her understanding of optimal experiences, and her ability to create the understanding of how these ideas link and fit together. My interpretation will be made through my experience as an educator, my training as a researcher, and my understanding of flow as described by Csikszentmihalyi et al. (1990, 1992, 1993).

Louise's Interpretation

In the second interview, Louise is asked for her perceptions of corrections, deletions, or additions to the transcript of the first interview. She is also asked for her general impression of the content of her stories and her thoughts regarding specific ideas that are profiled or stand out from the rest. At this point, Louise agrees to work further with the specific ideas drawn from her first interview, and to organize, categorize, and interpret the meanings they hold for her relative to optimal experiences (flow). The process involves reviewing the recurring key ideas from the first interview, as well as the additions and changes she contributes during the participant validation process. Individual ideas are transposed onto small individual pieces of paper and are placed on a large surface. Louise studies them and begins to form questions and opinions about the importance of each idea to the phenomenon of flow and its relationship to other ideas. The intent of the process is to categorize, label, and understand the meaning of the information provided by Louise's description of her experiences of flow. The process results in Louise interpreting her own ideas and creating a framework that represents key categories of thoughts, attitudes, and descriptors of her experiences of flow. She works her way through many questions regarding why certain ideas are difficult to group or label and why others seem to fall into place easily. She enjoys a number of ahas about herself, her life, her profession, and individuals with whom she works. In the end, she arrives at five general categories titled to reflect the ideas within the groupings and the reasoning responsible for the grouping. The second interview transcript includes the final product of Louise's labors

of induction. The transcript also includes clips of her verbalized metacognition as she makes decisions and questions her own thinking.

Professionalism. The first of the categories constructed by Louise is the one she titles Professionalism. Within this category she includes such things as “best teaching moments for students, resources, I have this need to be on top, connected to what you’re doing, immersed in professional growth, planning and structure, and professional skills.” Although not the whole list of ideas (for all the ideas see Appendix I), these few highlight the kinds of things identified by Louise as related to herself as a professional, and that link professionalism to her experiences of flow in the classroom.

As she works through the different ideas, Louise makes discoveries and expresses astonishment at some of what she uncovers. I ask her to talk about what she is thinking as she analyzes the group eventually titled professionalism.

You can be a tremendously wonderful individual, have all kinds of creativity and really work on harmony, but if you don’t know your profession as a teacher [pauses]. There’s a real level of professionalism there that allows all of this to happen for the students. That’s how that connects. This personal outlook, who I am [pauses] I said that to you personally the other day. I’m strongly identified with the profession of teaching. There’s a total overlap of that role and me as an individual.

Harmony. The second category is titled Harmony. This title reflects Louise’s thoughts about the importance of having a frame or base in place that highlights the concepts of respect and trust. Some of the ideas within this category are “students go with you; their lives, their situations, their stories; my team partner; community; a family feeling; and in touch with each other.” Louise talks while working with these ideas and concludes that without this category of concepts, it is impossible to have

students in the frame of mind to learn, and thus impossible for her to experience flow.

As she reflects on this group of ideas she offers these thoughts.

Oh, this is an aha for me [the idea of harmony among staff], but it's the kind of respect that you develop in your classroom for everybody as an individual, that you then have to live in your life on the staff. I really do feel that way about the people on my staff. So that's another circle!

She speaks about the relationship of three categories of connectedness, creativity, and professionalism.

Well, to me, these are talking about that moment [flow]. These represent I would say connectedness, but its allowing harmony. We could use that [as a title for the category]. Because of the harmony in our lives we enter into creativity and professionalism and all that. So that's a good word. Harmony.

Creativity. The third category is titled Creativity. This category, Louise explains, can not occur without the other two. It, too, is imperative to have in place for her to feel she is doing her job and thus able to experience flow. Creativity is one of the things Louise does in answer to the challenges she faces in her teaching. The ideas in this group represent things that support her creativity, detract from it, as well as descriptors of the creative feeling. Some examples are, “a need to start stretching, a unique person, stretching toward a goal, flowing out my mind, and releases the best you can be.” Louise explains as she is working, how having the opportunity and support to be creative assists her in reaching the students and in developing the creativity in them. Creativity, as Louise perceives it, is directly related to the uniqueness of an individual, and this uniqueness is an integral part of what enhances the optimal experiences in her teaching. While struggling to decide the importance and relationship of creativity with other key ideas, Louise describes some of the cognitive links she is considering.

Well, it's something about [pauses] there's a real thing for me about the journey and the circle, obviously, I keep saying that. I love when my students feel that they're part of something special in their lives. And by getting into their stories, and opening their own windows, there's some of that in here. The other part is the connectedness. And I'm wondering, now you've got me thinking, what is it? Is it creativity?

Louise makes reference to a surprising discovery regarding creativity and is asked to discuss it.

The real eye opener? Yes. I was talking about Teresa [principal] and that connection. I was looking at the quotations and I suddenly realized that she was the basis of the creative part for me and I just never realized. What I couldn't figure out was why I enjoy working for Teresa so much and now I understand it [laughs]. It's because she allows me to channel my creativity. That was an aha because it's [creativity] so important to me. The other aha was that I always thought that I love to teach writing because I love to connect to the students. I never realized how much fun it was for me, because I love to be creative and I get to watch them produce creations.

Window, mirror, truth. The fourth category is the most difficult to title. There is so much complexity and abstractness within it that it is difficult to describe within the label. Louise finally decides to call it the Window, Mirror, Truth category. She explains it as, "They are looking in on your life and you are looking in on theirs." This title comes from a discussion she had with me earlier when she explained the importance of allowing students to look within to find themselves. Included in this category are key ideas Louise identifies such as, "being focused, you lose yourself in the moment, in another world together, every eye is on me; not a sound, a very special time, and going deeper and deeper into their thinking." Louise believes that providing students with the opportunity to see themselves as learners and to believe in themselves as unique and valuable individuals is the one of the most important and effective ways she can create the environment for them to learn. Until this

environment is established, little real learning is done and Louise does not experience the joy and exhilaration that are characteristic of her optimal experiences or flow.

Louise begins to mesh her ideas and talks about this synthesis while considering the themes related to harmony.

I didn't realize that till we were just talking tonight. That's a big part of it for me. If you have harmony in your classroom, you can have the creativity. Not if, you must have it in order to get to the creativity. You can not have these special moments [flow] without harmony.

My personal outlook. The last of Louise's categories is the most difficult for her to talk about. She avoids it during the process until the very last and then admits that she isn't comfortable talking about herself. It becomes easier when she decides the category can also be considered to be a description of her beliefs. This category she calls My Personal Outlook. The basis of this category is introduced early in the interview series when Louise declares that she is eager to be involved in the study because she believes in the benefit of interpreting stories. She speaks about the importance of stories and themes of life throughout the series. Some ideas that she includes in this category are, "life journey, spiritual, energy and love, balance in life, good things out of bad, a humble feeling." The themes within this category represent Louise's deepest feelings about life, learning, and growing. This she believes is the basis of every other category. Without it, she will not have any of the experiences in life or in work that she does. While searching for a label for the group of ideas, Louise verbalizes her thoughts as they relate to herself, teaching, and flow.

I don't know, seems that there should be a category about kids and the reason we celebrate that. Maybe that's who I am. I can't do this [organize the ideas from her experiences of flow] without having something regarding that, because that's what it's all about. In fact all these [refers to the groups of ideas], I look

at myself in the classroom and I am very energetic. Its a very special time when I'm with the kids.

Discussion of the categories. Once the reflecting, grouping, and labelling of groups is complete, Louise is asked to talk about each group and how it relates to the other groups and the phenomenon of flow within the classroom. I ask her specifically to think about the individual groups of ideas (professionalism, harmony, creativity, window; mirror; truth, and personal outlook) and to determine which groups are critical to have in place in order to support the rest. She brings her ideas to the fore by concluding in the following way:

I don't know if you can take any of them away, because I felt last time that if I couldn't create that atmosphere [flow for herself and her students], then I couldn't go on. It wouldn't be teaching for me. That's what happened that [difficult] year. I went into another box [the box from the story representing the ability to teach] and I developed these skills to learn to work with kids like that. I had to find a way to be able to tap into their creativity and to be able to survive with my personal outlook on life. You could take truth away, but I don't know how long I would be connected to teaching. Personally, if you took this part away (windows, mirror, truth), I don't know how long I would stay with it. It's so important to me for students to be able to find that unique wonderful thing about themselves. And that's what this is all about. That's really like a mission! That's a good word. I thought about that. It's like a mission. It's what we talked about earlier. You see certain children and you go to them. You don't know why. Something calls you about them. If you took harmony away, your whole class would disintegrate and none of the rest of this [refers to the other categories] would happen. These all have to be in place for me to have those moments [flow] in teaching.

My Interpretation as the Researcher

Csikszentmihalyi (1990), Omodei and Wearing (1990), Delle Fave and Massimini (1992), LeFevre (1992), and Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, and Whalen (1993) are predominant researchers in the area of optimal experiences in life and work. Within their studies, they suggest that there are specific characteristics inherent in

activities that allow individuals to experience flow. Regardless of the type of activity, individuals who experience flow report the same kinds of attributes being present in different tasks.

The core or basic characteristics are external in nature and describe the activity. These characteristics include: (a) a balance of challenge and skills that can be varied and controlled, (b) clear goals, and (c) immediate feedback. Secondary characteristics are internal sensations experienced by individuals as a result of their involvement in activities possessing the basic attributes of flow. These are: (a) focused concentration, (b) merging of activity and awareness (feeling one with the activity), (c) activities or tasks being under the individual's control, (d) a distorted perception of time, and (e) a temporary loss of self-awareness.

Both the core and the secondary characteristics of flow activities, although integral to the optimal sensations experienced by individuals, are unique to the specific activity. For example, the characteristic within rock climbing that represents a balance of challenge and skills is different than the balance of challenge and skill experienced by a figure skater. The rock climber chooses a specific rock face, altitude, and time of year to climb and balances these with his or her abilities. The skater chooses a specific kind of music and includes difficult footwork or a variety of jumps within his or her program to balance the challenge of the program with his or her skill level as a skater. The climber's goal may be to reach a certain ledge by a specific time during the climb, and feedback would be provided through knowledge of how close to the estimated time the task was accomplished. For the skater, the goal may be to have a portion of the program perfected in time for a specific competition and the feedback

would be the performing of the planned skills to the music with the evaluation being provided by the coach and judges.

Using the dimensions of flow provided by Csikszentmihalyi and others I will work through the key ideas gleaned from the descriptions and stories of flow experiences told by classroom teachers. The actions and sensations of each teacher's experiences of flow will be discussed as they relate to the general characteristics of flow reported in other studies.

The balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled. Louise creates a balance of challenge and skill by striving to find a connection with each child in her class. She knows she has an ability to build relationships with students and pushes herself to do so with every child. She describes it in this way. "That very personal kind of connection that I try to build all year long with the kids. In my classroom I try to create an environment where the kids feel very connected to each other and to a level of respect that allows greater things to come about." Each day is different and each child is different. To achieve connectedness she works at building a relationship with each child to find the critical motivator for each child. Louise speaks poignantly as she describes the importance of this aspect of her teaching:

So whether it's on a large scale, a program I'm developing or a little program in my classroom, or even a one-to-one experience with a student, it's always about connecting to what's wonderful about them. If they can see that and celebrate it and have that feeling in themselves, and when they feel that way, I know I've done something special. It fulfills me, too.

She monitors the progress of each child and adjusts her approach to her teaching. She could simply cover the curriculum and decide that her job is finished. Instead,

she is driven to find ways to reach each student and assure that he or she understands not only the curriculum, but his or her uniqueness as well.

Creativity for her and in the work of her students is another aspect of the challenge that Louise seeks and creates to balance with her skills. She constantly pushes herself to find different ways of teaching and reaching her students. She expects more of herself each day and she expects more of her students each day as well. To meet the challenge of self-growth, she involves herself in professional development or discusses issues with colleagues for additional ideas. Her commitment to professional development is reflected in her statement “to be able to tap into what ever resources, energy, research, professional growth I can tap into to take it to the highest level it can be in my classroom with me, is really important to me.”

We must keep in mind that the balance of challenge and skills must be in the control of the individual. For the rock climber, he or she chooses the rock face to challenge his or her particular skills. For Louise, having control over her situation is important as well. She recalls a time when she had no control over the number of at-risk students within her classroom and was faced with a situation where the challenge was greater than the skills she possessed to meet the challenge. Lack of time, energy, and strategies to work with the number of dysfunctional students she had in her classroom made the challenge within the situation outweigh the skills Louise possessed. She recalls “and before I knew it I had this class that was difficult. Almost dysfunctional in a way that I couldn’t get them to trust or to build all the things that I needed to be there in order for me to teach them.” In addition, she felt frustration at having no control of the balance of challenge and skill. For these

reasons she had a very difficult year and describes the feelings she had then as borderline depression and definitely not in flow. The following statement reflects her perception of the situation. “I felt like I wasn’t able to use my skills. I was so busy dealing with behaviors that I couldn’t do my job as a teacher.”

A structure with clear goals. The second of the core characteristics of flow, that of clear goals, is represented in the knowledge that Louise has of the students in her class and the curriculum. She also has clear expectations for each day, month, and year regarding where she wants each student to be on the continuum. The district provides goals in the form of standards, but Louise has her own set of expectations that she strives to achieve. They begin with expectations regarding respect, trust, and relationship between herself and her students, and among the students within her classes. She has a framework in mind that needs to be in place for any of the magic to happen for her students. By magic, I refer to the creativity and uniqueness that she believes is so important for students to find within themselves. Louise explains the importance of this perspective in the following way. “I wrote here on the side that trust is critical. And that starts with day one and I tell the students that I respect them and expect that they will respect me.” Creating or finding this magic is a goal within Louise’s overall plan and can only be found by looking in the window that Louise describes while talking about students finding themselves. The magic of respecting self and others, developing potential, and finding joy in learning, is critical for Louise’s students to experience before she can have the experience of flow. The phenomenon of flow does not occur for Louise if she is not connecting with her students and helping them to travel their life journeys.

A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback. The last of the core characteristics is feedback. Of interest is that Louise discusses support from colleagues and administration to try new things, but not once does she mention that she needs to hear accolades or praise. What she finds invaluable is feedback from students. Feedback from students is her main source of information about her progress. The students' responses, questions, and work within her class provides the immediate feedback she needs in order to know how she is doing. Student progress provides the key information that allows her to monitor and adjust her lessons, and in this way, balance the challenges within her job with the skills she possesses to achieve her own goals.

The secondary characteristic of focused concentration. Assuming that teaching for Louise embodies all the core characteristics of flow, it is not surprising to find that she experiences many of the secondary attributes associated with the phenomenon of flow. Through her description of her experiences of flow, Louise discusses the first characteristic of total absorption and focus when working with her students. She becomes one with the action of teaching and describes the sensation in this way:

You just lose yourself and you don't think about who you are or anything. I think that's key for the children who are investing in relating and it's key to you because sometimes when you immerse yourself in the subject matter, there's a loss of consciousness of what's around you.

Merging of activity and awareness. For Louise, the merging of activity and awareness occurs on a daily basis. She experiences this sensation especially when she is involved in working with individual students as they are writing. She becomes engrossed in their attempts to overcome challenges and is so involved with each

student's production that she loses herself in the moment. She states, "I'm right there with them [in the moment]." As she recalls specific incidents of flow while teaching composition, Louise explains that she has a tendency of "getting into their writing" and that "it's [the moment of flow] so unconscious." She feels that she and her students seem to be "in another world together." This secondary characteristic is definitely a part of Louise's experiences of flow.

Control of the activity by the individual. In a specific example where Louise describes working with her class on a particularly abstract and difficult assignment involving symbolism, she stresses the importance of honesty and its relationship to having control when working with students. This leads her to explain how important it is to be aware of and in touch with the students' involvement, emotions, and confidence level. She describes the situation in this way:

And the whole time I kept saying, "We're getting into something really difficult." I was very honest with them. I kept building them up and reminding them, building them up, "you can do it." Reminding them of how hard it was, "If you can get through this the next step will be easier." I walked around the room and as they were telling me what a river current was, I was celebrating back. Then, "OK, now, if a mother is like a river current, if the mother is the river current, what could that mean?" And we went into that and I walked around and shook hands with the kids. Anything I can use to build them up and be honest with them. So what was happening there is a real honesty. They were allowing themselves to be lost in the writing. But I thought it was an art form in the way that you're just manipulating and working and trying to have the whole energy and the whole lesson enjoyable the whole time.

The last of the secondary characteristics experienced by Louise is the distorted perception of time. She talks about becoming so involved with the teaching moment that the end of the period comes and she is startled by the bell. She adds that the students, as well, are often surprised that the time is over.

Distorted perception of time and loss of self-awareness. The perception of time is a variable that for Louise loses its consistency when she is experiencing flow. She provides an example where her perception of time had become distorted and time seemed to race by even though she had wanted to be conscious of it. She was working with her class moving from student to student and she made herself aware that she had only two minutes left in class time. As she continued to work with individuals, her awareness of herself and of the time was completely lost. She explains,

I have to force myself to move from one [student] to the next because I can get so caught up in what they want to produce, in trying to help them. So I was moving quickly through the room and I was over here at this desk and I had been watching the clock and I knew that I only had two minutes left and I forgot. I didn't know and the bell went off and I went Aah! I was totally into their work.

Louise also refers to time when discussing some work she has done with adults from her church group. She describes time as having a spiritual quality and a special quality while in flow. She elaborates, “. . . the people were going deeper and deeper into their thinking and it [flow] happened there too. It has its own life It's almost what I call a holy or sacred moment in time. It's very special.” The perception of time becomes distorted when Louise is in flow, both in its passing and in its quality. Her experiences of flow allow her to become one with the moment, abandoning any sense of self-consciousness or awkwardness.

Summary of My Interpretation as Researcher

To summarize my interpretation of Louise's experiences of flow and the relationship of these experiences to the characteristics of flow outlined in the studies

by Csikszentmihalyi (1992) and others, it is important to say that her description and the narrative of her experiences are unique to her as a teacher. Although the descriptions of her experiences reflect the constructs of flow as described by researchers in the field, Louise's experiences and the actions that create those experiences represent a very personal and individual encounter for her alone. It cannot be stated that what creates or enhances the opportunities of flow for her specifically, would create or enhance the opportunity of flow for others. The same could be said for those things Louise suggests detract from her experiences of flow. Situations that she finds negative to her quality of life in work may not be perceived as negative by others. What can be said, however, is that her experiences reflect the broader categories or constructs of flow inherent in the situations described by thousands of other individuals who talk about their own experiences of flow. These broader descriptors of flow are a balance of challenge and skills that can be varied and controlled, a structure with clear goals, and a structure providing immediate and relevant feedback.

To address the characteristic of challenge and skills, it is obvious that Louise is challenged each day by her own personal outlook toward discovering ways to reach every student. She is also driven by her philosophy regarding professionalism. She believes it is her responsibility to stay current and to be a lifelong learner. In this way, she is able to keep the skills she attains every year in balance with the challenges she faces. For the most part, Louise is in control of the challenges and skills associated with her classroom experiences. It is a delicate balance. Sometimes the situation seems out of control as in the situation where she had too many dysfunctional students in one class. During this specific circumstance, she felt it was a negative experience

and was anxious about it. Looking back, she observes that she balanced the challenge (which was out of her control) with her skills by increasing her repertoire of skills. She tapped resources in the form of ideas from colleagues and was able to move past the difficult part of that year. This kind of action is typical of individuals who have autotelic personalities. They look for solutions, bright moments, and see challenges as problems to solve, not insurmountable obstacles. In this regard, Louise's autotelic personality is very much a part of her personal outlook on life that guides her decisions and actions at work.

The characteristic of flow, having a structure with clear goals, is reflected in the way that Louise organizes her plans for the students in her classroom. She knows what she wants to accomplish with each student and strives to achieve these goals. She sets timelines and guidelines for herself and her students to meet certain objectives within the curriculum. Alongside these guidelines related to academic achievement, she has very clear ideas about tapping into each child's uniqueness and creativity. A very key goal for Louise is to create a kind of harmony within her class that allows her students and herself to become a community of learners.

The final core characteristic that Louise's experiences reflect is immediate and relevant feedback. This she receives from her students. There is no more immediate nor relevant kind of feedback than the reactions of a child and Louise counts on those reactions for her feedback. The reactions can be in response to a personal challenge, an academic challenge, or simply a reaction to an experience during the class. Each time a child responds or doesn't respond in Louise's class she receives information

about the student and her success as a teacher. She uses these pieces of information to monitor the challenge she is facing and to adjust her skill level.

Concluding Thoughts Regarding Louise and Her Experiences of Flow

It is my heartfelt belief that what makes the experiences of flow occur for Louise, is first of all, her outlook on life. She has a powerfully autotelic personality. Her power comes from her understanding of and belief in relationships among people, from her understanding of and belief in the good people can do for one another, and from her spiritual grounding involving love, caring, and commitment to her family and her work. She benefits from this autotelic personality in that she consistently searches for ways to achieve in whatever she is doing. Within her classroom, this means finding different ways to address students' needs, using her broad repertoire of skills, and being absolutely prepared for each unit, each lesson, and each unexpected situation. The second strength Louise possesses is her commitment to the concept of professionalism and her hunger for knowledge, skills, and strategies to assist her in achieving her goals. She has a thorough background in teaching skills and strategies. Having this strong base of professional skill allows her to address the challenges in her everyday work environment with success. By striving to meet the needs of students, she creates optimal moments of flow for herself as well as her students.

Heather

Heather is an experienced teacher of 20 years. She is warm and up and very excited to be in the study. She wants to be involved so that she will have the opportunity to tap into her own feelings about herself and why she loves her job so

much. She is also interested in providing information about her experiences that might help others in the area of quality of life and work. Heather teaches at a junior high school that accommodates grades six to eight. She has taught in both the academic challenge, and the regular stream, and describes her experiences as a teacher as truly enjoyable. Her summers seem to drag and she admits that she can't wait to get back to school in September. Heather confesses, "I'm not ashamed to say that teaching is a big part of my life. A love." She continues to explain that she is one who could work all year. "I truly would be one that could work all year long in teaching. I don't feel exhausted. At the end of the year I could use a couple of weeks off but then I could be right back there."

Specific Experiences and Situations

After having read the three narratives that describe flow, Heather begins to discuss her own similar experiences. She feels that because of the fulfillment she experiences in work she has no need to search for heightened experiences outside of teaching. She explains:

You know, I wonder why I've never really gotten involved actively in sport. I enjoy walking and I've learned to play tennis. But I guess I never felt that I needed that because I get that sense [of heightened experiences] at work all the time.

Heather wonders out loud whether it is the work with her students or the work she does with her staff on the social committee that she enjoys the most. She is very involved with both, and they make her life at work full and satisfying. She discusses first her classroom experiences.

Classroom Discussions

For Heather, moments or experiences of flow seem to revolve around dialogue and interesting student discussions. She elaborates on these times:

Truly the best times of my life center around those classrooms and mainly times when we're having discussions of some kind. The times when the kids and I are working through a chapter and we're into that discussion back and forth. I work with gifted kids so the questions are always challenging. I just love that. Their intellect and working with that. Those are the times when I sense it [flow].

Distorted Time

As we speak about the sensations Heather receives when she has optimal experiences (flow) she makes reference to the passage of time. "My day, the minute I get to work [pauses] It's just amazing how quickly it is before it's two o'clock and school's out. My plan period [pauses] it seems I have so much to do. It's unbelievable how quickly the time goes." Heather perceives time speeding by especially when she is involved in dialogue with her students. "Those are the times when I sense it [flow]. To me this is the best feeling. When the bell will ring and the kids will look at me and say, 'was that the bell for the end of class?'" Throughout the interview series, Heather refers to the distorted passage of time occurring especially when talking and listening to her students. It is a time of complete focus for her.

Organization and Preparation

One of Heather's comments in reference to the first descriptive narrative is that she does not have the focus and organization she needs to feel fulfilled during the summer break. She explains, "I have to be organized in order to get through my day. I sense that there, at school. There is an order to everything." She continues to

discuss this aspect of organization and makes reference to starting a new unit in her classes. "I'd worked for two or three weeks trying to get my mind straight about what I had to do still and get all organized so that I had a good sense of what it was all about." For Heather, beginning something new is an opportunity to use her organizational skills and to feel absolutely prepared for the task. She views her organizational skills as being critical to her sense of well being in teaching. She expands on this aspect: "But I realize that at school I need that [organization]. It gives me a sense of calmness. OK, I know what I'm doing here. I have everything planned out. Papers are ready and now I can go have fun with it."

Being prepared allows Heather to develop better dialogue with her students. She has done her homework in getting her materials ready and in getting her students ready. She discusses a time when she had been completely prepared for her class in social studies and had done work with the students so that they were prepared for a video that was to be viewed. "You could see them go, 'aah,' the oohs and the aahs when they saw something we had talked about. And the interaction afterwards is so fascinating for me to hear the things that they picked up."

Physiological Responses to Flow

"Excited" is one word that Heather uses frequently to describe her feelings during flow. When I ask her to elaborate on this feeling, she refers to an isolated incident when she and a friend had been jogging and she had felt like she was flying.

So we ended up doing another mile and came home and I sensed that for the one and only time during my running career. And that's as close to what I can get, to what that [feeling in the classroom] sense is. It feels good. I feel good all over physically. That is an incredible high. Very similar to that runner's high. I feel like I could probably fly out of that classroom. It feels so good.

As she searches her memory for descriptors of the sensations she has experienced, Heather recalls the feelings she has had when things are not going well. This kind of anti-flow experience is associated with disappointment and a terrible feeling in her stomach. She describes one situation:

And actually the first day I was disappointed. I remember it [the lesson] didn't seem to have the life that I had anticipated. I was so excited to share this with them and when they left the room. I remember thinking, gosh something didn't feel right. That day again, it was almost, there was a terrible feeling in my stomach that something was not right. And so it was a sense that I had, that something was wrong with them. I certainly wasn't feeling right.

Heather has the opportunity to add to her description of her sensations when in flow when we met for the second time. She wanted to expand her original depiction in the following way:

Physically I guess the sense that I feel is just a charge, and excitement. I can feel excitement and butterflies in my stomach if I'm really anxious to get into a lesson and yet the same time there's another sense in that it's a relaxing feeling, like everything's going well. I think the excitement part comes if the lesson has been planned and I'm ready to present to the kids and I'm so excited to share this with them.

Heather continues explaining a specific situation and the feelings that followed the buildup of excitement for the lesson.

Then there was that sense of the relaxing, fulfilled, self-fulfilled feeling. I think of walking around and these kids are so focused into what they're doing. I feel almost like a little stuffed kitty at the end of a big meal. You sit back and you relax and you enjoy what has been prepared here. It's a wonderful sense. I mentioned here that the physical feeling was like a train on a roll. There's no stopping, but then also the other side of that is that then there's that calm and serenity of when you've done something well and the kids now want to take off with it.

Connecting With Kids

As Heather speaks of optimal moments or flow experiences within her classroom, she is compelled to make the association between moments of flow for herself and the experiences of her students. She is adamant that a key component leading up to the phenomenon of flow is the connection with her students. She elaborates on this theme as she describes some of her feelings during experiences of flow.

There's a connectedness. I would be amiss if I thought that I should just have this feeling. I hope, and that's what I'm pulling for, is that the kids are getting that too. And for me to see that face or to hear that comment, "Is that the bell?" That is just an incredible experience. I try to gear into it. I think they have a lot to do with that. If I were just standing up there and thought I had done a wonderful job, had a great lesson and felt this euphoria, that would be ridiculous. Looking in their faces and seeing that they're still with me and that I'm not just spouting off for my own. And a sense that they want to continue [pauses] that is an incredible high.

Heather thinks back over her teaching and identifies a time when she should have made sure the kids were with her. She realizes that her students must be involved and that during this particular lesson she was caught up in her excitement and didn't have them with her. She describes the situation:

I can sense it in them. You know. They're raising their hands or a hand has been held up the whole time, then I'm getting going on something. I have to stop and realize that they need to have a part in that. Part of that for me is that they must want to be able to have a part in it because something is drawing them into it. So that feels good to know that they are connecting, but I've got to stop and give them a chance.

One of the ideas that Heather discusses deals with the aspect of connecting with students through their personal interest. She talks about a unit that is always popular with her students because it involves learning about themselves. It is the human growth unit.

There's such a sense that this is their body and this is very real to them. Their attitude is that they can buy into this. It's not like teaching about Africa. "This is my body, I understand this." To me there's a closeness that I feel with the kids. You're either trying to dispel a fear so that they feel better or, "Yes that can happen but here are some ways to prevent it." That talks to me of a real warmth that I love to have in the classroom. A real timing and a connectedness with the kids. That kind of feeling where they didn't want it to end and neither did I. I think in a situation like that, it's not so much of a high, like the runner's high, but for me it's the warmth and closeness or a bonding which I've felt is so important. It's a different feeling, like I had accomplished something.

Heather brings her thoughts on connecting with students to a close by addressing a final belief. She states, "I don't see how you can do this job and not want to focus in and be a part of what they're doing." She continues by explaining how she connects with the students in her class, "To be looking at their faces to see if they're getting the idea, to make sure there is an interest or spark. As a teacher, you have to be in tune with these kids."

Challenge

Throughout the interview, Heather refers to the things she does in her classes to achieve her goals. She discusses changing her teaching style to make the history she teaches more interesting. She changes the lesson so that she is telling a story instead of lecturing. At this point, Heather adds that she has always been someone who can not teach the same lesson twice. She elaborates on this idea. "It seems sometimes that I need to take a new twist to do it the second time. Otherwise I get a sense of repetition that I don't like. I love the challenge of coming up with something new." Heather admits that in her twenty years of teaching basically the same subjects, she has never been bored. "I've always felt I've needed a new little twist to it. Mostly it's for me. If I don't have a sense of excitement in me, they are not going to get into

this at all.” Heather creates her own challenges in this way. “So the challenge is something I enjoy and the variety. I love to be able to think that I’ve found a new way so that I can continue my excitement and build it up in me.” She adds that when she creates challenges for herself the sense of something new and exciting carries over to her students.

Control

Early in the interview Heather talks about her need to be in control. She plans and organizes so that she can not only be ready but can be assured of a lesson with which she can be relaxed. She admits that she tends to end up doing things herself rather than having others help her. She likes to be in control of the final outcome of any action. With her students, she monitors their progress as the class continues and changes things as she goes. This constant adjusting of her plans allows her to be in control of the outcome of the lesson.

Goals Within Teaching

The last thing Heather wants to do in her classes is lecture at her students. She has experienced that situation herself as a student and says, “I can’t do this to these kids.” Instead, she wants to develop ways of getting information across that is captivating and exciting. If she does this, Heather believes she will be able to achieve one of her overall goals for the subject area of history. “What I want them to develop is love for something that happened in the past and see how it affects us today.” This sentiment, to have her students enjoy and love the work and the topic, surfaces numerous times throughout Heather’s descriptions of her classroom experiences. She

talks about a lesson where she was employing the use of a great deal of technology and was disappointed in the resulting interest of the students. She feels that worrying about the laser disc she was using and fussing with buttons and beams of light drew her away from her real purpose. "I can see how a lot of that was pulling me away from the real purpose which was to get them to enjoy it [the subject of the lesson] and love it."

In order to create the interesting lessons she needs, Heather has to prepare meticulously. She identifies this as a second goal of hers. She refers to the importance of being organized and that organization is a necessary daily goal she sets for herself. This goal allows her to conduct her classes and teach the kinds of lessons that will be worthwhile for her students. She explains how her experiences of being organized leads her to optimal moments within her teaching.

One of the things that I had to refer to, it was this high that I get, but a lot of it gears around organization, and I know that has to be a big part of my day. If I don't feel like I at least have the big picture in mind of what I need to accomplish then I don't have any sense of freedom of what I can do in between. I know I'm going to have a great day if everything's in order. I mentioned down in here [her notes on the first transcript] that physically I guess the sense that I feel is just a charge, an excitement I can feel excitement and butterflies in my stomach if I'm totally anxious to get into a lesson and yet the same time there's another sense in that it's a relaxing feeling, like everything's going well. I think probably the excitement part comes if the lesson has been planned and I'm ready to present it to the kids, and I'm so excited to share this with them.

Feedback

While describing the importance of being planned and organized for her lessons, Heather also discusses the information she receives from her students that tells her how she and they are doing. She recognizes immediately when teaching strategies have either hit their mark or missed completely. She recalls a time when a lesson,

enriched with a video, did not have the outcome she had predicted. “I remember it didn’t seem to have the life that I had anticipated. I was so excited to share this with them and when they left the room I remember thinking, gosh something didn’t feel right.” Analyzing the situation Heather puzzles over what had happened and decides that she had, “let them watch too much instead of stopping and letting them see what they had absorbed and talking to them about it. Getting some feedback directly from them, and me being able to interact.”

Heather discusses how feedback allows her to ascertain how her students are perceiving the lesson, and as a result, how she is achieving her goals. She uses both the feedback she sees and senses from her students and the bio-feedback she gets from herself. She explains the significance of involving the students in the lesson, which allows them to provide feedback for her.

I have to stop and realize that they need to have a part in that [the excitement of the lesson]. Part of that, for me is that they must want to be able to have a part in it because something is drawing them into it. So that feels good to know that they are connecting, but I’ve got to stop and give them a chance. That day again, it was almost, there was a terrible feeling in my stomach that something was not right. It was by looking at them and sensing that they were too into getting notes down and some things that weren’t fun at all. Instead of sitting and enjoying what we were listening to. Being able to see the beauty that was in there [the information and pictures of a video]. And so it was that sense that I had that, something was wrong with them. I certainly wasn’t feeling right.

Heather uses the feedback from students to make changes in her lessons. She adjusts then monitors key parts of the lesson in hopes of having her students more involved and more understanding of the main points of the lesson. The changes she makes to the way she teaches the subsequent lesson results in significant feedback for her. She receives recurring information about the learning that happens with her students. She provides an example of a situation where she adjusted her lesson and

used the feedback to know how close she was to her goals for herself and her students.

The next day, I thought I'd take a turn, and see if we could stop more during the video and let them have a chance to stop writing. We just stopped on this one scene where this grass was burning. I started there and the kids were right away, "Oh, that was when they were burning all the forests." And they went on and on and on. I realized that they had gotten a lot of the information but they hadn't had a chance to verbalize it. I could sense the excitement picking up and I was feeling better then because they were getting a chance to talk. I realized that they had gotten a lot but I hadn't heard from them so I didn't realize how much. It's important for me to be able to hear from them that they've assimilated what I wanted them to get.

Heather makes it clear throughout the interview series that feedback for her is an important part of her success as a teacher. Knowing where the students are in the learning allows her to modify and change lessons and in this way keep the students' involvement and excitement heightened. Their heightened excitement in the lesson is directly related to Heather having optimal experiences while teaching. Feedback from her students allows her to make conscious changes in her plans resulting in an enhancement or maintenance of their energy level. As a final example, Heather describes an experience where she made a change in her interaction with the students after sensing from them that they were losing energy. She moved closer to them, involved them more in responding, and increased her expectations of them. She called on individuals to answer rather than waiting for volunteers. She explains what happened:

I could see the focus turning in. You could suddenly see them sitting up a little more in the chairs, people actually having a hand onto the paper so they knew exactly where they were, pencils were in hand a little bit more to jot down some notes, and it just brought the focus back.

She concludes, “They need to know that [they’re important] and I ask for plenty of feedback from them and involve them as much as I can.”

Rules and Expectations

As Heather’s interview progresses, she makes reference to the aspects that need to be in place for her to be able to connect with her students. “I like them to feel comfortable in there. So there’s a sense that we can be friends with one another. When you see me in the hallway, it’s OK to say hello and to greet one another.” After some reflection she adds to her first ideas.

You talked about some unwritten rules that surround this relationship and one of the first things I thought of is there has to be trust. My kids, I think, share with me as much as they do because they know I’m not going to put them down, anything they say is okay, and at the same time we talk about trust with each other as a class. In fact the first two weeks of school I don’t do much teaching: I do a lot of work in the affective area with the kids. We do a lot about interacting with each other, learning about each other and so on. To me that is so important for building that basis for what my class is going to be about later, which is that we’re going to do a lot of talking in here. People are going to share some maybe very personal things. And to me those are some of the unwritten rules and the ground rules that if a child says something and you know it’s very sincere, that there’s no laughing, there’s no ridicule as you get out of the classroom or anything. And I think we have such good discussions because the kids feel that trust afterwards.

The School and the People

In addressing the relationship of the school and the people on staff to the experiences of flow, Heather speaks from different perspectives. She feels first of all that the openness of the facility lends itself to her ability to bond with staff members. Some staff members are distracted by the open classrooms and the noise; Heather however, sees this as a plus. “But for me, it is just so wonderful to have someone where I just literally look over a book case and I can see her teaching. We share a lot

more because of that.” She is of the opinion that the structure of the school is “more conducive to teachers working together. It’s almost like being in a home together. You see one another physically, you’re working more closely with each other.”

Her second perspective of the relationship between the school and the staff and flow is associated with the great respect and strong feelings Heather has for members of her staff. She is very close with some individuals and compares them in many ways to family. Heather talks about a valuable friendship she has with one member on her staff.

There’s so much that we’ve built together in our friendship and it was that warmth, that bond that you could share something and it wasn’t going to be passed around in the teacher’s lounge. A real true friend. She was into my feelings and understood me and yet would tell me if I was doing something that [pauses] if I were wrong.

This trust leads to the kind of connection Heather believes is so critical to have in a healthy classroom environment. By relating this situation during the interview, she recognizes how the atmosphere of respect and trust are universally important in creating positive and productive relationships among all individuals, staff or student, young or old.

The Administration’s Role

When I ask her to speak about the role the administration plays in her experiences of flow, Heather refers to the importance of autonomy in teaching. She needs to have administrative guidelines, but must also feel she is autonomous in her classroom. As she recalls previous principals she has worked with she concludes that the following issues are important to her regarding administrative involvement.

I need that sense from a principal that I have support. That if a parent is going to challenge me on something, that I have a principal who can stand up and say, "Hey wait a minute. She has been here for many years. I've watched her, I've known what she's like as a teacher and I back up what ever she's saying."

Heather feels to do her job and to have the freedom to plan, organize, and be creative, she needs an administrator who has a long term vision for the school. She also stresses that the administration must be forceful and willing to act on the teachers' behalf.

Detractors

During the interview series we determine that certain aspects of the school, the staff, the administration, the way Heather prepares for her classes, and the connection with her students, have potential to enhance the experience of optimal moments or flow. We address the alternate perspective and try to ascertain the situations that detract from or stop the experience of flow. For Heather, being interrupted in the middle of a lesson would stop the moment. A fire drill, a knock at the door, or "something dramatic like a child getting sick" are some of the specific situations she can think of. She also feels that the moment she begins to lose the students' involvement, the experience of flow starts to wane. Sometimes it happens because she has given them too much to focus on at once. She provides an example to clarify.

Then there was a sense that just looking around there wasn't the spark that I had. It took me until the next day to realize that maybe I was giving them too much to do. I had lost the feeling. I knew they had. It was some kind of sense in me that I gone over their heads. I know I try to cram a little too much into a period or have them do too many things.

Having talked about this incident in the first interview, Heather is excited to discuss a situation that has happened in the interim. She has been working with a

class doing a project that the students are very much enjoying. At one point in the project she chose to change activities to work through something less exciting and more mundane. Before long, Heather felt the change in the involvement of the students. She is pleased with the outcome of this experience, however, as she was able to sense the students detachment immediately. She began to move around the room calling on students and creating more involvement by everyone. She explains what occurred.

I could see everything plummet and just get that feeling this wasn't as exciting as what we were just working on and so it just had to be a quick decision that we had to do something fast to get that excitement back up and that was easy by going around the room and then asking the kids to participate more.

Heather is delighted by the potential of what she has accomplished. She can recognize when the flow is beginning to fade and can keep it going. She describes her sense of accomplishment. "I mean, we could have gone through a whole period of sleepiness and could have dragged out until the end, and to know that you stopped that situation and created a new one, it's great."

Describing a Complete Experience

During the time between the first and second interview, Heather tries to become more aware of the experiences she is having in her classroom. She describes an experience enthusiastically while it is still fresh in her mind:

Well, I think like even today, the whole time I was doing that lesson with the kids on the Nile River, I was thinking to myself this is building, I can feel it. Okay, what am I feeling? What does it feel like, without trying to stop the lesson and say just a minute I've got to write something down real quick. I could feel it growing in me. I start talking faster, I can tell that. I have to slow myself down as my excitement gets going. Watching the kids and watching them try to sneak into a notebook to try to work right away instead of that sense of no, we're not starting right now, it was like yes, they want to do this, they're

excited about this, it's working and then to watch them afterwards as they took off on their own and I walk around and that's when I wrote down that sense of calmness and serenity and security of like sitting back and [pauses] after I have weeded a section of the garden. I love working outside in the garden, and if I have weeded a section, I love to go back the rest of the night and look at my job that I've done and go, oh, doesn't that look nice. All that hard work I've put into it feels so good and that was the sense I had looking at the kids today. I've done such a great job, look at them. They are so excited. And they're all at work and that was wonderful. And yes, I don't think I would have been in tune so much if I hadn't done this to really be aware of gee, I should be sensing what this feels like and how do I get to it. And sit back and savor it.

Heather's Own Learning

During the second interview I ask Heather if she is surprised by anything that she has read from the first interview. The issues she identifies have to do with dialogue, feedback, being organized, and controlling of student discussions. She explains in greater detail:

I think the whole idea of the dialogue. I realized I've been doing a lot of it in the past few years. I never realized why and now I do. That that's the only way that I get this closeness with the kids. That I really feel like I'm tuned into what they're thinking and if they're getting back to me what I want them to get back to me. This whole idea of feedback. I can see over the past few years that it has been probably 90% of my teaching. I said it wasn't before because I was really fearful of it. I thought it was giving too much control over to them, but I realized I can control where the discussions are going and that's a technique I didn't have earlier and yet it's made my teaching much, much better. The whole idea with feelings. I am very much a feeling person so I'm very much tuned into people and their emotions, facial, body language, that kind of thing. And I've known that for the last couple of years, but I guess I didn't realize how much it was a part of what I'm doing. Organization is important for me at school. At home in the summer I don't have that same sense of organization that I have at school on a daily basis. Everything seems so right there. It must be just the setting.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative

Heather's Interpretation

After reviewing and reflecting on her comments from the first interview, Heather takes the opportunity to change and add to the description of her experiences. Following this I ask her to identify any key ideas that surfaced while she was studying the transcript. We add these to a collection of ideas I have already drawn from the transcript and have written on small pieces of paper. Heather proceeds to work through each key idea, discussing it and grouping ideas that belong together. By the end of the second interview she has created a frame of idea categories that represent important aspects of her experiences and the phenomenon of flow. These categories are connecting through feedback, staff, the “high” of teaching, people; feelings—need to feel closer to others, sense of order and control, and challenges. These titles serve to name the categories and to describe ideas within each grouping.

Connecting through feedback. This category includes statements that describe the way Heather gathers information from her students as well as the feelings involved with the information. Following are a few of the phrases in the category Connecting Through Feedback, which will assist readers to understanding the essence of the category (for the entire list of ideas see Appendix J).

1. There's a connectedness.
2. It's important for me to be able to hear from them.
3. Real timing and connectedness.
4. Just looking around, there wasn't the same spark.
5. Me being able to interact.

These key ideas represented the importance with which Heather views her ability to obtain feedback from her students and to be able to interpret the meaning of that feedback. She comments while working through the inductive process, "Because I need to feel from them and get their feelings and then in turn interacting with them, too. So I'm getting to the next step in the lesson and sensing from that, that they're understanding it." Using the feedback to make the teaching of her lessons better allows the students to have enhanced experiences within the lesson. This results in Heather maintaining or increasing her opportunities for flow.

"Sensing" the kids. This category Heather decides, is similar to the one called feedback, but it involves more of her intuitive readings of the students and less of what they verbalize to her. Ideas within this category include the following phrases:

1. Seeing that they're still with me.
2. Mainly times when we're in discussion, those are the times I sense it.
3. Losing what was happening with the kids.
4. Sensing this excitement in them carried over to me.
5. A connection beyond the subject matter.

Heather explains about the ideas within the category.

These were the sensing things. This wasn't so much talking with them, it was a sense I got about frustration, to see if they're still with me, to see that they're interested, waiting for a reaction, a sense that they want to continue [laughs]. There's a lot of sensing here. That comfort feeling. My sense that the kids were so involved.

Staff. This category has to do with the school but in the end, Heather decides to call it staff. The category, although not one of the biggest, holds much importance for

her. She discusses her need to interact with people and has this to say regarding the staff category. “These were all my feelings about my school. What I think is important in terms of vision, the openness, sharing with the teachers, learning with the teachers, working closely with them.” Included in this category as well, are these ideas:

1. There’s so much that we’ve [teachers] built together.
2. An open school.
3. More conducive to teachers working together [the school].
4. How teachers react with one another; with the kids.
5. Nurturing principal.
6. I have guidelines but I do what I want.

Heather talks frequently throughout the interview series, about how unique and special the school and staff is. It allows her to come to work each day looking forward to the challenges. She has been there many years and would not want to move. Heather feels that without the support of the staff, which is like a large family to her, she would not have the positive experiences she does while teaching.

The “high” of teaching. When Heather describes the contents of this category she says simply, “it has to do with the feeling. The euphoria, the high I get from teaching.” The statements or ideas in this grouping describe the physical, emotional and intellectual sensations Heather experiences. Some of these descriptions are as follows:

1. Feel like I could probably fly out of the room.
2. Very similar to runners high.

3. A love.
4. They didn't want it to end and neither did I.
5. Unbelievable how quickly time flies.
6. Teaching is a big part of my life.

Heather describes her feelings while in flow in another way as well. For her there is the physiological sensation that she describes as excitement, butterflies, and flying. She also discusses the emotional sensations she feels that are associated with knowing she is prepared and having a closeness with people. Heather describes her feeling when she knows she has done a good job preparing. "That physical feeling was like a train on a roll. There's no stopping, but then also the other side of that is that then there's that calm and serenity of when you've done something well." Her range of sensations while experiencing flow is great. She goes from feeling like she's flying to a feeling of warmth and contentment. Heather describes the feeling she experiences when she connects with someone, which for her enhances the experience of flow. "It was truly a closeness that I felt that was that connectedness, that bonding that I need to feel with people. To me it's a connection beyond the subject matter. I guess its just a warmth and a bonding."

It seems that all of Heather's experiences of flow in the classroom are enhanced by her ability to connect and actually feel the energy of the people or person with whom she is.

People—feelings—need to feel close to others. Although this category is similar to the one titled Staff, it refers specifically to Heather's feelings toward

students and others in her work. She explains that the ideas in this category are the more deeply felt interactions and are represented by these phrases:

1. The friendships and the bonds I have with the kids.
2. Saying hello to them in the halls, the friendship.
3. Fulfilling a need in them.
4. Enjoying what I'm doing.
5. This is what teaching is to me.
6. Love of my life, yes.

The manner in which Heather expresses herself in relation to this category suggests that the very significant aspects of her life all revolve around her connection, friendship and personal interaction with other individuals. Some of the other ideas in the category are, "the personal experience that you went through with them, a true closeness, work; be patient and kind to one another, and she was into my feelings; understood me."

Sense of control. At one point within the interview series, Heather talks at length about her need for control while at school; control of her classes, control through planning. For this reason, she is surprised that after some reflection, control does not seem to hold as much importance as she once thought. The ideas that make up the grouping are important but the whole concept, when compared with the other categories involving individuals and feelings, doesn't seem to stand out as much. This category includes the following ideas:

1. I'm so much in control at school.
2. I don't have the focus and organization in the summer.

3. Control is a big thing.
4. Teaching is autonomous.
5. A feeling I have accomplished something.

Challenges. As Heather begins to look more closely at some of the individual categories, they seem to be less significant in relation to the whole scheme of enjoying her work. She keeps referring to the interaction she has with individuals she teaches and works with. She can't explain how she feels, but it puzzles her that something she had originally thought was so critical now seems to be a product of the other more important categories. She ponders and suggests that she has "kind of little sprinklings here. Things I need but [pauses] I don't need a lot of that [challenge and control]. And yet I know there are some people that probably have order and control as the most important things." Heather groups the following ideas together for the challenge category.

1. The idea of being challenged.
2. I love the challenge of coming up with something new.
3. I need to take a new twist to do it the second time.
4. Starting new things with the kids.

As the interview proceeds, we investigate different explanations for her feelings regarding some of the smaller categories, challenge being one. As she works through different rationales for why her thinking has taken the turns that it has, she considers the suggestion that some categories seem less significant than she would have anticipated because they are areas that she is involved with and in control of as an individual. These aspects, such as challenges and control of her work environment, may be

categories that subconsciously she feels are within her control and in hand. Other aspects affecting her quality of life at work and optimal experiences while teaching relate to and involve other people. The categories that relate to connecting, sensing, staff, the high of teaching, and feelings regarding people, involve interaction with many other individuals and so may result in greater numbers of references. Heather also considers that as a young teacher, control and the mechanics of teaching loomed large in her perspective of teaching. Now she identifies less importance in the mechanics of controlling students. She also recognizes that she is now more skilled in the subtle but powerful area of building rapport and getting to know her students.

Discussion of the categories. When I ask her to discuss the overall organization of the final frame of categories, Heather expresses surprise at some aspects and a sense of confirmation in others. Until we explore the frame further, she is taken aback by the few references to challenges and control in her interview. She is positively confirmed in the realization that staff, people, feelings, and connecting are a significant part of what enhances moments of optimal experiences or flow. When I ask her for her reaction to the way she has interpreted her experiences, she expresses herself in this way:

The people that I work with are very important to me. I think I'd always felt that but, I never realized that. That the whole idea of feedback and staying in tune with kids is another big stack here. People's feelings, I mean, for my life this is the way my life is anyway with friendships or anything, it's very much [pauses] This control stack I thought might be bigger. And to me this [the high of teaching] is the result of these three [staff, people, feelings, and connecting through feedback], especially these three I think, the interaction of those . . . I would have thought that "order" would have been at least a lot more important. I knew the staff was very important because that's why I've stayed at the school. I love the people there. The whole study with you has really brought this [connecting through feedback] to my attention more than ever. I never realized

how important this [feelings] was for me Like I said I know that I've been doing it [connecting through feelings] more and more the last few years and I never understood why.

My Interpretation as the Researcher

After studying the descriptions of Heather's experiences of flow and the environment surrounding these experiences, it becomes apparent that there are numerous aspects of her experiences that are similar to the experiences of flow reported by others. When compared with what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) presents as a frame for the phenomenon of flow, much of what Heather describes coincides with this frame and exemplifies the different characteristics of flow. Following is a discussion of the key and secondary characteristics of flow as experienced and described in Heather's narrative.

The balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled.

Heather's challenge comes in a number of forms. The first is to connect with her students and to have them feel comfortable in her class. A second type of challenge is typified each day in the task of keeping students involved and interested in the topic. A third kind of challenge presents itself each time Heather self-imposes the challenge of making each lesson different from the one previous to it. She doesn't enjoy teaching the same lesson to two different groups of students and so challenges herself to be creative and teach the lesson differently the second time.

The balance of challenge and skill is achieved when Heather matches her experience as a veteran teacher to the challenges facing her. She has the skills to address students' learning needs and uses her skills appropriately.

The aspect of control within the first characteristic of flow takes on an interesting twist as the interview series progresses. Initially, Heather identifies the concept of control as something she seeks, in the form of planning and preparation. Although she is thoroughly prepared for each lesson she found, after some reflection, a different kind of control to be much more significant. The perspective of control that she decides is more critical to her present teaching style has to do with controlling the energy of the students during a lesson. Heather is excited when she realizes that she needs and has the skills to control the students' involvement in the lesson. This kind of control enables her to keep her students' involvement, focus, excitement, and energy at a level that allows her and her students to experience flow.

A structure with clear goals. This core characteristic, a structure with clear goals, is represented within Heather's experiences by her own opinions of what is required in order to teach her students. In addition to the state or provincial goals of schooling and academic benchmarks that are in place for all educators, Heather has strong ideas about what needs to be in place for her to be successful as a teacher. Her first goal is to connect with her students. For Heather, there is no flow if the students are not connected to the lesson either through her or through the topic.

A second goal is to be absolutely prepared for each lesson. Preparation allows Heather to begin relaxing which is a feeling she identifies with flow. When she is prepared she can relax yet be excited at the same time.

The third and most critical goal in relation to the phenomenon of flow is to be able to control the level of involvement, excitement, and energy of the students by manipulating the teaching environment. This last goal is what Heather believes

teaching is all about. Monitoring the students closely and adjusting the techniques and strategies as she goes serves to enhance and maintain the optimal experiences or flow that Heather experiences herself.

Immediate and relative feedback. This characteristic of flow is reflected most strongly within Heather's descriptions. Heather's interpretation of her own experiences suggests that feedback from her students is one of the most important ways she can gauge her progress and success as a teacher. She relies almost entirely on feedback from her students to guide her actions within a lesson. She reads their body language, their facial expressions and can sense their energy level. She also strives to have them verbalize their learning as a check for understanding. This tells her where they are in the learning and where she is in her attempts to reach and teach them.

It is interesting to note that feedback from administration does not play a key role in enhancing the experiences of flow for Heather. She expresses a desire to work with a principal who has vision and is nurturing, but other than that, places little emphasis on feedback from her supervisors.

Secondary characteristics of flow. It is clear that Heather experiences all of the core characteristics in one manner or another. She also experiences the secondary characteristics that are associated with the phenomenon of flow. The secondary characteristics are described as having focussed concentration, a merging of activity and awareness, the activity under the person's control, and a distorted perception of time.

The first secondary characteristic is reflected in Heather's absolute concentration while she is in dialogue with her students. She considers listening to be a critical skill for her and uses it to stay in tune with her students. Heather mentions one situation where she was so focussed on the operating of some technical apparatus in her classroom that she momentarily lost her connection with her students. She explains: "I was so focussed into making sure the technical part was working that I was losing what was happening over here with these kids." This creates a difficult situation for Heather in that one of her major goals is to stay in tune with her students, while another similarly important goal is to make her lessons challenging for herself and her students. These two goals could be in opposition with each other. Using the laser in her lesson was exciting but it took Heather's focus away from the students. Heather rarely experiences this situation. Her preparation allows her to be comfortable enough with new approaches that she can have the excitement of trying new types of lessons and still stay focussed on the students and their learning.

The second characteristic, merging of activity and awareness, is one that Heather experiences especially while in dialogue. Discussion is an activity that she can become engrossed in. She mentions a number of times throughout the interview her feelings of total involvement when the students are asking intellectual and challenging questions. This provides her with feedback and pulls her more into the center of the discussion. Heather reflects on her style as a teacher and admits that part of her style is to "bird walk." This is to leave the main theme of discussion and go where the students seem to have an interest. These times are especially rewarding for Heather and she finds that her reaction to their eagerness to talk about other themes related to

the original topic serves to anchor her and her students to the moment. These are often the experiences where the bell will ring and Heather and her students are caught unaware.

The third characteristic, the activity being under the control of the individual, is one that has been occurring for Heather throughout her career. She is, however, becoming more proficient with it. Heather discusses the importance of dialogue within her lessons and its relationship to control. Dialogue represents a time of creativity for her and her students, and is a form of valuable feedback as well. The interesting discovery for Heather during the interview series is that she has changed in her acceptance of discussion since she was a young teacher. When she was young Heather recalls, she was afraid to let the students dialogue. She felt she would lose control of the situation. Now as an experienced teacher, she not only has explicit control over the dialogue but encourages it and considers it to be a strength of her teaching style, a necessary means of obtaining feedback from her students. This kind of seasoned control within a lesson is demonstrated by Heather as well, when she feels her students' energy and concentration beginning to wane. She has the skills and experience to take control of the situation and bring the focus level back up to its optimum.

The last of the secondary characteristics is the distortion of time and temporary loss of self-awareness. This is alluded to in the discussion related to the merging of activity and awareness. Heather finds that her classes, preparation periods, days, and weeks speed by. She admits that "it's just unbelievable how quickly the time goes." When working with her students in a totally focussed environment, Heather perceives

that everyone has the sensation that the time has gone by in a flash. She recalls one of these situations:

Those are the times when I sense it. To me this is the best feeling. When the bell will ring and the kids will look at me and say, "Was that the bell for the end of class?" Did you feel that, too, cause that's what I sense? I can't believe the whole hour is gone."

Summary of the Researcher's Interpretation

As with other participants in the study, Heather's experiences of flow are unique to her. Although different from the descriptions of others interviewed in the area of flow, Heather's experiences follow closely the core and secondary characteristics outlined by researchers in other studies. She is professionally prepared as a teacher and thus has the skills to be utilized or called upon when needed. Her challenges within her classes are presented to her in the form of different student needs as well as challenges that Heather presents to herself. She seeks newness and uniqueness in her lessons which creates a kind of self-imposed challenge for herself. She knows she has the skills and experience to address most challenges that will surface.

Heather organizes her work as a teacher around goals of schooling and her own goals regarding what she believes needs to be in place for learning to occur. These goals when achieved, enhance the opportunities for Heather to experience flow.

The final core characteristic of feedback is one of the most critical aspects of Heather's teaching and without it, she feels she would not be able to experience flow. Through analysis of her own descriptions she concludes that feedback may be the most significant component of her teaching that enhances opportunities for flow.

Concluding Thoughts Regarding Heather and Her Experiences of Flow

The basis of Heather's quality experiences in work is her ability to connect to people. This key theme weaves its way through the entire interview series. Without being in connection with her students and members of her staff, Heather's opportunities for flow will be greatly diminished. Her passion for her work, her happiness on the job, and her joy in teaching are directly associated with her connection with people. When I ask her what would happen if the Connecting With Kids category were not a part of her teaching, Heather replies in this way:

Oh, I definitely wouldn't enjoy the teaching. I probably could still have order and control. I could have order and control. I think you can do that, you could be the Gestapo person and make the kids do stuff; it wouldn't be nearly as fun. The challenge wouldn't be there. It would be pretty boring. Feeling, I don't think I'd be tuned into them at all because I don't seem to care about them or want to hear about them. And it would make a difference as far as the staff especially with our kind of staff that we have. They are so in tune to one another that if you're a person who's not that way you're not close to a lot of the people there. So I can see where that [not connecting with others] would be a real loss [pauses] for me anyway.

Teaching and all that is involved with it is a huge part of Heather's life. It is who she is. She feels a sense of loss when she is not getting up and going to school each morning. This kind of association with one's job makes it even more imperative that as much of the daily activity as can be, is experienced as something positive and productive. Heather's experiences of flow in her work allow her, through very diverse actions, to have wonderfully joyous moments in her classroom.

When I ask Heather to make some final statements about the organization of categories and their meaning, she isolates the category titled The High of Teaching. She concludes her analysis by explaining her global observation in this way:

This [the high of teaching] actually I think is a bi-product of the rest of this [the other categories].

Interviewer— Is it necessary for your enjoyment of teaching?

Yes, but I still think I get it by doing these other things [connecting through feedback, sensing the kids, people-feelings, challenges]. It's not just something that has to be there for me, I think I have to work to get it, but yet it always seems to be there as a result of the others [other categories of staff, people, feelings and connecting through feedback].

Derek

Derek is an experienced teacher in a middle school that includes grades six to eight. The school has an enrollment of about 1,000 students and is situated in an area that would be considered middle class. Derek has been teaching for over 20 years and has taught everything from academic core subjects to physical education. Derek is very vocal on his staff and has strong ideas about what generally affects quality of life in teaching. He is passionate when he talks about the students in his classes, teaching, and education in general. He has some adamant ideas about why teaching has become what it is. During the interviews, Derek moves from one situation or experience to another, some of them having to do with flow and many of them having to do with antiflow. Antiflow situations involve circumstances that take away from the general conditions that enhance flow, where time seems to drag on with the individual losing focus toward the topic or activity. Both perspectives are helpful in obtaining information about what teachers' experiences of flow are like and what things enhance or detract from them.

Experiences and Situations

Derek, in his discussion about optimal experiences, describes a general feeling of well being rather than specific sensations associated with isolated incidents. He

explains his perceptions of an ordinary day. “To be really honest with you, generally almost every day is that way. I mean it always shocks me when the day is, when a period is over. It’s been almost always pleasant.”

Physiological Sensations

Derek begins to describe the physiological aspect of his experiences of flow and admits that he does not have the same sensations that he has heard of other people. He refers to activities outside the classroom, personal outdoor pursuits such as fishing, hunting, and horse back riding where he explains in this way:

I love fishing, hunting. I used to competitively ride cutting horses. I didn’t get a physical or one that I could describe as high with any of those things either. I love it. When I came home after a weekend of rodeo, I’d had a great time, I was sore, I was filthy, but I could not have said I felt high at a point. I’ve never noticed a particular physiological reaction other than fear and I haven’t felt that in the classroom. So no, I can’t. I wish I could give you a [pauses] some wonderful feeling. I feel good most of the time.

Derek has read about individuals having heightened physiological sensations like the runner’s high and is interested in the fact that so many people have so many different sensations. He is puzzled. “I have never quite understood when people say it really got me high or whatever. To me something is very pleasant or exciting, but I don’t feel my heart race.”

During the second interview, Derek discloses that he has thought about the physiological aspect of this experience, and has spoken to a number of friends about it.

I spoke to a number of colleagues, not about teaching, but if something you really liked happened, what do you have for a physiological response? The answer, most of the people I talked with said yes. Actually, I talked to another one that said no. Shivers, some felt totally drained, not for long, a moment or two, just drained and limp in a positive sense. The other one felt actually

shivering, an electrical type feeling, and those are physiological responses. I don't think I have one, nor did another colleague think she did. So that did make me wonder.

We continue the discussion about physiological responses and discuss the suggestion that individuals' sensations of optimal experiences (flow) vary in frequency and intensity. We acknowledge during the interview that people the world over describe similar feelings in very different ways. Derek decides that what he experiences is more a feeling of contentment and relaxation.

Passing of Time

When I ask him to listen to three descriptive narratives about the experiences of flow and then to describe similar experiences of his own, Derek responds in the following way:

I would tell you that the day between from the time the class starts until the end of any period is a moment. I don't know whether it's enjoyment, I don't know if it's a feeling of mastering. It is a feeling of connectedness or helpfulness. Dealing with kids for one hour takes no time at all.

Derek talks about his teaching method and style and the relative connection it has to his experience of flow regarding time. "I have assigned a task which takes very little time to make the assignment and the rest of the time is directing and helping. And they need and want acceptance and time goes very quickly."

Enhancers and Detractors of Flow

When asked to consider the conditions under which he experiences flow, Derek returns to the classroom situation then draws a parallel with what happens within the school and staff. He begins by talking about time while working with his students. ". . . and time goes very quickly. In fact, often there is not enough time." From here,

Derek reflects on situations where adults, including himself, either experience or do not experience the flow-like quality of the distorted passage of time.

In a cooperative attitude with adults, given a task that everyone feels is necessary, I have exactly the same [time going by quickly] feeling. Since most tasks do not give adults the sense that it is purposeful or necessary, the supposed cooperation between adults assigned a task, is the longest period of time spent. So I think there's nothing worse. I've never experienced anything worse during lots of different jobs than let's say a faculty meeting that someone thinks ought to be held but really has no purpose.

At this point in the interview, Derek begins to refer to other antiflow situations. He offers as an example of negative conditions resulting in antiflow, staff meetings that have no point to them. He explains, "I can spend hours in a classroom Give me a 30-minute meeting after school and that is something I will do darn near anything to duck. We're talking hours for that half hour." He continues to discuss conditions within a situation that make the experience negative for him. He returns to the idea of staff meetings and the aspect of having to hold power over others or being overpowered yourself.

Dealing with and not being authoritarian [pauses] [that] feeling, either for myself or others, makes time go by very slowly. Meaning if I'm putting power over a teacher's meeting it takes a long time in my time clock. If someone else is in charge of me, it takes a long time. But when people are working together, working on a task, time goes by very quickly. I see that in number one [the first narrative read in the interview].

Purpose

In listening to Derek's experiences of antiflow, it becomes apparent that a sense of purpose is important to the situations that enhance optimal experiences for him. He refers to a time when he was asked to take over a position out of the classroom. It

was an administrative position which Derek felt was too far removed from the students. He talks about this experience.

I was V.P. [vice principal] here for a while. That was a painful day, everyday was a pain being V.P. It was a lot of hard work but [pauses] mostly I didn't feel like I was helping any of them [students]. Other than helping teachers now and then by taking somebody out of their classroom, I hated that. I had less pressures and hated it twice as much. So [pauses] different kind of stresses. I was doing something I didn't care to be doing. I didn't have the stress of meeting time frames. I could be gone if I wanted. I could say, "I'm driving this kid home," and so I had a lot more freedoms, but hated the job. Rejected it after 6 months. I'm not going to do it anymore. So it wasn't working with kids, it was working at kids.

During the second interview, Derek refers to this comment and explains that after thinking about what he said about the vice principal job, he had not expressed himself the way he wanted. He feels he has been overly negative about the job of vice principal and the way it is done. He adds to his first interview ideas.

That was a comment that sounded more negative than it really was intended It's cutting the job [of vice principal] down to a relative meaningless job and it is a difficult demanding job that takes a great knowledge of children to do well. Now there [in his first comments about the role of vice principal] it sounds like a cop doing the job, but I don't think it's ever been done that way, nor did I mean it that way.

After discussing the thoughts behind his dislike for the job of vice principal, Derek decides that in order for him to have optimal experiences he needs to have a clear purpose in mind and direct contact with students as in a classroom scenario. Helping, teaching, seeing growth, and working in the classroom with a very clear purpose in mind are aspects that need to be in place for him to be able to have optimal experiences.

Intrinsic Reward

Within his classroom and within his sense of purpose as a teacher, Derek is very adamant that students should be involved in learning for the love of it. He speaks passionately about love of learning and the intrinsic rewards that result from attaining knowledge. He feels this is his purpose within his profession, to instill an intrinsic sense of reward for his students that is embodied in the love of learning. He expresses great disdain for rewarding students for learning with extrinsic rewards like candy or special treats. He considers this short term in duration and compares it to the way we train dogs.

A dog is just like a child. They want your approval, children want your approval. A dog has a lot of needs to be satisfied by the human as do children and they will do just about anything for strokes. That's why I don't believe in candy or any such thing. Candy is immediate; I'll give you this if you'll be good for a half hour and the same goes for a dog. You can teach them to sit up in 20 minutes with goodies, but it's not a lasting kind of teaching.

Derek continues to explain his perspective on the purpose of working with students. He observes the situation as one that requires adults who have a strong sense of what they want to accomplish in the long run. He calls this "a lasting kind of teaching." When I ask Derek to elaborate on this concept he explains in the following way:

You pay a kid and he'll do it, and more and more kids are paid for more and more things, and not much is expected of them without a payoff. It's because it's easy on adults. "I'll pay you if you go to your room and shut up," Mom may say, or some teachers, "Everybody who gets so many right will get a piece of candy at the end of the period." Kids are working for candy, they are not learning, they're not working for the adult, they're working for nothing of intrinsic value and therefore, they are working the rest of their life for, "What's the pay off for this? Why should I do that? Nobody's giving me anything." People need to do things because they are intrinsically good. And kids will do things intrinsically because they are getting paid off with knowledge, with being more confident in themselves, and when you put candy or some kind of payment

in the way it blurs that so that when they are done, they have no sense of having accomplished anything. It [a lasting kind of teaching] takes longer but it's a whole lot better.

The Basis of Long Lasting Teaching

During the first interview, Derek begins to discuss the framework he feels is necessary to have in place for long lasting teaching to take place. Being connected to his students is critical for him to be able to teach them. He reflects on this aspect and how the school itself fits into the frame. "In general it's softened, relaxed, dependant upon the school not me, but the school as being a place that they feel safe and free and can learn something. That's connected to me." Derek feels that his students like being with him. They tell him things about the important aspects of the life of a junior high student. These are interactions that allow him to connect with his students and to experience moments of flow (contentment and relaxation).

I ask Derek what allows this connection leading to long lasting teaching and flow to occur, he expresses the following thoughts.

First of all it's a two-way street. It doesn't flow from one to the other, from teacher to class. It's a mutual respect and therefore, for the first 2 or 3 weeks of the year, that isn't there. They have to get to know you and you have to get to know them. From that time on it's individual to individual, it isn't adult to child or child to adult. It is a mutual respect between the two, trust. "I trust you would not go out of your way to hurt my feelings in any way," and vice versa. And therefore, we take chances with each other.

Student Connection and Curiosity

When I ask what kinds of qualities need to be in place within the situation for him to experience optimal moments with his students, Derek again refers to the big picture. He talks about the curiosity of a student that leads them to connect with a

teacher. They want to know what that teacher is all about and they add what they learn to their world. The kind of connection that results from students needing to know about him as a teacher and a person is something that has to be there before Derek can have moments of flow.

Expectations of Himself

Derek discusses his needs within the relationship between himself and his students.

I probably need to feel efficient, that I'm not wasting their time. Their time is important; some teachers don't know that. And that what I'm giving them is worth the time that they put in, and there are days that I look back and say I wasted some of their time today and I shouldn't have. And so competence in passing on attitudes and knowledge are probably the most important need I have. I need to feel competent to myself. In my own standards, not somebody else's.

Goals and Standards

As the interviews continue and Derek reflects on things he needs to have in place for optimal experiences to occur, he touches on the issue of standards he has for himself. His standards are all relative to the reaction of the students in his class. He explains in these words:

I probably can't put them in perfect order, but "Did the child want to learn? Did he feel comfortable in making that attempt? And did he feel good in the social sense at being in the classroom?" That he's not going to be put down, that he's not going to be made fun of That he can take a chance with whatever, including making a joke at the wrong time That they can take chances in the classroom and they can extend their learning, sometimes make mistakes, but it's always worth taking a chance. I want them to feel it is a comfortable place as long as they are busy and they're not wasting time; it is a comfortable place to do a little experimenting and the main thing is, and sometimes they hit and they're very proud and sometimes they miss so badly and they're embarrassed, but not so that they should ever not take a chance.

I ask how he achieves that climate that has so much to do with his experiences of flow within his classroom and he refers again to the framework of expectations that must be set up at the first of the year, the framework that incorporates the building of trust and respect. One of the actions that begins to form the frame involves accepting what students say in answer to a question as a valid attempt even if it is not correct. Derek tries to “point out the positiveness of whatever the statement or suggestion was.”

Unexpected Success for Students

Although Derek cannot describe a specific event where he has experienced flow, he knows the kinds of things that are likely to result in a flow experience.

I’ve seen kids where they learn something they didn’t think they could and just a brilliant smile on their face when they see that they did something. It’s about as good a feeling as I can get in a classroom when a kid comes to school and says, “I think I’m gonna get an A on this test,” and I’ll say, “Nah,” and they’ll say, “No really at worst a B,” and I say, “Well, we’ll see.” And they get an A. It’s that they did something on their own, they did it and that is probably the height of feeling and that happens all the time.

The Effect of the Staff, Administration, and Environment of the School

Autonomy. Without much hesitation Derek answers the question “What is it about the school, staff, and administration that allows you to have the good experience that you do in your classroom when you’re working with kids?” His reply refers to the fact that most people leave him alone. “They’re afraid of me so they leave me alone.” He continues to explain that he is not much of a “rule follower” and that “they simply accept me as the weird guy who does things his own way.”

A strong staff. Derek elaborates and adds that the entire staff is “pretty strong.” When asked to define strong he explains, “They will not be walked on. They don’t take orders well without a good reason. Honestly is pretty much the way the staff will react to anything.”

Restrictive rules. When I ask him to expand his thinking and suggest ways the school environment could be enhanced to allow for more and better optimal experiences, Derek suggests the removing of restrictive rules. These rules, he explains, inhibit the ways of connecting with students. One of the examples he cites is the restriction of transporting students to athletic events. Because of the driving restrictions, many athletic events are no longer attended by staff members. “I used to take a group from here and I’d set up track meets with another school and we’d all jump in two or three cars and drive over there and have a competition after school. That was all removed.”

Derek feels that over the years different restrictions and regulations have taken the humanity out of teaching. He discusses the importance of kids being involved in different aspects of school where teachers can see all the different strengths the students possess. Because of some of the regulations placed within Derek’s specific district, many of those opportunities for extra curricular involvement have been curtailed. These restrictions detract from the opportunity to connect with kids in different ways and thus take away from the environment that is associated with his optimal experiences.

The cookie cutter syndrome. A second concern that Derek has regarding restrictions relates to inservices and the attempt of those conducting inservices to have all teachers teach the same way. He explains in this way: “Good teachers could use a little more freedom and a little bit less cookie cutter. I think we’ve really gotten into trying to make everybody the same. They [experts] attempt to make people less than they are.”

The facility. The last concern that Derek has, about what detracts from the environment that supports flow experiences, has to do with the facility. Derek’s school is an open school. That means the school is constructed so that no classroom is completely self-contained. Each room has three walls with the side where the fourth wall would be in a traditional building open to the hallway. Derek believes that because of the overcrowding that has occurred in the school and having 34 students in each class, doing anything that causes noise is not acceptable. He cautions, “The classes have about two-thirds the size of a normal classroom and 34 kids in it. You have to be tremendously aware of your neighbor.” He continues to explain the frustration that accompanies this situation.

Some of the things I tried were great and I started to do them and I have been absolutely stopped because the kids get excited and it makes some noise and my neighbor [pauses] it’s very hard to make everything together so that we know exactly who’s going to do what when. So most of us just try to be quiet enough most of the time. So that regulates behavior in a negative sense.

Good Teaching

At this point Derek returns to a theme that we had spoken about previously, allowing teachers to have their own style. He begins speaking about the way some

teachers view other teachers. “It’s too bad we’re judgmental about a particular style that has very little to do with good teaching. There are lots of different kinds of teachers.” When I ask him to define what a good teacher is Derek has this to say:

The ability to transfer the attitudes and knowledge to a child. In a sense that he will accept it as part of his own and use it in the future, not memorize it, and I’m not talking behaviors. Behaviors go along with the attitudes but, I’m not talking about a specific ability. I’m talking attitudes and then general knowledge that they can then use. But they must accept it, not just do it. Anybody who can do that, whatever method they use, if it’s lasting, is a great teacher. If it’s short term now they’ve wasted somebody’s time and that’s why I don’t like candy [laughs]. I’m talking long term behavior change and attitude change; that’s a good teacher. The one you can look back on and say, “Boy I hated him for a while,” or “I hated her for a while,” or “I loved him or her,” but they’re one that you remember and actually changed something about your life positively.

Optimal Experiences Outside the Classroom

When I ask him about optimal experiences outside the classroom and Derek’s thoughts move to outside education altogether. He speaks about the optimal feeling he experiences when he has the opportunity to deal with groups of adults. He recalls a time when he organized a gathering of Vietnam veterans, allowing them to discuss common issues. He recalls the situation and how he got the discussion started:.

“I just want you all to meet each other,” and then I sat and listened to them gripe at each other and gripe at life and then realize they all had a lot of the same experiences and most of them benefitted a great deal. I had a tremendous time. I said almost nothing all night. I just had beer and felt a tremendous feeling of accomplishment. I often feel that way in groups, though, in general.

Need to Be in Control

When I broach the idea that Derek has the ability to deal with groups of kids in classes and groups of adults yet be very solitary in other endeavors like riding horses,

he reflects on the suggestion intently. That idea has not occurred to him and he talks about the possible reason for the different sources of his optimal experiences.

I haven't ever thought of it that way. Maybe I need to be in command. Me and the fish, me and the horses, me and the classroom, me with the group of vets. I just told you something about myself. I probably am a control freak to some degree although I might not sound like one.

Challenges

Derek discusses a number of personal activities he is interested in outside of his work. He has in the past created physical challenges for himself just to see if it could be done. When I ask about challenges in his classroom he replies:

I am not trying to challenge myself to do anything in particular other than treat kids individually. It's the attitude and the method of learning that I'm interested in. And it's all individual so it is a challenge to teach some individual children and I don't always meet those challenges, but they bring the challenges to me, I don't need to invent them.

As Derek discusses his challenges, he admits that these days he's more involved in the political challenges within education. He takes great pride in taking on a political issue and getting others to see his side. He calls it the "mental math."

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative

Derek's Interpretation

After reviewing his initial thoughts on his experiences of flow, Derek decides that what he has said should be left unchanged. He has some concerns about the way he had phrased certain opinions, but does not want to change the original document. He works through the different concepts expressed within his interviews and creates eight general categories that he feels describe the ideas within and their relationship to the phenomenon of flow. The categories are presented below.

Eclectic me in the classroom. This category is Derek's most significant category. He feels this grouping is the basis of who he is as a teacher and represents his affective, not cognitive, side. The eclectic category includes these key ideas:

1. They feel safe and free and can learn something.
2. You see more of the whole child when you throw athletics into it.
3. A brilliant smile on their face when they see that they did something.
4. Long term behavior and attitude change.
5. Some kids don't take chances (for a list of all Derek's ideas see Appendix K).

When I ask which of the categories has to be in place for optimal experiences to occur, Derek indicates the eclectic group. He perceives it as the core of his beliefs regarding teaching, connecting, learning, and education.

Professional needs. This category is considered by Derek as being "primary and truly necessary." He selects some of the most important key ideas within the category and considers them to be the essence of what he needs to be as a professional.

Included in this category are these phrases:

1. I need to be in command.
2. Competence and passing on attitudes and knowledge.
3. Personal interaction.
4. I probably need to feel efficient.
5. Individual to individual.
6. They bring the challenges to me.

View of colleagues. Derek pairs this category with the category of professional needs and considers it to be “primary and truly necessary.” The key ideas in this category are:

1. This staff is a strong staff.
2. Good teachers could use a little more freedom.
3. It's too bad we're judgmental about a particular style [teaching style].
4. We've got some wonderful teachers here.
5. Honestly is pretty much the way the staff will react to anything.
6. This school used to be a lot more free.

These ideas are associated with what Derek knows and appreciates about his colleagues. Not all of them are positive, but they are nonetheless important.

Personal selfish feelings. The key ideas in this grouping are associated with Derek's inner feelings about what allows him to experience optimal moments in his classroom. Some reflect sensations occurring at the moment of the experience, others represent what is in place which allows the moments to occur. Key ideas included in this group are:

1. To me something is pleasant or exciting.
2. If everyone else around here were a bad teacher I wouldn't feel good being here.
3. A feeling of enjoyment or mastery.
4. I know I'm filling a need.
5. They [students] want to spend every moment with you for a half hour.
6. My challenges have been more political than anything.

Judgmental. Derek adds to the title of this category “black and white description of Derek’s world.” The ideas in this group are his own opinions and views about his world, which of course includes teaching. “So these are my judgmental, my black or white paintings of life,” Derek jokes while sorting and naming this group of ideas. He knows that he is opinionated and recognizes that these may not be the ultimate truth, but they represent a part of his philosophy in life. This category includes the following ideas:

1. Somebody will tell them [teachers] but that’s not the same as experiencing it [seeing kids excel in athletics].
2. Most of what kids do is positive.
3. Authoritarian feeling makes time go by very slowly.
4. Kids will do things intrinsically because they’re getting paid with knowledge and confidence.
5. Generally kids are risk takers once there are no stupid answers.
6. There are lots of different kinds of teachers.

Acquainting. This, although the smallest group of ideas formed by Derek, draws from him the most impassioned explanation about its importance. The group is made up of the following six key ideas:

1. So that’s one way it [connection with kids] wanes; when the need is gone.
2. We take chances with each other.
3. Kids make connections with different adults.
4. It’s a mutual respect.
5. They simply accept me as the weird guy who does things his own way.

6. You need to get to know kids.

When asked to elaborate on the category of acquainting, he explains: “Acquaint-
ing is a process and I think it’s important for everyday life. It is also important for
teachers, more important for teachers than most jobs. But it happens whether you
want it to or not.” I ask him to explain why he thinks the category of acquainting is
more important to teaching than to any other profession. He replies that “teaching is a
more interpersonal job than any other I can think of.”

Negative and positive feelings. These last two categories are actually separate
groupings but Derek feels they represent feelings that are not critical to have in place
for optimal experiences to occur. When asked to verbalize his thinking he explains in
this way:

Well, I don’t find it a need, I don’t like negative feelings, but I also don’t find a
great need for positive feelings in that sense [the sense of feeling appreciated].
It’s appreciated, some guy came in and said some real nice things today. That
was a very positive feeling, but if he had never come in it wouldn’t have
mattered to me. I need to satisfy myself. I know people say that, but I really
mean it. I’m really more that way than most people I’ve ever met. But I don’t
mind a pat on the back now and again. But I can do that.

Some of the negative feeling ideas Derek refers to are:

1. I was doing something [vice principal position] I didn’t care to be doing.
2. Mostly I didn’t feel I was helping any of them.
3. Positive things occur constantly.
4. They don’t stand out.
5. It wasn’t working with kids.
6. It was working at kids.

Within the positive feeling category, Derek identifies these ideas:

1. It's as good a feeling as I can get when a kid says, "I'm going to get an A" and they get an A.
2. Working together on a task.
3. Time goes by quickly.
4. They will gather around me during a break.
5. That heightened feeling; generally every day is like that.
6. They are the ones you remember and actually changed something about your life positively.

Discussion of the categories. Derek creates eight categories of key ideas stemming from his first interview about his experiences of flow. The categories are, eclectic me in the classroom (affective not cognitive), professional needs or behaviors, view of colleagues, personal selfish feelings, judgmental (black and white description of Derek's world), acquainting, negative feelings, and positive feelings. This process is not easy for Derek. He feels that he had spoken too much in some areas of the interview and has not been elaborate enough in others. This makes the sorting and verbalizing of ideas as they relate to flow that much more challenging. His final perceptions are that experiences of flow are associated with the categories representing his affective side (eclectic me in the classroom), the strength of his colleagues (view of colleagues), his professional needs and expectations of himself (professional needs or behaviors), and special connections with kids (acquainting). The other categories of judgmental, personal selfish feelings, and positive and negative feelings, are not critical to the environment that supports his experiences of flow. Derek believes the categories of judgmental, personal/selfish feelings, positive and negative feelings are

secondary to the more significant ones mentioned previously. A complete chart of all the key ideas from Derek's interviews is included in Appendix I.

My Interpretation as the Researcher

Analysis of the information obtained from Derek's interview series is uniquely different from the other interpretations conducted within the study. Because he was unable to describe specific experiences of flow within his classroom, the characteristics of flow are not represented in the overt manner that is common in other participant stories. There is, however, evidence within Derek's choice of words and reference to antiflow situations that suggests he experiences flow but in a much more subtle way than other participants in the study.

Derek's experiences and the core characteristics of flow. The balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled is a characteristic of flow that is critical to the initiation of the phenomenon of flow. Often this balance continues unnoticed until something or someone points it out. The balance of challenge and skill for Derek, is represented in the individual personalities that he feels he must get to know within his classes. Derek clarifies in this way:

I am not trying to challenge myself to do anything in particular other than treat kids individually; therefore if a particular lesson is the least amount of interest to me, I really don't care if they learn this about South Africa or that about Europe, it's the attitude and the method of learning that I'm interested in. And it's all individual so it is a challenge to teach some individual children and I don't always meet those challenges, but they bring the challenges to me; I don't need to invent them.

Derek's approach to dealing with each student individually is to connect with them. This is the way he balances the challenge (treating students individually) and

his skills (building rapport). Derek views connecting with his students as being a basis to working with them individually and providing what each student needs in order to be successful. He describes how he begins this process. "I'd say from day one, having just started a new year, I watch kids come in and they have certain expectations. Generally somewhat negative and somewhat fearful." Humor is a method that Derek uses to begin to make in-roads with his new students. One of his favorite approaches has to do with his ties. "I have a great number of ugly ties. They think this is ugly! I've got worse! I'll just build up to it." He continues to talk about using his skills to build an atmosphere of trust and respect within his classroom.

First of all it's a two-way street. It doesn't flow from one to the other, it doesn't flow from teacher to class. It's a mutual respect and therefore for the first two or three weeks of the year that [respect and trust] isn't there. They may enjoy, they may like it, but they have to get to know you and you have to get to know them. From that time on it's individual to individual, it isn't adult to child or child to adult. It is a mutual respect between the two, trust. I trust you would not go out of your way to hurt my feelings in any way and vice versa. And therefore we take chances with each other. In general it's interaction between two human beings.

The second core characteristic of the phenomenon of flow is having a structure with clear goals. In Derek's situation, he has his own ideas about the purpose of teaching. In addition to the standards and goals of schooling, he uses a philosophy of life to support his personal goals in teaching. He focusses on a concept he calls "a lasting kind of teaching." As an example, he compares teaching to training an animal. The animals will learn something quickly when given treats, but the learning doesn't stay with them once the treats are no longer provided. He explains this concept.

You can teach them to sit up in 20 minutes with goodies, but it's not a lasting kind of teaching. And so you need to get to know kids, they need to trust you and then they'll accept just about anything you have to give them. Kids are working for "candy," they are not learning. They're not working for the adult,

they're working for nothing of intrinsic value and therefore, they are working the rest of their life for "What's the payoff for this? Why should I do that? Nobody's giving me anything." And kids will do things intrinsically because they are getting paid off with knowledge, with being more confident in themselves, and when you put candy or some kind of payment in the way it blurs that so that when they are done they have no sense of having accomplished anything. So it [teaching for intrinsic rewards] takes longer but, it's a whole lot better.

Derek moves easily from one topic to another during his interviews and touches on his need to feel competent relative to his own standards. I ask Derek to explain his self imposed standards and he begins in this way:

I probably can't put them in perfect order but "Did the child want to learn? Did he feel comfortable in making that attempt, and did he feel good in the social sense at being in the classroom?" That he's not going to be put down . . . that he's not going to me made fun of, that he can take a chance with whatever, including making a joke at the wrong time, that I won't bite his head off. I may scold him in a pleasant way, but that they can take chances in the classroom and they can extend their learning, sometimes make mistakes, but it's always worth taking a chance. I want them to feel it's a comfortable place as long as they're busy and they're not wasting time.

For Derek, these important standards result in his creating an atmosphere in his classroom where students are free to risk and therefore to learn. This has little to do with the specific subject area. It is more related to the gaining of confidence and a sense of belonging and worth within the classroom.

Addressing the issue of standards from a different perspective, I ask Derek to define his ideas about what makes a good teacher. He refers again to the aspect of "lasting teaching."

The ability to transfer the attitudes and knowledge to a child in a sense that he will accept it as part of his own and use it in the future, not memorize it, and I'm not talking behaviors. Behaviors go along with the attitudes, but I'm not talking about a specific ability, I'm talking attitudes and then general knowledge that they can then use. But they must accept it, not just do it. Anybody who can do that, whatever method they used if it's lasting, is a great teacher.

The third core characteristic revolves around the aspect of relevant feedback. Derek receives feedback from the students in his classes. He refers to evidence he receives from his students that indicates he is connecting with them. "Seeing them loosen up and become very accepting of me tells me that I am connecting with them. And when they will gather around me during their break time, I know I'm filling a need of theirs as an adult." Derek reads his students' behavior every day and begins to know how they feel and think; what's important to them. He jokes, "... personal interaction. Telling me all the things that happened at their house last night, whatever it might be. Kidding me about my ugly tie."

He refers to the observations he is able to make of his students that provide him with the feedback he needs about their confidence to try and to risk.

I've seen kids where they learn something they didn't think they could and just a brilliant smile on their face when they see that they did something. It's about as good a feeling as I can get in a classroom when a kid comes to me and says, "I think I'm gonna get an A on this test," and I'll say, "Nah," and they'll say, "No really at worst a B," and I say, "Well, we'll see." And they get an A. It's that they did something on their own. They did it and that is probably the height of feeling and that happens all the time.

Derek's experiences and secondary characteristics of flow. Having drawn parallels between Derek's classroom experiences and the core characteristics of flow, I move to the interpretation of the specific experiences he has that represent the secondary characteristics of flow. These are sensations that an individual experiences as a result of being in flow. Of the four characteristics identified by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), focussed concentration, merging of activity and awareness, control of the activity, and a distorted perception of time, Derek refers to two of them. He speaks frequently about being in control of what is happening between himself and the

students, and the functioning of the group. The second characteristic he speaks of is the passage of time. When involved with students, time seems to go by very quickly.

It may be that the two characteristics that go unmentioned in the narratives, are not experienced by Derek. It may also be that he has taken little notice of these aspects while in specific teaching situations. The characteristics he does not describe within his classroom experiences are focussed concentration and merging of activity and awareness.

Summary of My Interpretation

The core characteristics of flow are present in Derek's experiences within the classroom but reveal themselves in a very subtle manner. The challenge of working with individual students, discovering their unique needs, and getting them to risk are addressed by Derek's interactive skills as a teacher. He utilizes his natural ability to build rapport and develop trust and respect between himself and his students. He strives to have control of the atmosphere within his classroom. During the interview series, Derek questions the idea that he is a "control freak." It occurs to him that "Maybe I need to be in command. Me and the fish, me and the cutting horse, me and the classroom, me with the Vietnam vets. I probably am a control freak to some degree."

Part of that sensation of being in control is a result of knowing what the goals of the specific teaching situation are. This is the second core characteristic. Derek knows what he wants to accomplish related to both the curriculum and the affective side of learning. He has his own interpretation of what is necessary to have in place

before kids can learn. This has to do with students feeling safe to risk, and having accomplished something on their own that has intrinsic value.

The last core characteristic evidenced in Derek's stories is his need for and utilization of feedback. Beyond the customary academic assessments, Derek uses student reactions and hesitations within his class to determine how he is doing in achieving his goals. If his students are afraid to risk, he perceives this through their involvement in the lesson, and works to develop greater confidence and trust within the students.

As with the core characteristics, Derek's descriptions of his experiences that involve the secondary characteristics are unique to him. He experiences a sense of control while in flow, as well as a distorted sense of time. The other two characteristics seem to go unnoticed or do not occur at all within his experiences.

Concluding Thoughts Regarding Derek and His Experiences of Flow

The aspect of this interpretation that stands out most clearly is that the experience of flow is again a very personal and uniquely different experience for each person. Derek's experiences are different from other participants', especially in the area of physiological responses. His sensations are much more subtle and he describes them in very general terms such as, "I feel good most of the time," and "to me something is very exciting or pleasant, but I don't feel my heart race." His outlook on life seems to lend itself to having optimal experiences that are less intensive but that result in a general good feeling that lingers from one optimal experience to another. His sense of challenge and achievement that is related to the experience of flow

revolves around his very personal ideas regarding student needs and teacher attributes. The combination of specific and exact qualities identified by Derek as part of his optimal experiences results in an interpretation that, like the man, is concise yet complete.

Barrie

Barrie has been teaching less than 10 years. He is soft-spoken and has a serious nature. He teaches in a small junior high school located in an area of the city where there is great demographic diversity. At Barrie's school there are differences in the students' socio-economic status, ethnicity, and academic ability. Barrie's school has streamed classes and they modify materials for special needs students. With a young family of his own, Barrie's time is precious yet he agrees to meet with me. We meet on a Saturday at the school and settle down to talk in the staff room. The school is silent with no bells, or laughter, or enthusiastic shouting of excited adolescents. As the interview begins it is apparent that Barrie is tired. He's been up since 6:00 AM for a hockey practice and must be home in time for his wife to go to work in the afternoon. I ask him to tell me how and why he became a teacher. He begins by telling me that early in his education he switched from Engineering to Education. He explains "I didn't find it [Engineering] as fulfilling as I thought it would be. I didn't fit in." Barrie took the opportunity to teach while on a mission for his church and it was there that he discovered his love for teaching. He returned to university and completed his Education degree with a double major in mathematics and social studies and a minor in science.

Description of the Key Themes Within the Interview Narrative

After some discussion of Barrie's decision to become a teacher, I ask him to consider the three descriptions of flow I am about to read. In the quiet of the school I begin to read the three narrative paragraphs that describe flow experiences. Barrie listens intently, thinking. After hearing all three paragraphs he begins to share his thoughts with me and concedes that he has had similar experiences while teaching. He provides a very general description of some of the situations that are common in his flow experiences. He begins in this way.

There's times—not every day, I wish they were, but there are times when you are able to reach and have the interest of your students, and in particular, those who have been struggling with a concept and you are able to either use manipulatives or be able to explain it or show it visually on the board and all of a sudden, you can see their light turn on and they're able to understand that. And that's probably one of the most enjoyable experiences that I have as a teacher.

As Barrie continues to talk about his experiences he is thoughtful and intense. He discusses high points in his teaching and moments of frustration. He shares moments of optimal experiences both in and out of his classroom. In the following descriptions I will highlight the key ideas and themes from Barrie's descriptions as they relate to flow.

Conditions That Initiate the Experience

Connecting and students actively taking part. Barrie does not pause before he responds to my query of how his experiences of flow start. He states assuredly, "It starts with the students and their enthusiasm and knowing that I'm making a connection, and that just feeds upon itself. They become interested. They're showing themselves that they understand it, and you're part of that." He reemphasizes the role

student involvement plays in creating the environment that allows flow to occur.

“You have to have the involvement of the student. They have to be a key participant [pauses] I mean, a participant [pauses] they’re active in the learning process or whatever you’re working on. You have to have them on your side.” He reflects for a moment then adds, “You need to have them on your side to be able to experience it together [pauses] I guess. It’s just a matter of understanding, you know, that there’s that direction or that chemistry that’s happening between yourself and them.”

Teacher preparation and organization. Barrie recalls the kinds of circumstances that are present when he experiences flow and adds, “I think you have to be prepared. You’ve got to be organized and understand what’s necessary and be prepared and have the things available that are needed for that experience.” Barrie describes the kinds of preparations and ideas he has in place before meeting his students for the first time. They are mechanisms that will assist him to do his job better and more completely. He explains, “I have procedures that are set up that I go through with the kids at the first of the year that let the kids know how they are on the discipline plan and what they have to do to be able to change their behavior.” With his plan in place, the students know what is expected and in that way he is prepared for any situations that may arise. It is most important to Barrie that expectations be communicated to the students and that they understand them.

Expectations. Throughout his descriptions Barrie mentions expectations and the importance of teaching expectations to the students. He believes that communicating the expectations to students is a “key source or key area that an individual has to be

able to do with a class or group of people.” Barrie describes the importance of this perspective.

You can control a lot of problems with communication, whether it’s verbal or nonverbal. In fact, right at the first of the year, I don’t teach anything out of the textbook or look at the curriculum for the first five days. It’s all getting to know each other, communication, going through my expectations, looking at their expectations, getting into a happy medium that we can work with [pauses] have a positive learning environment, go through all kinds of hand signals. If I’m in a certain location within the room and hold up my hand, you know what to do. You do a lot of foot work right at the beginning and through the month of September. You’re always modelling that so by the time in October and November, the kids are trained and it doesn’t take a lot of time. You do lose that five days or whatever at the beginning of the year, but the benefit is worth it.

When asked if this framework is a way of controlling the situation, he comments, “Not necessarily that I’m in control but the framework is there for learning . . . the framework would have as much control on me as it does on the students.” By the time the expectations have been taught, a child who has missed a day of school knows that he/she needs to merely look at the back of the room to find out what they missed and the assignments for the day. Barrie adds, “It’s very much controlled that way—just to alleviate any type of misunderstanding or not knowing what the expectation is and I find it helps a lot.” As I inquire about the concept of expectations for himself and his students, Barrie adds that there is an underlying assumption that must be established as well. This assumption is that both he and his students are striving for a common goal. He explains:

There’s got to be some type of goal or some type of theme or whatever that we’re working on—working on together. So I guess the first thing is to identify . . . what the purpose is that we’re trying to do—it helps move the process along a little faster.

Barrie alludes to “the process” and when asked what he means by the process he explains that the process is what happens when he and his students are experiencing flow. He does not call it flow, but he is referring to his experiences that mirror the examples provided in the three narrative paragraphs. Barrie senses the phenomenon in his students and is energized by it. The process or optimal experience of flow is less likely to occur for either himself or his students if a positive learning environment is not established. This kind of an environment is present only after Barrie teaches his students the routines and expectations of his classroom. At this point in the interview I ask Barrie to describe his specific experiences of flow.

Specific Experiences of Flow

As the interview continues I ask Barrie to move from the issue of how the experience starts to describe specific experiences of flow and he immediately recalls a situation. The situation is one that occurred the previous day during his mathematics class where he was working with a student who was struggling with the concept of fractions. Barrie describes the scenario.

A student was having a problem with fractions. She's a little bit slower [pauses] I just referred it to money, you know, you're working with fractions. It was working with integers, the question was the unknown plus $\frac{3}{4}$ is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$. And all I told her was, “Well, think of what could you represent the $\frac{3}{4}$ with?” She couldn't think for a minute so I said, “Well $\frac{3}{4}$ [pauses] what's $\frac{3}{4}$? If I have three quarters in my hand what would I have?” “Oh, three 25¢ pieces, three quarters . . . You mean you can relate it to money like that?” “Sure you can.” “Well that's easy!” She was able to finish the rest of the questions, no problem. I guess just that little insight and be able to have her use that and be able to take off with it. You know, it's something very minor, a little thing but [pauses].

For Barrie's students that moment of discovery is a result of his finding a concrete example and connection for the abstractness that frustrates them. For Barrie, the

experience of flow in this situation occurs when he is assisting his students to make those connections through his examples. When he assists students to work through problems and the students are able to arrive at their own conclusions and be participants in their own learning, Barrie experiences the phenomenon of flow. He is very focussed and completely involved in his work of teaching.

A second situation Barrie describes has to do with relating his experiences to another person. He recalls telling a colleague after school about the fraction discovery. In retelling the episode he experiences some of the same feelings as when working with the student. He is focussed on the issues of the story and while explaining the situation to his colleague, senses a similar kind of high as during the original experience.

When I ask what experiences of flow have occurred outside the classroom, Barrie describes a coaching experience. He had been assisting another coach and they were facing a critical game, a city final in junior high soccer. The weather was cold and windy with bouts of rain. The coach, if given the opportunity, wanted his captain to choose to have the wind at their backs during the second half of the game. Barrie thought it might be best to have it in the first half in order to get a bit of a lead in scoring. He justified his position to the coach and the coach agreed. They won the game by eight goals. Barrie describes the experience.

And I was kind of a junior coach at that time [pauses] and he said, "You know, I think you're right." And we ended up scoring, like, eight goals in the first half and they didn't score any. And the game was over and it was like a sense of "Yah! We did make the right decision, and the kids really played well, and we ended up winning the city championship!" That was a good feeling. In fact it was so good a feeling that I was going home, driving along the freeway, I forgot to keep control of my speed and got pulled over and got a \$65.00 speeding ticket!

Following this description Barrie mentions other times when he has experienced the same flow sensation when driving. He gives some examples “The idea of driving the freeway for the first year [pauses] you’d get in your car and all of a sudden you’d be at school.” He experiences this at present when he drives to work and thinks about his day. He also recalls having the same kind of sensations when driving to university as a student.

The same thing happened when I was going to university. I lived in a small town and drove to university in the city every day. It was about a 45-minute drive and a lot of times I’d leave the university and all of a sudden I’d be home. I’d be thinking about things and just lose that sense of time.

The last specific situation Barrie discusses related to flow is the kind of experience he has when working within a church situation. Within his church Barrie speaks publicly and works with groups either in a teaching or planning situation. The episodes of flow he experiences in his church result in similar sensations to the ones he has when working in the classroom. When I ask him about the similarity Barrie explains, “Yes. I think that it’s the same type of feelings, the same experiences you have within yourself [inner peace, tingling, shivering, self reflection]. He specifically recalls working with a young man in his church who was having personal difficulties. The youth had lost his father and was looking for guidance. Barrie purposely does not become involved in this way with his students at school. He feels that there must be an understanding that the relationship is one of teacher and student. The situation with the youth in his church, however, was somehow different and Barrie explains.

I think just my own personal feeling is that it’s OK to be able to understand a student, but they need to understand that you are the teacher and they are the student and be able to keep that relationship. There is an individual, not necessarily in teaching but with our church, that was starting to lose it and I was able to help him [pauses] he didn’t have a father and it was like a big brother type

situation. He was able to make some sense out of his life [pauses] have some purpose.

These explanations and descriptions of specific experiences of flow are helpful in understanding how Barrie lives through and perceives the phenomenon of flow. Like his demeanour, Barrie's experiences are quiet and subtle yet satisfying and impacting for both him and his students.

External Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow

When I asked Barrie to describe the physical, emotional and intellectual aspects that occur during the experience, he begins by outlining the external condition that is present. He explains,

And you have to have the involvement of the students; they have to be a key participant [pauses] I mean a participant. They're not [just] there, but they're active in the learning process or whatever you're working on. You have to have them on your side [pauses] at least maybe not to begin with, but when you have that feeling, you need to have them on your side to be able to experience it together.

Barrie discusses other external cues that are present when he is having a flow experience. "I can say that it doesn't matter about the noise. I've had this type of experience with all kinds of noise within the classroom." He continues to explain the connection that occurs between himself and his students when they, both teacher and student, experience flow. "It's just a matter of understanding, you know, that there's that direction or that chemistry that's happening between yourself and them." Barrie reflects and tries to come to an understanding himself, of the different aspects present during the flow experience. He decides on a key issue that is outside the essence of the experience but critically linked to his ability to experience the phenomenon. "I

think you have to be prepared.” He elaborates on this perspective “I mean, it’s not just a matter of just happening to happen. You’ve got to be organized and understand what’s necessary and be prepared and have the things available that are needed for that experience.”

Barrie adds to his description by discussing an assignment he accepted teaching mathematics and science to a group of grade seven students. Observing the students make connections between the two subject areas was satisfying and he had a sense of completion when he was able to work with the same students again in their grade nine year.

I really enjoyed my second and third year of teaching here. I had three classes of grade sevens and taught them both math and science. To be able to go from the one subject to the other and have the opportunity to see their development in one area and have it be related to another and have that connection was really beneficial. I really enjoyed teaching grade seven math/science because when I taught grade nine, those kids would have been the ones I taught in grade seven. And just to be able to see the growth that they’ve made and the experience that they’ve had, and I’d said it [the student learning and growth] was very much a continual process, and I looked forward every week [to working with the grade nine students].

The description of conditions or external cues present when Barrie experiences flow provide a frame for the rest of his explanations. I ask him to describe the internal sensations or physiology that accompanies the phenomenon of flow.

Internal Cues Accompanying the Phenomenon of Flow

Barrie begins to describe the physiology of his experiences by stating that each experience is different in intensity. He is not sure if the feelings are different strengths or if he is less aware of some moments than others. “Sometimes it’s more of a powerful feeling or I’m more aware of it. I don’t know if maybe at times that

I've experienced it so often that it's maybe kind of lost its lustre." Barrie continues to explain that he experiences the phenomenon of flow "weekly, probably even daily, but to various degrees." When I ask what first alerts him that the experience is present, he ruminates and decides that his own thinking and internal self-talk is the first cue that the experience of flow is taking place. He elaborates,

I guess I'd start to reflect in my mind as the process was going on. "Gee this [specific strategy or plan] is really working; what can I do to help increase this [experience or success involving himself and his students] or whatever;" and do a lot of the self-reflection when the process was going on [pauses] and just kind of [pauses] hey, you know, this is great! Let's continue so the kids can really experience something that's positive.

Barrie believes he is first aware of the experience when he senses things are moving along smoothly and there is an intellectual connection between himself and his students. This is part of what he perceives as students being participants in their own learning; that chemistry that must be present for teacher and students to be working in the same direction. There is a very real intellectual awareness for Barrie that alerts him to the realization that he is experiencing flow. He tries to describe the bodily sensations that are present when he experiences an optimal moment in teaching. "A lot of times I've had situations where I've had a tingling sensation, just kind of right from the toes up to the top of the head [pauses] kind of a shivering kind of feeling." He adds, "I think your mind just frees itself above any other types of worries that you might have had."

Challenge

Barrie has a quiet determination that could be overlooked. He works doggedly at solving problems and overcoming obstacles in a manner that achieves results but may

go unnoticed by others. Where others perceive a situation as an insurmountable problem, Barrie perceives it as a challenge to be overcome. He recalls a specific situation where he decided to view a problem as a challenge.

I think back in my first year, teaching social studies to grade nines. A lot of them came into the class at the first of the year saying, "Social studies. It isn't any fun or very interesting." What I did was that I took that as a challenge At the first of the year I took the name tags that I have and I asked them to put down their favorite subject. There weren't too many of them that had social studies as their major interest. Art and math was quite common. I was quite surprised at that, but quite a few of them had math. There was more of the science, math, language arts, not too much social studies. What I did was take that as a challenge to be able to have some kids that really didn't have [pauses] well, they were kind of indifferent about social studies. To change that attitude and be able to have them enjoy social studies, and I think, you know, I was able to. When they come back and have you sign their yearbook or whatnot, I had a yearbook for them to sign and they made comments in there that said they really enjoyed social studies; this was the best year in social studies they ever had, and those were things that really made me think that I was able to attain that one goal that I had set out to do.

A second challenge Barrie strives to meet is to have his students feel responsible for their own learning and to be active participants in the learning. He has this expectation as a challenge within all his classes. Barrie discusses this issue. "I think first off, we've got to be able to understand that there is something that we're reaching for. There's got to be some type of goal, or some type of theme or whatever that we're working on . . . together." The challenge of getting students actively participating in their own learning is one that Barrie believes is critical and he strives to overcome it. He states, "There is a goal that you're looking for and working for or some experience that you want to have the kids be involved with and that does lend itself to having an opportunity to experience that [the phenomenon of flow]."

A third challenge for Barrie has to do with creativity. He believes he is not creative in the way that many people understand creativity, but would describe his

attribute as having to do with discovery. He explains, "I'm probably not the most creative person but I do enjoy being able to discover" Barrie continues to try to put his meaning into words "Looking at the type of learner I am, I'm very concrete I'm not a creative, imaginative person, but I do enjoy that aspect." We move from the area of creativity into the area of freedom or autonomy within the classroom. I ask Barrie if he feels he has free rein to establish routines and create expectations for his students. He believes he has complete autonomy in teaching and has established a way of working with students that is comfortable for him. He describes his satisfaction with what he is doing at the present time in his teaching and how that articulates with seeking other ways of working with students. Being open to other ways of approaching challenges is what Barrie means when he uses the word discovery. He expands on the aspect of comfort and discovery.

I've found, at least right now that I'm very, very comfortable with the way that I run the classroom and it seems to be working for me and I'm getting the results, test performance, or you know, kids are wanting to learn [pauses] positive learning environment. Right now it seems to be working. Later on in my career, I might try different things. In fact, I'm trying different things all the time to see if they will fit within that framework [connecting, establishing expectations, routines, rules and consequences], but I may need to go from that framework to another one and see how it works and keep trying. Right now I'm looking into cooperative learning to be able to understand more about that . . . rather than having kids work in groups, to really understand the concepts of cooperative learning and be able to utilize that within the classroom. I think you can never be a true master of anything. You need to be able to look on and see what will work for you and take little pieces out of whatever concept or whatever strategy or philosophy . . . and be able to take those pieces out and try to see what will happen in my class if I do this. And try it and throw it away, and kind of build your own strategy or whatever [pauses] philosophy.

Barrie finds challenges of working with students invigorating. He is motivated by the possibility of discovering a way to overcome challenges within his classroom. Being challenged in a way that requires him to be resourceful and use all of his

knowledge and skills as a teacher is one of the conditions that enhances experiences of flow for Barrie.

Conditions That Sustain or Enhance the Flow Experience

Preparation or building a base. Barrie experiences flow in his classroom when lesson plans have been well prepared, students know the expectations, and are working on task. If he can maintain these conditions, his feelings or experiences of flow continue till the end of the class. When I ask him what would be observed if I came into his class at this time, he answers that I would see students working, discussing, being productive with him moving around assisting students as they need it. The framework he implements at the first of the school year assists him to maintain this positive learning environment in his classes. If students occasionally misbehave, the discipline plan that was put into place in September is utilized. Both Barrie and his students know the rules and consequences in the plan and follow the steps when needed. Inappropriate behavior is addressed in a manner that keeps the environment neutral. Barrie tries to keep negativity out of his classroom and his discipline plan helps him to stay on an even keel with his students. He explains,

I have procedures that are set up that I go through with the kids at the first of the year that let the kids know how they are on the discipline plan and what they have to do to be able to change their behavior, but if the behavior doesn't change then they're asked to leave [the classroom]. It's not a situation where you get angry, you know. You go through the steps, logical consequences. They know what they are and they know exactly where they are on the plan and when it comes to the last one, I just point to the door and they know what happens and that's all that's said.

Getting emotionally hooked into students' behavior is something that Barrie believes would detract from his teaching and the experiences of flow in his classroom.

For this reason he goes to great lengths to set the stage in September so that his students know what is expected and what they should be working toward in terms of behavior. The resulting environment is one that is calm, with students working toward specific goals academically and socially. This environment enhances the conditions of flow for Barrie and his students.

Being allowed to focus on teaching. A second condition that maintains the flow experience is being able to focus on teaching. If Barrie is able to have uninterrupted time where he is teaching without having to deal with student outbursts or extremely disruptive student behavior, his experiences of flow are longer and more intense.

Staff attitude. Barrie speaks about the third condition that assists him to maintain his experiences of flow. This condition is related to the atmosphere surrounding the staff and administration. Having support from his colleagues is important to Barrie. He recalls times in his career when the staff “were almost like a family and had very much a family attitude.” In these situations he got ideas and assistance from others on staff and felt he had the support of his administration. This general feeling of well-being associated with belonging to an emotionally healthy staff allows Barrie to focus on his job of teaching. He does not have to be preoccupied with concerns that may have developed in relation to the cohesiveness of the staff. Staff togetherness provides a cushion for Barrie that represents a chemistry (similar to the chemistry in his classes) that moves everyone in the same direction. Belonging to a staff that is working together to achieve common results is reassuring to him and

allows him to do a more focused and confident job in the classroom. This feeling of cohesiveness among the staff enhances the conditions that support his experiences of flow.

Conditions That Diminish or Stop the Flow Experience

Negative, destructive feedback. When I ask him to comment on conditions that detract from his experiences of flow, Barrie begins with what is foremost in his mind. The district in which Barrie teaches has been recently subjected to very close public scrutiny. There have been budget cuts and salary rollbacks, creating anxiety for most teachers. To add to this, a student's parents have questioned the job Barrie is doing regarding the instruction of their son. Knowing how much work he devotes to setting the frame for the students in his classes related to expectations and consequences, Barrie is frustrated and disappointed at this attack by the student's parents. It is a negative perspective that, added to the other recent struggles of his profession, takes away from the job he is trying to do. As we continue to speak about negative feedback, he refers to the impact that one negative comment can have. He has had many parents provide positive feedback regarding the work he is doing with their children, but Barrie admits that a single negative comment weighs heavily on his mind. As a professional he is committed to leaving external issues outside his classroom. When he walks through the classroom doors, he tries to focus on the students and place his personal concerns aside. When something disturbing does happen however, especially when it is related to the students in his class or his work as a teacher, the experiences of flow are more difficult to attain.

Excessive, disruptive student behavior. A second condition that detracts from the environment that supports flow is having to deal with unnecessary disruptive student behavior. Barrie is finding that, now more than ever, the student population is demonstrating more inappropriate behavior. After laboring to establish a workable environment within his own classroom, Barrie is frustrated with what he sees outside his classroom in the hallways. It also seems that the increased disruptive behavior and negative attitudes of students in the school are seeping into his classroom. He finds that establishing a positive learning environment is becoming more and more difficult. It now takes more time and energy to build the connection with students that is necessary to create the kind of working atmosphere Barrie needs to be successful in achieving his goals. He explains:

I'm finding within the hallways and within the classrooms that's starting to come back and be a problem.

Interviewer: And is that affecting your classroom situation?

Barrie: Yes, I'm having to spend more time on the management—classroom management than I ever did. And I think it is just a ripple effect of what's happening [in the hallways].

Loss of staff cohesiveness. A third condition related to diminished experiences of flow involves the staff in Barrie's school. He feels that the staff is losing its cohesiveness. He explains, "I don't know [pauses] the first four or five years that I was here we were almost like a family and had very much a family attitude. I can see a lot of division. That bothers me." When I ask Barrie to elaborate he adds, "Even when I come to school in the morning. You know, just little things. You're able to cloud your eyes over a little bit [but] it's [the staff being divided] not a good feeling." I question whether this detracts from the positive energy he used to get from work and

he answers, "I would say yes. I try to leave all the problems or whatever out of my classroom and be able to have a positive environment there, but I would say, yes, it has in the last three weeks."

Public opinion, over subscription, and pride as a professional. The last detractor that Barrie identifies is one that creates intense feelings for him. It relates to self-esteem and pride as a teacher and the opportunity to do your best. He explains the impact of public opinion on his own sense of pride and self-worth.

You know, you get battered in society, and you'll always get battered in society for teaching. The general public just doesn't understand the demands that a teacher has had to have on their life. I think we, as educators, have taken on too many responsibilities, and we're almost to blame for that. We see something that's broken in society, and we feel that we're the ones who have to do the fixing; and I think that as we've taken on those roles, society expects us to continue those roles. I think we've got ourselves spread out so thin, that we're going to have that cohesiveness broken.

The various issues Barrie identifies as detracting from the conditions conducive to flow involve situations that, at times, leave him feeling powerless. When these issues begin to affect his performance in the classroom or his energy when dealing with students, they detract from the optimal conditions that allow him to experience flow.

Philosophy

Responsibility. Throughout the interview there are some issues that Barrie mentions frequently. These have to do with his overall philosophy regarding the role and responsibilities of those involved within education. This perspective includes both teachers and students, and Barrie explains it in this way:

I guess the goal that I would think that education has is for you [teachers] to be a facilitator more than a teacher [pauses] to have them [students] actually learn from amongst themselves, or, you know, you as a teacher provide an experience, but to have them do a lot of the learning themselves.

The belief that teachers should be facilitators for learning and that students must take responsibility for their own learning are strong ones for Barrie. It moves him into discussion of another aspect of his philosophy.

Expectations, purpose, and involvement. As Barrie begins to reflect on his beliefs about education he keeps coming back to the issue of expectations and purpose. At the beginning of the school year he focusses intently on expectations within his class and feels that this must be understood by everyone before learning can begin. Barrie explains his philosophy regarding common understandings of expectations and purpose.

Well, I think, first off, we've [student and teacher] got to be able to understand that there is something that we're reaching for. There's got to be some type of goal, or some type of theme or whatever that we're working on, working on together. So I guess the first thing is to identify, not necessarily, I guess it can be done almost in a manipulative way, but, you know, if the kids and you understand what the purpose is that we're trying to do, it helps move the process [of learning and experiencing flow] along a little faster.

Barrie makes the connection between the opportunity for flow experiences and his beliefs or philosophy about student, teacher interaction and involvement in learning.

It [flow] can happen at a moment's notice, but if you really want to have that feeling, it can be built upon, and that feeling will be there. Some of the things that I think that are necessary for that [flow] is just for those individuals involved to understand the process [of creating opportunities of flow through common understandings of purpose], to be able to have certain doorways to be open and go through to be able to do that [learn and experience flow] You have to have the involvement of the students; they have to be a key participant

[pauses] I mean, a participant, they're not [just] there, but they're active in the learning process or whatever you're working on.

To underscore his commitment to the philosophy of involvement in learning Barrie often refers to William Glasser's comments about learning. Barrie has a poster in his classroom and he uses it in motivating his students. He explains,

I have in my room William Glasser's comment on what we learn and what I did was, at the first of the year, I went through with all my classes, saying this is what we want to do. Seventy percent of what we discuss with others [we retain], so I have a lot of discussion within the math class . . . There's a lot of noise in my room. It's all, hopefully, productive but they do get side tracked once in awhile. And then it [the poster of Glasser's statements] goes down to the bottom that 90% of what we teach someone else when we're in a peer situation, even those individuals that are doing very well on the concept, that they can actually go and work through with an individual that's having difficulty and they'll be able to retain that concept that much more.

Barrie speaks of Glasser frequently during the interview series and uses the comments on the poster to underscore his belief that student involvement and participation in learning is critical to growth and success in school. Barrie believes that students must take responsibility for their own learning and that this is facilitated when the teacher structures his/her lessons in a way that encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and participate actively in the lesson.

Rules, actions, and consequences. As part of his philosophy Barrie places great importance on the necessity of clear rules and consequences. He perceives rules and consequences as being essential for all interactions in life and that this quintessential condition is a critical component in maintaining a positive learning environment. Consequences are not punitive, but are a logical result of any action. I ask Barrie to provide indicators that describe clearly understood rules and consequences in a classroom and he suggests as the bottom line, "I think expectations are clearly

presented, [and] that even as a student or a teacher, if they [student or teacher] cross a line, something is going to happen.”

Barrie’s philosophy regarding school and learning allows him to program for his students in a way that is consistent from day to day and year to year. He strives to make explicit his expectations for himself, his administration, and his students. He identifies for his students, the purpose of all that they do in the classroom. He endeavors to clearly communicate rules and consequences that result in a smooth and effective classroom operation. Barrie also works toward having all students take responsibility and be involved in their own learning. When the conditions supported by Barrie’s basic philosophies of teaching and learning are in place, his students and as a result he, are more likely to experience flow. He concludes,

I’ve got a banner in my room that says, “The choice is yours but so are the consequences.” I’ve had that up since I started And I really believe, you know, that the kids [pauses] you can’t force them to do anything. They’ve got to take that ownership, but as they start taking their ownership, they’re able to feel the thrill of learning and as they take that on themselves, it [learning and the experience of flow that goes with it] just snowballs.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative

Barrie’s Interpretation

Barrie and I identify the key themes and ideas related to the phenomenon of flow in the classroom. Barrie begins the process of reflecting, grouping, and labelling the ideas. As he works he discusses his thinking and through this metacognition he begins to analyze and interpret his own ideas and the thinking behind them. Barrie identifies 10 groups of ideas that have been drawn from the transcripts of his interviews. They are:

1. Indications kids are sensing this optimal feeling.
2. Creating the positive learning environment.
3. Hindrances to teacher performance.
4. Students who take ownership for their own learning.
5. Always a growing and learning experience.
6. Understanding the environment necessary for the process [of flow] to happen.
7. Sensations felt.
8. Student hindrances.
9. Peer influence for my learning
10. Frequency.

Each of these groups of ideas has been provided in its complete form in Appendix L.

Indication kids are sensing this optimal feeling. The ideas in this category relate to the kinds of situations and observations that are found when Barrie knows that his students are experiencing flow. This is significant in that Barrie's experiences of flow are directly related to the experiences his students are having. The ideas in this category include "have them on your side, to make that transition from concrete to abstract, I enjoy being able to discover, knowing that I'm making a connection, there's a direction or chemistry that is happening, you have the involvement of the students." Barrie has a strong philosophy about what must be understood in order for individuals to learn. He keeps returning to this philosophy unconsciously throughout the interview series. His thoughts relate to his philosophical base involving the beliefs that learning is a responsibility of both teacher and student; the purpose, expectations, rules, and consequences must be understood by all; and that students must be actively involved

in their learning. The ideas in the category, Indication Kids are Sensing This Optimal Feeling, reflect his philosophy. A critical realization for Barrie during the process of sorting and labelling ideas is that his experiences of flow are directly related to his students' experiences of flow. When asked to explain further he elaborates,

I think it [flow] builds and feeds each other. As the students are able to have that feeling [flow] and energy, it radiates back and wants you, you know, to try different things to see if you can keep the process [flow] going.

The ideas placed together in the category represent "the indication that the kids are sensing this optimal feeling," and Barrie's own discovery that he knows he's "doing something properly."

Creating the positive learning environment. The themes within this category represent the work Barrie must do to establish the framework for learning. They include "fair and professional; understand the role as teacher and student, and administration; consequences and expectations; Glasser; to reach and have the interest of your students." I ask Barrie to verbalize his thinking as he is putting this category together.

Creating a positive learning environment at the beginning of the year . . . especially when you have a new group of students come into your class. I think that it's important right at the first of the year to establish within the students your expectations, classroom expectations, through your discipline so they understand exactly how the classroom is going to operate. And once you have those expectations established, then you're able to move into a situation where you don't have to use a lot of time on the management type of problems that you would have if you didn't do that kind of preparation. Well, just establishing what your outcomes and expectations are for the year. If they understand that, and they understand each other and know each other, then they're able to have an ability to be able to work within the environment and be able to have a better chance of obtaining the feeling [flow] end result.

I ask Barrie to tell me about the statement "to reach and have the interest of your students" and its relationship to his experiences of flow. He explains,

I think in order to have the kids interested and to be able to reach the students, you have to show that you're willing to get to know them a little bit and share a little bit about yourself and have them know you, more on a personal situation than I think a lot of the teachers allow themselves to do. I think it's very important for that feeling, that, yea, we're here as a group to learn, not just them as students and myself as a teacher, but we're a group. You know, striving for a common goal.

The feeling of togetherness is something that Barrie discusses more than once within the process of sorting and grouping his ideas related to flow. He speaks of "direction or chemistry" in relation to his students and uses the term "family" in reference to his staff. He considers it to be "very important" in order for the phenomenon of flow to take place.

Outside hindrances to teacher performance. This group, explains Barrie, "is looking at what kind of things could happen within society, or within the classroom or within the school, that would detract from that feeling [flow]." The ideas contained within this group include "we've gotten ourselves spread too thin, a general loss of self-esteem and pride, we are battered by society, the division [staff] detracts from the positive energy, and more time on classroom management." He feels this category is fairly straightforward and affects the way a teacher is able to apply him- or herself within the classroom. He says, "with this group, looking at what kind of things that could cause a distraction within the classroom that would prevent the teacher being able to focus himself properly within the classroom, to help that feeling [flow] happen." These represent the kinds of situations that stop the progress and lessen the intensity of the feelings Barrie experiences when in flow. They are incidents and situations he feels are beyond his control. He is saddened by the hindrances and they create a discomfort for him within his profession.

Students who take ownership for their own learning. Barrie describes this category as “I can see that they’re starting to use the process [feeling of flow], starting to feel good about the process and want to have that process continue.” Within the student ownership category there exist themes relating to “they have to be a key participant; a facilitator more than a teacher; it [flow] starts with the students and their enthusiasm; and I took that as a challenge, to enjoy social studies.” When I ask Barrie to describe what taking ownership by students would look like in a classroom, he explains, “busyness, being on task, being excited, and not just sitting back but being actively involved. If I can see that the students are actively working with each other and learning from each other” When I ask Barrie which of the categories he feels is critical to have in place for him to be able to experience the phenomenon of flow, he does not hesitate in identifying the category of student ownership for learning. He states, “I think if you took away, Students Starting to Take Ownership of Their Own Learning, if that was removed, then you, as a teacher, would not ever have that feeling [flow] at all.”

Always a growing and learning experience. The ideas in this category relate to the issue of learning from experiences in the classroom and not assuming that teaching can remain the same from day to day or year to year. Key themes in this category are “making the right decision, I reflect in my mind as the process [flow] is going on, I’m trying different things all the time, and you can never be a true master of anything.” Barrie explains how this category relates to evolving as a teacher. “Sometimes it [a lesson] falls flat on its face. You do the same thing that you did last year, but there’s just something that’s missing and you don’t have the successes that

you had.” He begins to analyze why that difference from one year to another occurs. “So it’s different with each individual group. You have to be able to recognize that there’s certain strengths within the students or within yourself . . . that you can build upon and work with and have success at.” As he speaks I get a sense that he feels teaching can be a very tentative thing. That sometimes you get results and sometimes you don’t. He has done much thinking about this situation and understands that there are variables effecting what happens on a yearly basis and on a daily basis. He explains in this way, “Well I think as you go through your different year, like throughout the year, you can understand what really makes this group tick and you’re able to focus on that.” He elaborates, “That goes back to understanding the environment and the process to make it happen. You have to recognize that there will be differences [between classes] and work with those differences.” The essence of this category is that a teacher is always evolving and looking for different ways to address a challenge. As Barrie stated in the interview, “You can never be a true master of anything.”

Understanding the environment necessary for the process [flow] to happen.

This category relates to the kinds of conditions Barrie identifies as being present during his lessons when he experiences flow. They include ideas such as “the kids and you understand the purpose, kids know what to do when they get into my classroom, you have to be prepared, there’s a goal or theme we’re working on together, and communication is one of the key forces to be able to work with a class.” Critical skills within this category are being able to use previous experience and being prepared for the unexpected. Barrie explains this category as “a group of the things

that are necessary to have this process [flow] work.” He adds, “The students have to understand the roles they’re playing, as well as the teacher, in order to have this phenomenon happen and to be very conscious about what’s happening within a learning environment.” The ideas in the category, Understanding the Environment Necessary for Process to Happen, are critical for Barrie to recognize and utilize. By utilizing the concepts in the category he can have greater success in reaching and teaching students. This increases the students’ experiences of flow, having a direct influence on the quality of his own experiences of flow.

Sensations felt. This category contains the descriptions of Barrie’s sensations when experiencing flow. The sensations include “tingling, shivering, a very good feeling, a calm feeling, inner peace, and your mind frees itself from other worries.” As we discuss the descriptors in this category, Barrie explains the intensity of these feelings. “Sometimes it’s a more powerful feeling. It’s again, a sensation felt. Sometimes you have really strong sensations, others more of, you know, an inner peace you feel comfortable with.” On occasion he recognizes the sensation and begins to analyze his actions in order to increase the experience in either intensity or duration. Barrie elaborates on this situation.

I guess I’d start to reflect in my mind as the process [flow] was going on. Gee, this is really working; what can I do to help increase this, or whatever; and do a lot of the self-reflection when the process [flow] was going on [pauses] and just kind of [pauses] hey, you know, this is great. Let’s continue so the kids can really experience something that’s positive or whatever.

When I ask him about the frequency of his experiences of flow, he anticipates that he experiences flow a couple of times in a week. He has more of the feelings associated with flow when he has created a positive learning environment with his

students. “Where I’ve been able to establish that [positive learning environment], it’s [flow] able to be picked up quite readily and quite quickly, and then it [flow] can happen throughout the year.”

Student hindrances. As we talk and Barrie sorts the themes associated with flow, he begins to discuss the difficulties of trying to work with a class of students when some of them are extremely disruptive or troubled. He groups together three ideas for this category, all of them having to do with a sense of belonging. The first statement is about a boy who had lost his father. Although the loss of a parent may make it difficult for a student to feel as though he or she fits in, the statement also represents for Barrie a time where he was able to assist someone and as a result experience flow. The second statement in the category describes his own feelings when he found that the faculty of engineering was not a place he felt he belonged. The last statement refers to students in his classes who have difficulty fitting in with the rest of the class. The context of this last statement involves Barrie’s efforts to create an environment in his classes where all students feel that they belong.

As we discuss the implications of the themes in the category, Barrie explains how having to deal with students who feel they don’t belong affects him. “When that positive learning environment isn’t there and I have a few individuals that cause a lot of problems (where I have to spend a lot of time on classroom management), it’s really hard to get that feeling [flow] as a class.” I ask him how this affects him specifically and he states, “It’s energy draining.” He alludes to the fact that dealing with a few individuals who are disruptive and showing no progress leaves him with a feeling of powerlessness. It is frustrating and weighs on his mind.

Peer influence for my learning. Part of Barrie's success as a teacher is a result of being able to turn to other members of his staff for support, encouragement, and ideas. He pulls all the statements pertaining to his colleagues into this category. Although there are only three statements in this category, Barrie stresses the importance of having staff support in place. He explains:

I watch people in action and learn from them how they deal with certain situations I was influenced and got a lot of my strategies from watching others. Very much, we were almost like a family, very much a family attitude within the staff itself, a lot of openness. I'm sure I could walk into any room and the teacher wouldn't feel nervous, you know, "How come you came into my room?" type of deal. It's that openness that we feel, and that I enjoy with my peers.

Throughout the interview series, Barrie touches on the importance of the staff to him. He also explains that he is feeling somewhat isolated since the staff has started to become divided regarding specific school issues. He misses the support and creativity that he had when the staff was closer.

My Interpretation as the Researcher

My interpretation of Barrie's stories and descriptions will be made in comparison to what Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1992) reports as common characteristics of the flow experience. There are three core characteristics:

1. A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled.
2. A structure with clear rules.
3. A situation providing immediate and relevant feedback.

The secondary characteristics are related to the sensations experienced by individuals while in flow. They include:

1. Focused concentration by the participant.
2. A merging of activity and awareness.
3. The activity is under the person's control.
4. A distorted perception of time and temporary loss of self-awareness.

A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled.

Barrie's first mention of challenge is in his discussion of students who disliked social studies. He took on this challenge and endeavored to have students feel more positive about the subject area as a goal. He utilized his experience and knowledge and was able to change students' attitudes. Barrie explains in this way: "What I did was take that as a challenge [pauses] well, they were kind of indifferent about social studies, to change that attitude and be able to have them enjoy social studies; and I think I was able to." In much of Barrie's work as a teacher there is a quiet yet driving force to make situations better. He is analytical and recognizes where things could be improved. He takes on the improvement of situations as personal challenges. Barrie refers to some work he is presently doing in the area of teaching strategies. Many of his students lack the social skills and collaborative skills needed to work with others. To alleviate this situation, Barrie investigates new strategies to use in his classroom.

Right now I'm looking into Cooperative Learning and [want] to be able to understand more about that just rather than having the kids work in groups or whatever; to really understand the concepts of cooperative learning and be able to utilize that within the classroom. I think you can never be a true master of anything. You need to be able to look on and see what will work for you and take little pieces out of whatever concept or whatever strategy or philosophy . . . and be able to take those pieces out and try to see what will happen in my class if I do this. Try it and throw it away, and kind of build your own strategy . . . or philosophy.

An interesting aspect of the characteristic regarding challenge and skill is that Barrie seeks and overcomes most challenges because he has the skill that is required to do so. There are occasions, however, where he feels overwhelmed with the challenge and desperately searches for skills, knowledge, and solutions that he feels are beyond his scope. The situations that are beyond his reach detract from his love of his profession and stop any experiences of flow he may have otherwise experienced. One of these overwhelming situations is the range of issues teachers are expected to deal with. He explains,

The general public just doesn't understand the demands that a teacher has had to have on their life. I think we, as educators, have taken on too many responsibilities, and we're almost to blame for that. We see something that's broken in society, and we feel that we're the ones who have to do the fixing, and I think that as we've taken on those roles, society expects us to continue those roles. I think we've got ourselves spread out so thin that we're going to have that cohesiveness [being able to do everything] broken.

Although Barrie feels somewhat disillusioned with the state of education, specifically the challenges he must face personally in his classroom, he never stops trying to overcome the obstacles that represent the challenges. He becomes frustrated with the lack of discipline and appropriate behavior among his students, but continues to seek alternative ways to work with difficult students to improve their social skills and work habits. Barrie, after metaphorically throwing up his hands, keeps striving to find ways to support students with special learning needs. He explains,

Some individuals within the classroom, if you're able to identify it, might have a special need, and you might not understand that individual or how they learn as well as you could so you have an opportunity to call downtown to any of the consultants that would be in that area that you could talk to, that there'd be information that you could read that they would forward to you or you could pick up and read yourself, so that you can help those students that might be having a difficult time. You're able to adjust to them and they can adjust to you by understanding how they are actually learning.

Although Barrie has times where he thinks he has used up all his ideas and resources to teach special needs students, he soon annuls that perspective by finding more ways to tackle the challenge. He draws from central office assistance as well as colleagues on his staff. He states, "I like to watch people in action and learn from them how they deal with certain situations."

In Barrie's case, the challenge seems to come from the constant reading of and adjusting to students' needs, moods, and abilities. He tries to overcome the challenge of reading ever-changing students by learning and trying new methods, or by resorting to old strategies that are new to the students. He describes this situation. "It's different with each individual group. You have to be able to recognize that there's certain strengths within the students or within yourself at a certain time of year, that you can build upon and work with and have success." He adds, "As you go through your . . . year, like throughout the year, you can understand what really makes this group tick and you're able to focus on that. That goes back to understanding the environment and the process to make it [flow] happen."

Barrie has moments where he believes he has come to the end of the road regarding alternative ways to help students, but in actuality, he demonstrates that he possesses skills to seek out and utilize other solutions to problems. He is in essence varying and controlling the balance of challenge and skill.

A structure with clear goals. If I were to observe Barrie's classes, I would determine very quickly that they are set up and run according to straightforward rules, consequences, and goals. These are critical components to the structure Barrie uses in organizing and conducting his teaching approach. He outlines his structure of the

class by establishing expectations, goals, rules, and consequences. Within this structure he utilizes criteria to determine student progress both in academics and behavior. He explains, "I try to look at it as a professional . . . I have my criteria and I go through that . . . I've got all the backing that I need and it's set. If it [students' work] doesn't fit, then that's the mark they get."

Barrie prepares his classes for his basic parameters by creating an expectation on the first day of class. Students know how they are expected to behave and what happens if they do not. They also know how they can earn marks according to Barrie's criteria. He elaborates,

I have procedures that are set up that I go through with the kids at the first of the year that let the kids know how they are on the discipline plan and what they have to do to be able to change their behavior, but if the behavior doesn't change, then they're asked to leave. It's not a situation where you get angry, you know. You go through the steps, logical consequences. They know what they are and they know exactly where they are on the plan and when it comes to the last one, I just point to the door and they know what happens, and that's all that's said.

Barrie shares how this is done.

I don't teach anything out of the textbook or look at the curriculum for the first five days. It's all getting to know each other, communication, going through my expectations, looking at their expectations, getting into a happy medium that we can work with, have a positive learning environment, [I] go through all kinds of hand signals. If I'm in a certain location within the room, hold up my hand, you know what to do. You do a lot of foot/leg work right at the beginning and through the month of September, you're always modelling that, so by the time in October and November, the kids are trained and it doesn't take a lot of time. You do lose that five days . . . at the beginning of the year, but the benefit is worth it.

Within Barrie's teaching philosophy exists a belief that success occurs when people are striving together toward a common goal. He incorporates this belief into the structure of his frame or base for teaching. Barrie explains, "We've got to

understand that there is something that we're reaching for. There's got to be some type of goal, or some type of theme . . . that we're working on, working on together." He adds, "If the kids and you understand what the purpose is that we're trying to do, it helps move the process [of learning and of flow] along a little faster."

Throughout the interview Barrie refers to important aspects of his structure or frame for successful, meaningful teaching. Included is the aspect of student involvement. He elaborates, "There is a goal that you're looking for and working for or some experience that you want to have the kids be involved with and that does lend itself to having opportunity to experience that [flow]." Student involvement and responsibility for learning are important aspects that Barrie stresses within the structure of his approach to teaching. He elaborates,

And you have to have the involvement of the students; they have to be a key participant . . . they're active in the learning process You have to have them on your side [pauses] at least maybe not to begin with, but when you have that feeling [flow], you need to have them on your side to be able to experience it together, I guess.

Barrie labels many of the ideas associated with the structure he creates in his classroom, Understanding the Environment Necessary for the Process to Happen. The ideas in this category support the basic structure of his expectations and give reason for its importance in Barrie's approach to teaching. He explains, "The students have to understand the roles they're playing, as well as the teacher, in order to have this phenomenon happen and to be very conscious about what's happening within a learning environment."

The issue of consistency within expectations, rules, and consequences is one that Barrie believes is critical to his experiencing optimal moments in his teaching. He

believes that there must be consistent expectations, rules, and consequences for students, teachers, and administrators alike. He states,

To understand our role, I think as a teacher, and a student, and an administration, to know which fits into which, and not have this greyness. I mean, there's always going to be an exception to a rule, and I understand that, but there is a rule, and the majority of those situations would fall into that and be able to go with a logical consequence for whatever event happens. I find it frustrating to not see that process [of expectations, rules, and consequences] work.

It is clear that Barrie's experiences of flow are associated closely with structure and clear goals. He strives to have structure and clear goals within his classroom and seeks it personally within the constructs of his profession. He feels most satisfied, successful, productive, and at peace when he knows for himself the expectations, consequences, and goals of the situation.

Feedback. As Barrie reflects on aspects of teaching he mentions various situations associated with feedback. One such situation I call the Aha. It involves teachers observing students who suddenly understand a concept that has evaded them up until that moment. Barrie describes an aha moment.

There are times when you are able to reach and have the interest of your students, and in particular, those who have been struggling with a concept and you are able to either use manipulatives or be able to explain it or show it visually on the board and all of a sudden, you can see their light turn on and they're able to understand that. And that's probably one of the most enjoyable experiences that I have as a teacher.

A second reference to feedback comes when I ask Barrie to establish what starts his experiences of flow. He explains,

It starts with the student and their enthusiasm and knowing that I'm making a connection, and that just feeds upon itself. They become interested; they're showing themselves that they understand it . . . And you're able to facilitate the feeling that [pauses] you're feeling within yourself . . . Hopefully, you're able to have that same feeling be generated within the student. It's very exciting.

This kind of direct feedback from his students is relevant to what Barrie is trying to accomplish as a teacher. He receives information about where the students are in the learning from their reactions and demonstrations within his class. There are other kinds of feedback that Barrie receives that he considers to be not relevant to the job he does in the classroom. He discusses parent comments about his teaching, and although the comments have an emotional effect on Barrie, he relies more on his own methods of evaluating his work and the work of his students. He has set criteria and utilizes that consistently to assess the growth of his students. Barrie shares a situation where a parent questioned his judgement regarding the quality of a student's work.

I go through and I have criteria that I mark with. Those are required to be signed by parents and one parent made a comment that said that [pauses] I gave the mark of four on one. It's out of five. A couple of fours instead of fives, and the comment was made, "Well, it sure looks like, in my opinion, they should all be fives." And the comment was made with regards that I didn't know what I was doing. You know it's just one parent . . . but that one negative can wipe, you know, that feeling away quite fast.

Barrie adds,

You know I want to be as fair and professional as I can. It's not the student. The student's fine, but there's that parent, and I don't know if she's trying to manipulate me so that next time there's a question of whether it's a four or five, or what, but I try to look at it as a professional and I have my criteria and I go through that, and if it doesn't fit, then it doesn't fit. I've got all the backing that I need and it's set That's the mark they get [pauses] a four out of five, or whatever it works out to be, and I hope I won't be influenced that way [by irrelevant feedback from a parent].

Moving from the issue of irrelevant parent feedback, I ask Barrie to describe what would be observed in his classroom when everything is going the way it should and he has that sense of calm or inner peace. He creates this picture.

Kids are working on their homework and going through, asking questions, and being on task . . . they're working away like little busy beavers and asking questions and [pauses] I have in my room William Glasser's comment on what

we learn and what I did was . . . I went though all my classes saying this is what we want to do [have discussion about math] . . . so I have a lot of discussion within the math class. If you walk into my math class; . . . people are working but there's a lot of noise in my room.

Barrie utilizes the kind of feedback that is relevant to what he is trying to achieve. He makes use of what he sees and hears his students doing to assess how they are progressing. The picture he creates is an example of the kind of feedback he needs and finds most useful in doing his job and in achieving flow.

A similar kind of feedback that Barrie utilizes is observing students making connections between two subject areas. He was able to do that when he taught a group of grade seven students both mathematics and science. He witnessed their progress in what they said and the intellectual connections they made between the two disciplines. Barrie taught the same students in grade nine and spoke about the feedback he received from them in the following way. "Just to be able to see the growth that they've made and the experience that they've had and I'd said it was very much a continual process, and I looked forward to it every week."

Barrie is able to discern students' moods and attitudes from feedback he receives from their physical and emotional behaviors in his class. This assists him in adjusting his lessons to accommodate their readiness for learning. "I mean, at times you come into the classroom and you're down, they're down, and you have to try to pick up where they're at and try to achieve." He reads them as well as he can and adds that reading to the academic assessments he has in place already. The combination of formal and informal feedback is invaluable to Barrie's teaching and a critical part of his experiences of flow.

Focused concentration. During the interview series, Barrie addresses the aspect of focused concentration. He describes this focus as being in touch with all that is going on around him. “As a teacher,” he explains “I feel it’s important for me to be able to know what’s going on. If there is a knock at the door, to be able to hear it, and I’m very much conscious of the surroundings and things that are going on around [me].” He adds, “As a teacher, there are thousands of things that are going on within just one period that you have to be aware of and that’s something I make a conscious effort of doing.” As we investigate and discuss other possibilities associated with focused concentration, Barrie brings up the category he has created called Hindrances to Teacher Performances. The themes within the category are associated with occurrences that would pull Barrie’s concentration away from his teaching. They include issues such as teachers taking on too much responsibility within society, division within a staff, and unclear expectations for students and teachers. Situations such as these can weaken or drag Barrie’s focus from his main priority, that of working with his students to achieve success. When distracting issues can be alleviated or blocked out of his mind, Barrie is completely absorbed in his teaching and experiences flow.

Merging of activity and awareness. Although Barrie does not mention a specific teaching incident that relates to merging of activity and awareness, he recalls incidents outside of teaching where he experiences the characteristic. As he finishes describing an incident where he experienced flow during a coaching situation, I ask Barrie if he notices that during a game he becomes completely one with the game and is unaware of the crowds, the weather or other extraneous conditions. He suggests

that he doesn't but that after a particular game while he was driving home in the car, he was still having that feeling of flow and was unaware that he was speeding. The team had just won a championship game and Barrie was absorbed in happy thoughts and rerunning of plays from the competition. He laughs as he recalls, "We ended up winning the city championship. That was a good feeling. In fact, it was so good a feeling that I was going home, driving along and I forgot to keep control of my speed, and got pulled over and got a \$65.00 speeding ticket." We discuss reports (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) inferring that many people experience flow while driving and Barrie states that he has had the feeling of flow while driving on other occasions. He recalls when he had to commute to university from his small town. "It's about a 45 minute drive. and a lot of times, I'd leave the University and all of a sudden I'd be home. I'd be thinking about things and just lose that sense of time."

Two things may be occurring regarding Barrie's sensation of merging activity and awareness. It may be that Barrie does not experience this characteristic of flow during teaching. Or it may be that he does experience the merging of activity and awareness but is not cognizant that it is happening. We know that it occurs for him while driving but he has no recognition of it occurring while he is teaching.

The activity is under the person's control. There is no doubt that the events within Barrie's teaching experiences are for the most part within his control. He utilizes his skills and knowledge to adjust to varying conditions within his classroom. The mood of the students and the behaviors of students who are acting out are situations that must be taken into consideration when planning and teaching. Barrie tries to control and has success in controlling the intensity of the unexpected situations

during his teaching. By teaching expectations and consequences at the beginning of the year, he curbs inappropriate behavior and is better prepared for the unexpected. In this way, he exhibits some control over unforeseen student activity in his classroom and absolutely controls how he reacts to each situation. Barrie feels he has control over how things are done in his classroom and when I ask him to discuss this, he elaborates, "It's totally up to you [the teacher]. I'm very comfortable with the way I run the classroom and it seems to be working for me . . . I'm getting the results, test performance . . . you know, kids are wanting to learn [pauses] [a] positive learning environment."

Even though there are some issues that affect Barrie's concern regarding teaching, he still feels he has autonomy within his classroom and that what occurs between himself and his students is definitely under his control.

Distorted perception of time, temporary loss of self-awareness. Although Barrie feels that he must be and is completely aware of time while teaching, he admits that in situations where time is not critical, he may have a distorted perception of time. As an example he uses the interview he is involved in at the moment. Because he has no pressing appointment immediately after the interview, he allows the preoccupation with time to relax and so has no idea how much time has gone by. The distorted dimensions of time and loss of self-awareness were also present during the drive home after the championship game. Barrie found that he experienced both a distorted perception of time and a temporary loss of self awareness such that he drove beyond highway limits of speed and incurred a speeding ticket.

Summary of My Interpretation

To summarize my impressions of Barrie's experiences of flow and how these experiences compare to reports of flow by others (Allison & Duncan, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993), I begin by stating that a critical component of Barrie's experiences of flow is associated with the first of the core characteristics of flow, the balance of challenge, skill, and control. He strives to address the challenges of working with a variety of students by drawing from his bank of skills and knowledge. He also seeks to control the conditions within which he teaches by creating a structure or frame that communicates to students what is expected, consequences for actions, and the goals of the class as a group.

Lack of structure and clear goals is something that Barrie finds frustrating. He speaks of having grey areas of rules and consequences within the school as a whole and how that situation makes adhering to the structure within his classroom more difficult for his students. Consistency is critical, in Barrie's opinion, for an individual to establish control. When the structure breaks down and there is ambiguity regarding how to deal with expectations and rules, Barrie believes experiences of flow diminish. When there is lack of structure, students are less focused and tend to not experience flow as readily.

Barrie's experiences of flow are directly related to the experiences of flow occurring for his students. He receives feedback from them that informs him that they are in flow and this frees him to experience flow as well. While he is in flow, he does a quick mental check to determine what he is doing that will prolong the

experience for both himself and his students. Feedback from them aids him in this quick tally and he is able to then continue as before or adjust his teaching strategies.

The secondary characteristics of flow are, in Barrie's experiences, much less distinctive than the core or primary characteristics. They blend and share descriptors and become difficult to determine in a defined way. Barrie is a very focused individual and carries this quality into his classroom. When working with small groups of students he can become fully engrossed in the task at hand yet be absolutely aware of other activities going on in the room. This is critical in Barrie's opinion for a teacher to be able to do. While he describes his experiences as "your mind just frees itself above any other types of worries that you might have had," he maintains that "it's important for me to be able to know what's going on. If there's a knock at the door, . . . I'm very conscious of the surroundings and things that are going around."

For Barrie the merging of activity and awareness does not occur in the way that has been reported in other's experiences of flow. He is able to keep a consciousness or awareness beyond his task yet still be immersed in the activity.

Barrie focusses a great deal on the control aspect of the flow experience. He describes himself as "more of a military-minded individual." He likes to have structure or a framework for both himself and his students. He exclaims, "The framework would have just as much control on me as it does on the students." By this he implies that it is just as important to have a structure or base on which to build the class routines for him as a teacher as it is for his students.

The final secondary characteristic is experienced by Barrie, but he is not as aware of it occurring while he is teaching as he is aware of it when he is involved in

activities outside of teaching such as driving. At one point in the interview series he wonders if perhaps he has experienced flow so often that he has become less aware of its novelty and in that way less aware of some of the characteristics.

Concluding Thoughts Regarding Barrie and His Experiences of Flow

In order for Barrie to experience flow, he needs to be prepared and in control. This allows him to accomplish the results he desires with his classes. He is a very meticulous and decided man and during the interview series he underscores that quality by describing the many details that need to be in place for him to do his job and to experience flow. The most critical detail is that the students Barrie is working with must be connected to him and in flow in order for him to have the shivering kind of sensation, tingling feeling, and inner peace or calm that is characteristic of the flow that Barrie experiences. When I ask him to provide some concluding thoughts at the end of the interview series he offers, "Just I think that it doesn't happen haphazardly. You do have to plan for it, and there are certain things that you can do to prepare yourself, as well as kids, for that experience." He continues, "But again, sometimes it might, through all the planning and organization that you have [done], if things just don't click between yourself and the students on a particular day, it [flow] more than likely won't happen."

Dana

Dana has been teaching for less than five years. She received her training in the east and then plucked up her courage as she moved away from most of her family to take a job somewhere on the opposite side of the country. To begin with, that choice

tells us something about Dana as an individual. She is a risk taker, she loves adventure, yet there is a very soft and tender side to her that makes its appearance in her work as a teacher.

In her first position after moving west, Dana worked in a small junior high that is situated in a lower socio-economic area of the city. In this setting, she worked with students who were academically delayed by at least 4 years. She encouraged students who were learning disabled and protected others who were behavior disordered. At the same time she pushed the students who had average to gifted ability and continued this tap dance for 3 years. After 3 years she felt she needed a change and moved to a school across the city where most of the students are healthy, well behaved, and of average and above ability. For the most part, the parents of these students have excellent parenting skills and support the teachers. Dana's new school, where she has taught for less than a year, has a reputation for being on the leading edge in education. It houses grades seven to nine and if you were to walk into the front foyer, you would get a sense of seriousness, achievement, and business throughout.

Dana teaches "core" to grade seven students, something that she has never done before. Teaching core means that she teaches mathematics, science, language arts, and social studies to her home room students. In addition, she also teaches them health and physical education. When I interview her, 3 months into the school year, she is exhausted. As the interview series progresses, however, she begins to reflect on all the excellent times she has had in her teaching career and seems to gain back some positive energy.

During the first interview, I ask Dana to listen to three narrative paragraphs describing flow which I refer to as optimal experiences, and then to describe similar situations and experiences from her teaching. Dana responds by describing her experiences in a thoughtful, passionate, and sensitive way. She is able to verbalize her thoughts and opinions related to optimal experiences in a warm, clear and enthusiastic manner.

Specific Experiences and Situations

How Does It Start

After listening to and reading the narrative paragraphs, Dana begins easily to describe an incident where she has experienced similar sensations. When asked what starts this experience or how does it start, she responds by saying, “I think it starts with an expectation.” She recalls an optimal moment that occurred when she had asked students to simulate a court case and three of the students did an excellent job of playing their roles and interpreting the essence of the topic. Dana describes her thinking while observing the court room activity and experiencing flow.

I remember when I was watching it, we were all [pauses] I had the class, they were the jury members, but I said we get to decide guilty or not guilty, based on the case presented. And I remember my expectation, thinking, well you know, “I’ll just take it for what it’s worth [pauses] it’s grade eight.” And when I watched it, as I was watching it, I was sitting there and I was thinking, “I can’t believe this. This is remarkable.” And they had just exceeded my expectations and more, and they were so into it, and they had done such a great job. It was of those moments where I just thought, “Wow!”

Dana continues, “So it started with just throwing something out there but having kids take it and exceed what you anticipated, and also for them, when you look around

the classroom, and to see the other kids being moved by it.” She confirms, “Then, that’s when it starts for me.”

As Dana continues to discuss what starts the experience for her, she introduces a situation that precedes the presentation of the expectation. This involves what happens for her when she plans. She uses the word “envision” to describe how she uses her creativity and pulls her lesson plans together. Dana provides an example of when this kind of planning started an optimal experience for her:

I’m thinking that when I’m actually getting ready for a lesson, that it’s just myself sitting there and I’m planning out an activity. Even if it is creating choices for kids, a project that I have in mind and so on. And it’s sort of how I envision how kids might go with it, and how I envision them interacting or so on.

Dana recalls a specific situation where her lesson plan would mean risk taking for her students. While creating her lesson, she envisions how her students will handle the expectation and what each student will be doing. Her lesson involves her students pretending to be on a talk show, and while planning, she visualizes her students moving around the room, interviewing members of the expert panel and members of the audience. She describes her visualization.

And I’m seeing her running around with a microphone and really getting kids to talk. And all of a sudden, kids just talking about all these personal things, and having everybody listen and respect them and so on. And when I plan these things, I have those moments, even just in thinking about them, envisioning them. I get goose bumps even thinking about how it might go, and then I’m hoping that it will be everything I expected it to be.

For Dana, the start of an optimal experience begins at the beginning and that is with the planning, the envisioning and the setting of an expectation for her students. Not only does this enable her to have opportunities of flow but, she experiences flow while planning and envisioning.

What Keeps It Going and What Stops It

In answer to the question, what keeps it going and what stops it, Dana describes how she is able to bring the moments back. She approaches the idea of keeping the moments going by addressing how easily she can bring them back after they naturally wane. For her, the moments begin to wane when the logistics of the lesson have to be looked after. She may experience flow while observing students exceeding her expectations, then have the sensation drop a little while she attends to the next student or moves the lesson along. Dana recalls a time where a group of her students had done a presentation in a very unique way. Instead of just presenting their ideas, they sang a very moving song. She describes the experience and the waning of the experience in this way:

Well, when they finished singing and then everybody cheers and claps, they come away feeling so good and so [pauses] I'm still having the feeling. I'm still thinking, "Wow!" You know, 'cause they're so cool [laughs]. Then it just kind of peaks there and then things go back to normal. But it's almost like you're sort of lost for that moment, and then you kind of catch your breath and go, "OK, who's next?"

The practical side of being a teacher means that Dana has to leave the optimal moments behind as she works through her lesson. It is as if each child's moment in the sun is her moment in the sun, and then she has to get back to the organizing of the activity and moving the lesson forward. She adds to this explanation,

but I have to get back to the task at hand. It's the same way with anything, whether it's poetry reading, or whatever, you think about it and you let the class have an opportunity to process it and then, OK, it's time to move on.

I ask Dana to clarify for me the manner in which the experience evolves. It seems to me that it starts with the students, continues with the students and when they

are done, the experience ends. I question her, "Is it totally related to the kids?" She explains this situation in the following way:

No, it doesn't end for me. It ends for me for that moment, and then, you know, because it has to. You have to put it at the back of the brain to get on with the lesson. But then it comes up again when you reflect on it, like at the end of the day when you go home and you talk to somebody and you say, "You should have seen this." . . . And then when you share it again, the feelings are all there. And you're shaking your head in awe, you know, and the goose bumps come back and so when you talk about it again, the same feelings happen for you again.

For Dana, it seems that the phenomenon of flow has a natural end of its own but can be resurrected later by thinking about the moment and by talking about it with another person. When pressed to think how the optimal moment might end suddenly or unnaturally she suggests that it might happen when there is an interruption from outside. She becomes frustrated with phone calls to her room or people knocking on the door which interrupts her lesson.

Physiology of the Experience

As the interview progresses, Dana has opportunity to discuss many of her experiences and the physiological sensations that accompany them. These feelings range from having goose bumps to feeling overcome with joy. She also speaks about the specific incidents that she knows are associated with her having those reactions. Dana begins by recalling a situation involving a behavior disordered and very dysfunctional student.

He got up and he read this poem, really expressively, and again, you could hear a pin drop. The kids were so into what he was saying and they were so accepting of him. And I got goose bumps because I thought, "This is probably one of the few moments that he's actually shone and felt really good in front of so-called normal kids." I was impressed with him but I got the goose bumps because of the other kids too, because [pauses] just to see them so accepting.

A large part of the physiology associated with flow for Dana has to do with her emotional perception of the moment. She is very cognizant of what she is thinking at the time of the optimal experience and remembers situations where her emotional feelings alerted her to the presence of the experience. Dana mentions sadness, joy, happiness, excitement, and feelings of hilarity. She discusses a time when a very withdrawn student began to come into herself. Dana explains, "I started crying in class, tears of joy My eyes actually fill up And so I got goose bumps and my eyes fill up, because I just thought, 'Wow! You know, that shows such growth for that girl.'" She continues to describe the emotions that accompany her experiences of flow:

Whenever I see something happening in the class where it's just a moment of growth for a certain individual or a group of kids, I feel so happy for them that I actually, you know, my eyes fill up and I feel warm inside, and I just think "Wow." It's almost a feeling that you can't explain because [pauses] the average person who hasn't experienced the joy in seeing the kid shine [pauses] I don't know.

As she continues to discuss the physiology and emotion that are associated with her experiences of flow, Dana recalls a time where her students had again exceeded her expectations. "I was so excited by what I had seen and I couldn't think of anything else, and as you say, time had stopped or whatever [pauses] it was such a neat experience to see them producing such quality work and getting so into it."

The last situation associated with her physiological and emotional sensations of flow that Dana refers to are times when she witnesses the students being free and happy. She thinks of all the difficulties specific students experience and is moved when she observes them being released from their problems and experiencing joy. She elaborates on her feelings:

When I would feel the happiest sometimes a lot would be at our school dances. And I would just stand back and I would just observe and think, "This is incredible. Look at these kids," because there were so many of them with such troubled lives and crises and traumas and it's like they just forget it all when they're at a dance So when I see that, it brings me such joy to see them having so much fun and not worrying about all the other stuff that they might go home to after the dance.

Dana's Philosophy

Throughout the interview, Dana refers to beliefs she has regarding what is important in life. These beliefs are demonstrated in the way she organizes her work life and establishes goals for herself and her students. An overall theme that weaves through many of her descriptions is that of harmony and love. Dana recalls fondly a time when her students used the lyrics to a song to present a topic in language arts and it moved her greatly. The moment was one of flow and she states, "It was also the nature of the song that extended the experience about love and harmony among people, which is all a part of what moves me [pauses] to see love and harmony among people." This perspective on life reflects itself in all of Dana's classroom situations. She focusses on the social-emotional growth aspect before she does anything else, believing that without the cultivation of harmony and love, nothing else will grow.

By striving for these affective goals, Dana creates a base to begin to assist her students to achieve self actualization. Self-actualization is another of her philosophical beliefs and she searches for a different word to describe what she tries to accomplish in her teaching. "It's how it all happens. The focus on the social-emotional growth part first. You know, the affective part of education. And I thought what came to mind as what to call that is going for more and shining." When I ask Dana to explain what that looks like within a student's actions she depicts it in this way:

Seeing them show personal growth and taking risks and stretching and being rewarded, expressing and opening up. Because it's not just [pauses] it's individuals going for more and shining. It's groups of people getting into stuff even more than they normally would and shining and accepting each other and applauding each other. And it's me too, sort of going for more, going beyond just an average lesson from a text book.

Dana concludes with an interpretation of how her philosophies articulate with what she believes is important on the academic side of education. "And so I said [reading from her notes related to the first transcript] there seems to be in my teaching, a real focus on social and emotional growth or affective education, first and foremost, and then with that comes the opportunities for creativity and academic development."

Connecting—Creating an Environment

Dana's most recent assignment involves working with grade seven students in all core subject areas. When she was preparing for the new school year, she knew she had to build in extensive opportunities to facilitate connection within her classroom. Dana's philosophical view leads her to ensure that an essence of trust and openness is in place among her students before she begins work towards growth in any academic area. She elaborates on this reasoning and describes her thoughts at the first of the school year.

My first thought, before I even began the school year was, OK, I'm really going to have to connect with these kids. I'm going to spend the first two weeks just connecting with these kids so that they like me and I like them, and we feel comfortable and we feel safe with each other. So any time when I want to have a successful year, that's the first thing I think of [pauses] it's connecting with the kids. And developing relationships with them and developing relations among them as well, as a class. Things don't happen unless you create a really safe environment and kids feel they can take risks, and so definitely, my focus initially is on getting to know people and everybody liking each other and so on.

One of the ways Dana achieves this connection is by “listening and hearing what kids have to say.” She feels this is a key to creating relationships with her students. “In my opinion, if they feel you know and understand them, and accept them and you love them, then they feel safe.” The result of this trust and relationship has to do with Dana’s phrase “going beyond and shining.” She adds, “. . . and they’ll be able to take more risks in your class because they see you as making that possible and making it so that it’s going to be a comfortable situation even if at first the idea seems uncomfortable.” Creating risk-supporting environments for her students begins a circular pattern of risking and gaining confidence and risking again. Dana explains, “Then when they risk, they grow, they stretch themselves, and they shine. And that is going to lead them to do it more. If they have success with their risk, then they’ll take more risks.”

By feeling they can risk, students stretch and are rewarded with successes. During this process, if the ground work is in place and the environment is prepared properly Dana explains, her students will experience optimal moments as well. She defines these carefully orchestrated times in her teaching as “creating momentous opportunities.” As Dana is interpreting her descriptions from the first interview, she expands on this area.

This is the whole planning process, the stuff that has to go on before. Me coming up with the ideas, scenarios, choices, envisioning things before I actually take it into the classroom and put it to work and see it happen, so I’m just going to call this [pauses] because I’ve always wanted to take things to the max, so, for me, it’s creating momentous opportunities And this is having to do with the stuff that comes before the momentous opportunities, developing relationships, and making connections with the kids and creating that open, warm environment where they feel that they can grow and take risks and have those moments.

Dana adds one final perspective to the aspect of connecting and creating an environment to allow her students to shine. This perspective is that the overall relationship within her class is a familial one. She explains benefits of the familial relationship in her class.

Because it even goes beyond just having them feel safe and comfortable. When problems arise, if you have that family environment, that relationship in place, then conflicts are easier to deal with and so on because they learn how to apologize and they learn how to get along with each other and so on, because the respect is there.

The theme of relationship is one that represents the basis of Dana's teaching. She feels she must set the stage for the drama that will follow and achieves this through building relationships with her students. If this is not done then teaching is a struggle. The theme of connecting and creating a positive environment within her class is a goal in itself for Dana and allows her to achieve other goals related to academic and social-emotional growth. It is the underlying structure of all the other things that happen in her classroom.

Appreciation

A theme that seems to recur during the interview is that of appreciation by students. The important issue in each project or assignment for Dana is that students appreciate the optimal experiences they have been involved in and find them to be memorable. The theme of appreciation has little to do with Dana's being appreciated for her part in students' memorable moments but that they have shared an experience that will be with them all their lives. These kinds of appreciations by students create optimal or flow experiences for Dana. She recalls meeting a former student in a social situation and describes the conversation they had and her feelings that resulted.

And he remembered everything he did, and that just, you know, to me that says so much for a teacher. When you're only there for a month [as a student teacher] and it's years later, and they can remember the novel they read and they can remember the experiences that they've had in your classroom, and they still talk about it. And that is so exciting [pauses] to have people [pauses] like it's almost like their legacy, you know . People are still talking about that class that they had. So [pauses] again, the goose bumps came back and everything came back because I wanted so much [pauses] it was such a memorable moment for me. I wanted so much for him to remember it.

Having students come back and talk about their experiences in her classes is a situation that often results in moments of flow for Dana. She discusses with me the way that she can bring back feelings of the moment by sharing the experience with someone else. She talks about the same regaining of sensations when students come back and begin to talk about "momentous moments" they remember from her class. These discussions let her know how much her students have gained from her and the activities in her classes and the impact the situations she creates has on her students. The recalling of experiences and sharing of memories with her former students recreates moments of flow for her all over again. This show of appreciation allows Dana to believe, "I did create an unforgettable moment for them, as well as for me, and I did make a difference."

Creativity

In the initial phase of the interview series, I ask Dana to describe any experiences that are similar to the descriptive narratives used as examples of flow experiences. She believes she can relate to all of the paragraphs in some way but begins her explanation with a description of a previous experience where she had developed a lesson involving choices for her students. Dana believes that providing students with choices increases their opportunity to be creative. She elaborates on this

thinking. “I give kids choices, and I think that’s what brings in creativity as well, giving them lots of choices.” This belief in having options and the freedom to choose how to demonstrate learning is reflected in her actions and beliefs about her own creativity as well. Dana is a strong advocate for nurturing creativity in herself and her students, and believes that creativity is a large part of an individual’s growth. Dana refers to this nurturing of creativity in a number of ways throughout the interview including her descriptive phrases of “taking it to the max” and “going for more and shining.”

Dana feels that being creative is an important part of her teaching. It allows her to find ways to establish the environment needed for students to risk and grow. Without the freedom to be creative, she feels stifled and unfulfilled. Dana recalls a time where her principal had alleviated her fears about not being able to use her creativity within her classroom:

And so as soon as I heard that [be creative, do what you want] then, you know, I knew it was going to happen. If it’s somebody [a principal] who thinks learning mostly takes place when they see everybody sitting at their desk, you know, quietly doing their thing, then those kinds of moments [flow] are not going to happen. Not for you [the teacher]. I mean, if people, you know, think that singing in class is not learning, for example, or students get noisy and so on . . . and try to quash that side of it, then those moments won’t happen. So you need somebody who’s accepting of creative ways of learning and teaching.

Dana makes it very clear that being creative is an important part of her individuality and that creativity plays a key role in her opportunities to experience flow.

Autotelic Personality

As Dana describes her experiences as a teacher, she makes reference to herself and the way in which she perceives the world. She talks about being a “take it to the

max” kind of person. By this she means that everything she does, she does with a creative, enthusiastic, or energetic flair. She explains, “Well, I’ve always been [pauses] myself, in work that I’ve done, I’ve always wanted to take thing to the max, kind of thing.” She recalls situations as a student and teachers would have an expectation for an assignment. “Teachers would throw out things to me, opportunities for me to [pauses] you know, here’s an idea, run with it. That’s when I would see things as being an opportunity, to be incredible. This is my moment.” The kind of view Dana has regarding challenges and opportunities leads me to believe she has what Csikzentmihalyi (1990) calls an autotelic personality. She makes the best out of every situation by turning boring situations into exciting ones and tackling difficult situations with a vengeance. Dana finds a challenge in everything she does. She recalls having to do a presentation as a high school social studies student. The topic was mundane, but Dana made her presentation extraordinary by using costume, slides, and a taped interview. She remembers her thoughts at the time. “I chose the Boer War, and yah, I know, Boer War, this is going to be a bore [pauses] bor-ing. No, I’m going to try to make this interesting.” It was a difficult topic and a difficult situation but Dana recalls the challenge of the project and her feelings of achievement. The feelings she experienced during the presentation were the same as she describes when she is in flow in her classroom as a teacher, time flying by, goose bumps and being overwhelmed with joy.

Dana’s “take it to the max” personality is exemplified in her teaching. When asked what allows her to do the creative and special things for students in her classroom she elaborates in this way:

I think partly it's just me as a person. I think it's just that it's part of my personality. You could put me in any school, any place, and whatever the circumstances of the school, I'm going to take my class and I'm going to try to create something of it, create an environment where we can all be creative, and individuals, and express ourselves, you know, on a personal and academic level.

While interpreting her narrative description from the first interview, Dana expands on the theme of creativity, relating it to her “take it to the max” personality. “When I’m given an opportunity, I like to really turn it into something dynamic. That has to do with the whole planning thing as well . . . with how I plan things and how I envision them.”

Dana’s autotelic personality is expressed in the way she views the aspect of risking and shining. She discusses the benefits she receives from situations where her students take risks. “Well, I guess it’s the same for the kids as it would be for me. If they risk and shine, and I risk and shine, then I’ll continue to set up those opportunities and extend myself as a teacher, too.” Dana’s natural tendency is to look for ways to risk, for her students as well as for herself. When her students risk and are fulfilled, she has risked and has been fulfilled. Her personality naturally leads her, as a teacher, to seek new and different ways to do things or to approach challenging situations.

Enhancers of Opportunities of Flow

Because Dana perceives her opportunity to experience flow as something that is greatly associated to her personality, she identifies very few external things that enhance the opportunities of flow. She highlights two things. The first enhancer is time and her need of time to be able to create the lessons that she desires. “Time for people to put their energy into creating things rather than just spending time, like all

their time being spent just to get by [pauses] just to be a basic kind of teacher. You need time to be able to do the things that you want to do.” The second enhancer of opportunities for flow is human interaction. Dana knows that she needs to be able to share her experiences with other adults. Adult interaction is important for her to be able to maintain her positive energy. She expands, “Planning ideas with other teachers or just being able to share things and talk to people, that creates positive energy for me.” She continues, “I love people and when I sort of get shut off from people because we’re all too busy, then my energy level goes down.”

After some reflection on her initial ideas regarding enhancers, Dana adds and summarizes, “So support from adults, resources, interaction with other teachers, sharing and time.” These she considers to be her professional needs to be able to carry out her role as a teacher and to have opportunities of flow.

Detractors From the Opportunity for Flow

Because Dana’s personality plays a key role in her experiences of flow, she has few issues that she feels would be detractors from her opportunities for flow. The first detractor, however, is a critical one for her and that has to do with support for her creativity. To be stifled in the way she uses creativity in her classroom would be a detractor for her. She recalls a new teaching assignment and the part the principal played in her sense that she could be as creative as she wanted. In her terms, take it to the max.

This was my first year of teaching and so many things were buzzing through my head of all these things that I wanted to do and how I’d envisioned everything. And when he [the principal] took me into my classroom, I was just looking around and imagining so many things, so many activities . . . So I asked him, “Well, do you have a certain standard or things that you object to the way things

should be taught in a classroom?" And he said, "I trust that you will do a good job," and he added, "the sky's the limit, be creative, do what you want." And as soon as I heard that then, you know, I knew it was going to happen.

Dana's second detractor is mirrored in the issues she highlighted as enhancers.

For her, lack of time is a definite detractor. She believes planning for the most simple kinds of extras within a lesson takes time. An example she offers is when she creates a lesson where her students have choices or options to choose from:

That Brazil assignment, there were seven different choices, but it took time to think about all those things and how they would sort of plug into different kind of kids and appeal to them, and it took time typing it all up, you know, giving them the scenarios and so on. And, if I didn't have the time to do that, it might not have happened.

Related to the issue of time is the aspect of interacting with colleagues. Dana discusses the danger of not having time to meet with colleagues, and feels even more adamant about the significance of the culture established by the leader of the school. The principal must set the tone and encourage sharing and teaming with staff members. Without the sense that openness and collaboration is respected and expected especially by the principal, Dana's opportunities for flow are greatly reduced.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narratives

Dana's Interpretation

Dana takes time between interviews to review her thoughts and ideas expressed during the first interview. She is eager to add and expand on some of her original ideas. The addition of new or expanded ideas enriches her initial transcripts and allows her to feel that the description she has provided is more complete. The augmented transcript is then analyzed by Dana as she works through key ideas, creating groupings or categories of similar ideas. The groups or categories of similar

concepts she titles Creating a Family, Professional Needs, Creating Momentous Opportunities, Evolution of the Moment, Exceeding Expectations, Wow Experience, Fun, My Passion, Shining (Personal Growth), Sharing and Reflection, Appreciation, Caught or Lost in the Moment.

Creating a Family. This category of ideas, Creating a Family, is reflected in all the interviews and in Dana's mind is imperative to have in place to create the environment needed for individuals to be able to risk. Risk is something that she believes allows both herself and her students to grow. Some of her ideas within this category are expressed as follows (for the complete list see Appendix M):

1. Things don't happen unless you create a really safe environment and kids feel they can take risks.
2. We feel comfortable and we feel safe with each other and just to create a really warm environment.
3. I'm really going to have to connect with these kids.
4. I got the goose bumps because of the other kids, too,—just to see them so accepting.
5. I try to create an environment for those kinds of things to happen.

Dana feels that to have a sense of family within the relationships created in her classroom is to have a base from which to experience growth. She strives to build this environment in all her classes.

Professional Needs. The concepts within the category Dana titles Professional Needs are representative of the things she needs personally to feel successful in her

job. Although she considers herself to be enthusiastic, creative, and a self starter, Dana still believes there are some key supports that need to be in place for her to do her best work. The entire collection of these concepts is listed in Appendix M. To provide a brief view of the essence of this category, the following ideas are provided:

1. You need a principal who is going to support different kinds of things.
2. You also need time because these kinds of things that I like to do—they need time.
3. The other thing is human interaction.
4. Planning ideas with other teachers or just being able to share things and talk to people; that creates positive energy for me.
5. Support and resources; you need all those things to be able to do a good job and to plan things creatively.

Having support from her principal and colleagues is an important form of connection for Dana. Her principal's acceptance of her creative style allows her freedom to express herself as a teacher and to create positive growth environments for her students. Having time to plan her lessons and then to have individuals on staff that she can interact with regarding what she is planning are two other critical aspects that Dana considers to be professional needs. This category called Professional Needs contains the concepts that have potential to enhance her opportunity for optimal moments of flow in her teaching.

Creating Momentous Opportunities. Dana describes momentous opportunities as those that have potential to become extraordinary. For her, every challenge has the potential to result in a remarkable solution or outcome, and she believes her students

deserve the opportunity to take on challenges and have momentous experiences as well. Within the category of Creating Momentous Opportunities, Dana relates many different aspects of this overall concept. Following are some of the ideas (for a complete list see Appendix M):

1. I would see things as being an opportunity to be incredible. This is my moment.
2. An opportunity for them to be creative and let themselves shine through.
3. It's the way things were set up in the first place.

Dana believes that to create opportunities for her students to have momentous experiences allows her to have momentous experiences as well. It begins with the planning and Dana explains, "When I plan these things I have those moments [flow], even just in thinking about them, envisioning them." From this point, Dana strives to have the kinds of lessons that will be growth enhancing and memorable for both her and her students.

Evolution of the Moment. In describing how the moment of flow starts for her, Dana pulls all her ideas together and titles them Evolution of the Moment. Within this category the phrases depict how the flow experience starts for her. What Dana finds as she discusses the ideas within this category is that the basis of her optimal experiences is related to her planning for the lesson and in the students' reactions to her challenges within the assignments. Dana describes the evolving situations as the flow experiences begin and end. She phrases the development of the experiences in the following way:

1. They [the students] feel that this is an opportunity for them to do something they've always wanted to do.
2. To see other kids being moved by it [another students' work presentations] then that's when it starts for me.
3. You kind of catch your breath and go, "OK, who's next?"
4. It just kind of peaks there and then things go back to normal.
5. Then it sort of leaves you until you remember it again.

The initiation of flow always relates to Dana's work with her students and their accomplishments and growth. It can be reincarnated, however, when she thinks back to the incident or shares the situation with another person. The experience of flow has a specific beginning, a midpoint, and an end. Sometimes it seems to wane or go into a holding pattern when she has to attend to the logistics of a lesson or to direct students within a presentation. After this small interruption she can easily tap back into the feelings as she observes students' work or recognizes growth in a specific student. For a more complete picture of the ideas in this category see Appendix M.

Exceeding Expectations. A great deal of Dana's description of her experiences of flow relates to what initiates the experience. She speaks often of setting an expectation and having her students exceed it as the most prominent enhancer of flow experiences for her. The expectation is well-thought-out which is part of the planning that Dana believes is a critical component the entire picture. The students then take the expectation beyond what Dana has anticipated. Some of her descriptive phrases within this category are as follows (for the entire list see Appendix M):

1. I think it [flow] starts with an expectation but not really a high expectation.

2. The kids do open up and the kids do run with it and are totally creative.
3. I was sitting there, and I was thinking “I can’t believe this. This is remarkable.”
4. They had just exceeded my expectations and more, and they were so into it, and they had done such a great job.
5. It was such a neat experience to see them producing such quality work and getting so into it.

Dana’s perspective is that exceeding of expectations is representative of student growth. Recognizing that a student has achieved personal growth and has demonstrated it in an exceptional and often times personal way is related to her experiences of flow.

Wow Experience. Dana relates easily to her students. Part of this relationship is associated with to her youthful manner of speaking. She is energetic and expressive in her use of vocabulary. One of the descriptors she utilized frequently throughout the interviews is the word Wow. Using it in the title of this category allows Dana to identify the experiences that she would consider extraordinary or optimal within her teaching. These phrases describe and refer to the flow experiences that Dana has during her teaching. Some examples of these phrases are provided (for a complete list see Appendix M):

1. I was so excited by what I had seen and I couldn’t think of anything else.
2. It was just one of those moments where I just thought, “Wow!”
3. I feel so happy for them that I actually, you know, my eyes fill up and I feel warm inside.

Using the word “wow” as she does throughout the interviews, gives the impression that flow experiences for Dana are both emotional and physiologically moving. She talks about tears of joy that accompany moments of affective experiences with her students. These moments of flow are arresting in their impact, and Dana refers to them often when discussing what makes teaching rewarding and fulfilling for her.

Fun. As we are discussing her descriptions of what is important to have in place to enhance the experiences of flow, Dana realizes that although she has not specifically mentioned it, the aspect of fun is a significant aspect of her teaching. She wants to add the idea of humor to all the other phrases that seem to be collecting together. She titles this category simply, Fun. Within it she includes these ideas:

1. Time had stopped (when the class was laughing).
2. Just seeing them all connect so much and have so much fun and be active.
3. When I see that, it brings me such joy to see them having so much fun.

Dana believes and expresses during the interviews that laughter and fun are ways for students to let down their guard and to be able to connect with her and each other. Laughter and enjoyment is one component of Dana’s teaching that lends itself to creating flow moments for her students as well as herself. For the complete list of Dana’s ideas in this category, see Appendix M.

My Passion. Although not a large category, Dana considers her personal outlook on life to be critical to all that she is and does. She calls this category My Passion. The most descriptive phrase within the category and the only one that is

needed to express this theme is the one related to Dana's commitment to doing her best (for the complete list see Appendix M). She affirms in this way:

You could put me in any school, any place, and whatever the circumstance of the school, I'm going to take my class and I'm going to try to create something of it, create an environment where we can all be creative and individuals and express ourselves.

Shining (Personal Growth). In between interviews, Dana reflects upon her thoughts and ideas from the first interview. She decides that she needs a word to describe what she considers the unique personal growth that occurs for her students and for her. She chooses the word Shining, the title for the category of phrases expressing her thoughts regarding the importance of personal growth. Some of the ideas are expressed in the following phrases:

1. Being able to stretch ourselves and grow ourselves with that lesson.
2. The joy in seeing the kids shine.

One of the most poignant descriptions of shining and Dana's reaction to it is expressed in this excerpt referring to a student whom Dana had struggled to connect with for weeks.

I remember the first time that she actually raised her hand and did this incredible speech. And so I got goose bumps and my eyes filled up, because I just thought, "Wow!" you know. That shows such growth for that girl.

This category, Dana explains, is associated with the expectations she sets for her students and their ability to exceed these expectations. She continues to discuss how the category of Shining or personal growth provides a flexible standard from which she determines her students' achievements. When they shine they do so according to his or her own abilities and achievements. Each student is assessed according to their

individual efforts and accomplishments. When the students accomplish and grow, Dana's sensations and experiences of flow are enhanced. For the complete list of phrases within the category, see Appendix M.

Sharing and Reflection. The flow experience and all its sensations can be reexperienced when Dana thinks about the specific incident related to the flow experience and when she describes the experience to another person. The ideas and phrases in this category refer to what happens for Dana when she reflects on the specific experiences and shares them with others. These ideas are represented by the following phrases:

1. You have to share it [the moment] with someone else, too, and when you share it [the experience] again, the feelings are all there.
2. But then it comes up again when you reflect on it, like at the end of the day when you go home and you talk to somebody and you say, "You should have seen this."

As Dana talks and reflects on this category, she isolates one phrase that expresses an important idea related to her fulfillment as a teacher. It describes how she feels when she tells someone about extraordinary occurrences within her classroom. It is the simple and youthfully exuberant phrase of, "Wow! This is why I became a teacher."

Appreciation. The creation of this category reflects Dana's personal need for feedback from students in the form of appreciation. Not appreciation toward her work as a teacher, but appreciation for the activities and efforts students recall from their

classes. When students remember and appreciate their accomplishments in her class, Dana is able to regain many of the same sensations that she experienced at the time of the student accomplishment. She wants her students to have the same appreciation for what happened in the class as she does and when they do, and express that appreciation to her, she steps back in time to that moment and feels the rush of flow all over again. The following phrases express this theme:

1. That's another memorable moment, running into him and having him restate everything that he had done in my class to show me, "Wow, you really did learn something."

2. The goose bumps came back and everything came back because I wanted so much for him to remember it and when he did, it was all right there. (For the complete list of phrases see Appendix M.)

Dana explains that much of her fulfillment in teaching and the ability for her to experience optimal moments (flow) has to do with making a difference for her students. This is difficult to determine but is made easier when former students return to her and express their appreciation for what they had accomplished in her class.

Caught or Lost in the Moment. This final category pulls together the aspect of losing oneself and the passage of time while experiencing flow. Dana describes in other categories the sensations of tears of joy and goose bumps associated with optimal experiences during her teaching. This category draws together the aspect of time and space during flow and contains the following three ideas:

1. As soon as I got into that presentation, then that was it. I forgot about everything.

2. You're sort of lost for that moment.
3. I was so into what I was going to do. I didn't care what just happened 5 minutes before.

As Dana discusses the ideas within this category, she refers to times in her career as a student and as a teacher when time lost its meaning. She explains that she becomes so involved in what she is doing that before she knows it time has flown by. She also recalls times when even though she is preoccupied with concerns before the involvement in a lesson or presentation, she is able to completely clear her mind of thoughts other than what she is concentrating on at the moment. This intense focussing is associated with her experiences of flow.

Discussion of the Categories

At the conclusion of the inductive process where Dana groups, categorizes, and labels her key ideas related to flow, I ask her if there is one group that is critical to have in place for her to be able to experience optimal moments (flow) in her teaching. She responds by describing and ordering the most important categories of ideas. The critical theme is the one she titles My Passion. Dana believes that her personality precedes all other aspects associated with moments of flow. She explains this view.

I think these three things have to be in place: professional needs, creating a family environment, but I guess even before creating a family environment, my passion for teaching and what makes me the kind of teacher I am, and my personality precedes everything. I think it [her experiences of flow] has a lot to do with the kind of person I am so, because the kind of person I am, and what kind of people I want people to be, if I have a say in the matter, those beliefs have to do with why I create the family, and why I create momentous opportunities, and why I want people to shine, and so on. So those are personal beliefs.

As Dana continues explaining how all the categories she has created mesh together, she returns to the three categories that have to exist before any other grouping can develop. These are her personal passion and beliefs in life and teaching, her professional needs, and creating the family environment. If these are in place the next four themes or groups can fall into place. The four themes are creating momentous opportunities, fun, exceeding expectations, and shining. Dana explains how the ideas fit together.

Right, these are the things [fun, exceeding expectations, shining] that happen after you create the moment [of opportunity] and when these things [fun, exceeding expectations, shining] happen, that's when this [flow] happens. You're kind of lost in the moment. You have the "wow" experience. You go through the evolution of the moment, and then after that, you share these moments with other people and reflect, and then after that, hopefully, you are given some feedback and feel appreciated.

When I ask for some final thoughts about unanticipated discoveries or general perceptions about the interview process, Dana replies that it has been an interesting exercise for her and has given her the opportunity to think deeply about herself as a person and as a teacher. She concludes in this way:

It's the kind of thing that I think I've always believed in but I don't consciously think about it or talk about it enough maybe. There are certain moments in your life when you do reflect on all these things and why you teach and how you teach and how you feel about yourself as a teacher, but not usually until you're given an opportunity to think about it, reflect on it, do you realize that all these things are there, and they're all important. I was thinking about, "Well, what are some comments, things that keep coming up for me?" And it's interesting to be able to sequentially sum it all up into a big picture.

My Interpretation as the Researcher

Benefiting from Dana's meticulous interpretation of the descriptions from her own transcripts and from the additional comments made while she groups and

analyzes her ideas, I offer my own interpretation of Dana's description of her experiences of flow. This interpretation will compare the experiences described by Dana with Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) frame of reference created from studies of experiences of individuals in other walks of life.

Core characteristics of flow. The main or core characteristics of flow identified by Csikszentmihalyi are a balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled, a structure with clear goals, and immediate and relevant feedback. The secondary more internal characteristics of flow are focused concentration, a merging of activity and awareness, control of the activity by the persons involved, and a distorted perception of time.

The balance of challenge and skills. This characteristic is evident in Dana's descriptions of her experiences. It takes the form of Dana controlling her own creativity, and the role that creativity plays in allowing her to feel fulfilled and to experience moments of flow. For Dana, the challenge comes in creating and planning lessons that are interesting and appropriate for all of her students. This is a standard that Dana places upon herself. She feels it is necessary and desirable to work with students in a way that addresses their individual needs and that appeals to them. She creates lessons and assignments that offer choices to her students. The availability of choices allows Dana's students to excel or exceed her expectations. This she calls shining. The challenge for Dana is to have all her students and herself shine or achieve personal growth.

A second way that Dana is challenged and matches the challenge with her skill is by connecting with her students. She feels it is imperative for her to build relationships with and among her students. Dana calls this challenge, “creating a family environment.” In her perception, neither she nor her students can feel safe to risk and grow without the strong relationship in place that supports connection and relationship. Dana controls and orchestrates this challenge by planning specific activities and easing students into risk taking situations.

A third way Dana is challenged and matches the challenge with her skills relates to the way in which she chooses to embrace as well as initiate change within her teaching. She voluntarily and purposefully makes changes in both her teaching style and location. She desires change as is evidenced in her acceptance of various tasks and roles within her school. It is also reflected in the way she seeks new strategies and professional development to assist her to work with her students. This year Dana requested a transfer to a different school, which represents a significant emotional upheaval for most individuals. Dana, however, sees it as an opportunity to work with different kinds of students and different staff members.

A great deal of Dana’s match of challenge and skill is controlled by her. She is autotelic in personality, allowing her to find the positive in most situations. She strives to excel and achieve in her teaching. She refers to this as, “taking things to the max.” The autotelic personality tends to seek challenges by becoming involved in new and different situations or by making the old situation more complex, complete, or sophisticated. The autotelic aspect of Dana’s personality is demonstrated every time she plans a unique lesson or creates choices within assignments. By doing this,

Dana increases the odds of risk for herself. She is not content to spend time just getting by. She feels that to grow she must risk and that when she risks, her students benefit and grow as well.

Structure with clear goals. Within all public school settings, there are predetermined structures that are commonplace to the tradition of schooling and education. Criterion for assessment, assessment strategies, standards set by boards of education, time lines, and set curriculum are examples of predetermined structures. These structures are firmly in place and are accepted as a part of the public education system. In addition to these frames, Dana has her own structure or blueprint that outlines what she wants to do and what she wants to accomplish.

The first glimpse of Dana's structure is that she must be able to use her creativity to plan her lessons and work with her students. Her goal associated with this concept is to use what she knows about each student to create the kinds of lessons and choices within those lessons that meet each student's needs.

As we continue to sort through the structure that Dana creates for herself in her teaching it becomes evident that part of the self-induced structure has to do with creating a safe environment for her students to risk. An important goal for Dana is to have a family-like environment within her classes. By achieving this goal, Dana is able to move on to the next goal of creating opportunity for students to shine or excel.

This entire web of structures and goals is driven by one critical aspect of Dana's skill as a teacher. When asked what starts the situations where she experiences flow, she replies simply, "I think it starts with an expectation."

Immediate and relevant feedback. One of the most immediate and powerful enhancers of the conditions that result in flow for Dana has to do with her observing reactions from her students. She talks of tears coming to her eyes after observing students being accepting of one another. She discusses the sensation of goose bumps following student demonstrations of learning and accomplishment. She also explains how having a student recall extraordinary situations from classes gone by creates within her sensations of excitement, wonder, and fulfillment that are replicas of the sensations she experiences when the situations are actually occurring. All of these reactions that Dana describes are associated with her experiences of flow and are directly related to the relevant feedback she receives from her students. Some of the feedback comes in the form of observations of student performance. Some of the feedback comes from student discussions where she hears what they think and feel about the lessons, activities, and projects they experience in Dana's class.

The characteristic of relevant feedback as related to flow begins with Dana envisioning what will happen within a lesson or activity. It is then brought to fruition by the feedback she receives in the form of actual observations of students or listening to students' accounts of their experiences in her classes. It is interesting to note that feedback from students is extremely important as a part of Dana's perception of whether she has achieved her goals. At no time, however, does she talk about feedback from administrators regarding her performance as being a significant aspect of her experiences of flow.

Focused concentration. This characteristic of flow is evidenced in Dana's tendency to become fully absorbed in the task at hand. She recalls situations where she has had other concerns on her mind before becoming active in a presentation or lesson. As soon as she begins to work within the presentation or lesson, the other thoughts or concerns are wiped away for the time being. She becomes one with the activity. Dana describes a situation that is typical of what occurs for her when she is experiencing flow. "I was so into what I was going to do. I didn't care what had just happened 5 minutes before. As soon as I got into that presentation, then that was it. I forgot about everything." In clarifying some of her descriptions from the previous transcripts, Dana reflects, "It has to do with the moment and the experience, but it's sort of the distancing, being lost, forgetting about all else except what's going on at that time." She continues, "It's that whole idea of being completely caught up into it. Into it and lost. You know, for just a moment, I was lost in time. But I don't know how to [pauses] Would it be unconsciousness?" Dana struggles for the right words to explain her sensation of merging with the activity. She decides the phrase that best describes the merging of activity and awareness should be "caught up in the moment."

Activity under the person's control. Dana mentions in the early stages of the interview series that part of what enhances the conditions of flow for her is being meticulously prepared for each lesson. This kind of preparation allows her to have greater control over what occurs within the classroom and within her lesson. She agrees that teaching is a situation of dealing with the unknown and the unexpected. Working with individuals who are all different and unique in their strengths and areas of need presents its own set of problems. For Dana, however, having control over her

part of the lesson and being ready for the unexpected gives her a sense of direction and influence over the tasks and activities at hand.

Although there are always aspects of a situation that cannot be controlled, Dana believes that she is in control within her world of teaching. She has an outlook that is efficacious regarding what she can do in teaching. In other words she has a belief in herself that she can under most circumstances, create a positive learning situation for her students. She makes a very bold and convincing statement when she decides:

You could put me in any school, any place, and whatever the circumstance of the school, I'm going to take my class and I'm going to try to create something of it, create an environment where we can all be creative and individuals and express ourselves . . . on a personal and academic level.

For Dana, orchestrating the events, actions, and reactions within her lessons is what teaching is all about. When she is exercising her control over various situations, and influencing the outcomes, she enhances the conditions that are associated with her experiences of flow.

Distorted perception of time. At the initial stages of the interview process, Dana listens to three narrative paragraphs that describes other people's experiences of flow. When asked to describe similar experiences within her teaching, she states that she can relate to the first narrative which refers to forgetting about time.

The basis for this distorted perception of time has to do with Dana's being totally involved in the situation. One of the ways she suggests that both she and her students are able to achieve this total involvement is when there is laughter and humor. She explains, "When you get caught up in a fun, humorous moment, time does stop. It's almost like you forget that you're in school." Dana continues, "So

when you have those moments [flow], it's hard to believe that you're in a classroom, and you're teaching, and the kids are learning, and yet you're killing yourself laughing."

Dana offers humorous moments, as an example of when the perception of time is distorted. These moments represent situations where those involved are totally engrossed in the action taking place at that time. Individuals are not thinking of other things and are focused on the event or action, which could happen in either a humorous or serious situation. Dana refers to this situation as being, "lost for that moment."

Summary of the My Interpretation

Taking the core and secondary characteristics of flow into consideration it is clear that Dana demonstrates each characteristic in a way unique to her. The descriptions and interpretations of these experiences, although specific to her as an individual, are similar in essence to the experiences of flow described by participants in other studies.

She balances the challenges of her job with her skills as a teacher by utilizing new strategies and trying new approaches. She controls this balance by staying current and knowledgeable about the needs of her students. Dana's personality is such that she needs to feel challenged, and she maintains that subtle balance between challenge and skill by striving to achieve her best, no matter what the boundaries. She needs to feel creative and dynamic and works to have this present in her teaching.

The second core characteristic of working within a structure that has clear goals is found to be very strong in Dana's situation. She states adamantly that the starting point for her fulfillment as a teacher is the expectations she holds for both herself and

her students. She molds her own boundaries or guidelines beyond that which is prescribed by the district board. She has goals that must be achieved in order for her to be fulfilled and to experience the phenomenon of flow. One of the key expectations Dana has is that she will build a strong family environment within her classes that will allow her and her students to risk and grow.

The third core characteristic that is evident in Dana's descriptions is feedback. This aspect of flow takes the form of direct observations of her students and listening to what they tell her about their experiences in her classes. Both these types of feedback allow Dana to know how well she is meeting her needs and the needs of her students.

The secondary characteristics of flow, although less easily determined by an observer, are experienced completely by Dana during moments of flow while teaching. She is totally absorbed and focused. She loses herself in the moment and becomes one with the activity and the actions of her students. She consciously controls or orchestrates the phases within her lessons, directing and adjusting the actions of both herself and her students, bringing the outcome closer to what she desires. The last of the secondary characteristics referred to as having a distorted perception is evidenced in Dana's discussions and descriptions of being totally absorbed in her activities with her students. These episodes of involvement where she and her students lose track of time or have time seem to stop are most prevalent in situations where powerful emotion is a product of the activity. Activities that produce laughter, concern, or sadness are identified by Dana as being moments of flow where the perception of time is distorted.

One final observation must be made about Dana as an individual and the impact her personality has on her experiences of flow. I believe the basis for the power of her experiences of flow and the fulfillment she feels in her work as a teacher, are directly related to her personality. She has an autotelic personality that is evident whenever she undertakes a challenge. She likes to “take things to the max” no matter what the obstacles or limitations are that she must face. Dana mentions often throughout the interview series that she is one who does not feel fulfilled if she has not gone the extra distance in her efforts. She exclaims, “When I’m given an opportunity, I like to really turn it into something dynamic and having that side to me [to take things to the max], when I see that side in kids, it brings back all those [flow] feelings.” This aspect of her personality allows her to look for the good in most situations and people. She becomes excited, not frightened in the face of challenge. When situations seem easy to deal with, Dana searches for ways to make them intricate and more complex thus more growth producing for her students and herself.

Nick

Nick has been teaching for more than 20 years. He has had the opportunity to try different roles within his district and has now taken an assignment at a small junior high where his responsibilities are broad and varied. Before becoming a teacher Nick’s career plans were very different and it wasn’t until he actually started work in his previous profession as a biologist that he realized that he had made a mistake in his choice of professions. Having had some exposure to working with youngsters as a coach, Nick recognized that he missed that interaction in his present professional assignments as a biologist. As he sat alone on a northern check line “netting fish at

40 degrees below zero” he thought, “I’d much rather be in a classroom working with kids.” Nick explains his decision to return to university to become a teacher:

What you got from it [his job as biologist] [pauses] you never got to see a discovery. You could feel it for yourself, but you never saw the discovery in someone else’s face. You never saw the “Wow, I did it!” You never saw the joy in others. I mean, you could see the joy in yourself. You could feel happy if you discovered something, but generally in the job that I was doing . . . there was no sense of accomplishment which can come from working with individual kids in a classroom.

This first sliver of explanation regarding Nick’s perspective of the world is consistent with his thoughts throughout the interview series. He thrives on achievement which plays itself out in the successes he facilitates for children in his classes.

Nick’s experiences within his district have included working with adults and children. He is now striving to balance a position that involves teaching junior high science, coordinating the library resources, conducting staff development, and supporting the principal as a curriculum coordinator. He feels very stretched and his fatigue is evident in the first interview. I ask Nick to tell me about his career as a teacher, and we begin the interview series with him describing the choices and paths taken throughout his teaching career.

Nick began teaching with the same district that he is with presently and has had the opportunity to experience numerous roles and responsibilities over the years. We talk about movement within his career and Nick shares his view of the way in which changing schools or roles impacts teachers. It’s been 6 ½ years since Nick has been in a school. Although he is someone who enjoys change, he is finding that moving to a different place of work means having to establish himself all over again. “You recognize again . . . that you actually have to have kids learn what it is that you

expect of them and . . . in a sense, what you expect of them, and what they expect of you.” He believes that for some people, the longer they stay in one place the more frightening change becomes. He also believes that people who do not move from school to school have an advantage in that they maintain a reputation of being a certain way and of having certain expectations of students. The reputation carries over from year to year. Nick has found this year, his first year at a new school, that he must rebuild and emphasize his expectations of his students. He must get to know them and they must get to know him. Becoming familiar with each other and understanding each other’s expectations are two concepts that form the crux of success for Nick in the classroom.

Nick’s description of his career history allows me to understand better his background and perspectives on work. As the interview progresses I ask him to describe any experiences he may have had that are similar to experiences of flow as reported in other studies. I read to him three narrative paragraphs depicting experiences of flow. He listens and reflects. He then begins his description and comparison by asking if he can add a sensation from his own experiences, the feeling of euphoria. From this point the interview is rich and full of very deep and uniquely personal accounts and stories. Following is the description of Nick’s experiences of flow and the meaning he makes of these experiences.

Nick’s Description of His Experiences and Thoughts

Philosophies and Beliefs

Lifelong learning. Early in the discussion Nick states the first of a number of heart-felt beliefs that make up his personal philosophy of teaching and life. We are

discussing his previous role as a staff developer and he states, “learning is something you do every time you open your mouth, every time you breathe air, every time you see anything [pauses] [the ideal is] that you should be a lifelong learner.” Nick relates this philosophy to his theory of teachers and change and explains that for many people who have become comfortable in one school, change is very frightening.

Healthy and ready for the world. A second philosophy Nick maintains allows him to make a comparison of teaching and surgery. He discusses the goals or philosophies of a surgeon as being similar to his own.

His [the surgeon’s goal] is to send that person out healthy. Mine is to send that person out healthy, too, to send my learner out into the world so that they can be independent and inter-dependent, so they’re not reliant on others, so they can help others, so they can have others help them.

He finalizes this view by saying, “You see, my optimal experience is knowing that when one kid leaves my classroom, they’re ready for the next step in the world.”

Win/win. As we continue talking about Nick’s beliefs, he reflects on a third philosophy involving the aspect of competition and teaching, and the essence of win/win versus win/lose. To explain his perspective he goes back in time to when his father first taught him to play cards.

We played crib. He taught me how to play bridge when I was about eight, and even when we started to play crib, he’d let me win, he’d let me win, he’d let me win, and I didn’t like that. Finally, I started beating him, and I didn’t like winning, so I’d let him win, because it wasn’t as much fun beating him all the time. I didn’t enjoy that.

For Nick, optimal moments or flow in teaching is similar to winning an athletic event where all players are working together to accomplish a goal. “It’s like winning a competitive event, except better, because you beat somebody when you win at a

competitive event. In this case, everybody wins, because you feel it [success and flow] and they [students] feel it.” He refers to Covey’s (1991) win/win principle and states that the feeling and situation of teacher and student working together and achieving is “so incredible.” The win/lose situation is not as satisfying for him as the win/win scenario where “the feeling is joy because it’s unencumbered by competition. You walk away from it [pauses] ‘Gee that was great.’”

Striving for perfection. One of the most stringent philosophies Nick possesses is the one that creates the personal standards by which he conducts his life. He believes that to be involved with something or to complete something means that you do it to the very best of your ability, to perfection. He is painstakingly particular about how he does his job. At this specific time in his professional life, Nick is feeling some frustration with his role and responsibilities at school. He places great emphasis on doing the best job he can, no matter what the circumstances. In his present situation he is finding it difficult to feel satisfied with the work he is doing. He is responsible for a variety of roles within his school in addition to teaching. Others tell him he is doing a good job, but it is not good enough for Nick. The advice from others leaves him feeling exasperated. “And the problem being . . . ‘Ease off, you don’t have to be the best teacher in the world,’ . . . I can’t be any other teacher but somebody who feels like he’s giving his best.” This situation creates difficulties for Nick. He knows what he needs in order to feel fulfilled and satisfied in teaching. He talks about the differences between the goals of a teacher who wants simply to cover the curriculum and himself who, in addition to that, needs to be the best teacher he can be. “What I mean is that if you don’t match your emotional needs

with your intellectual beliefs, you'll never reach that sense of personal quality of life in the profession. These two [emotional needs and intellectual beliefs] really need to be matched."

With a better understanding of the way Nick conducts his life philosophically, I encourage him to speak about other aspects of his life, his professional accounts, his frustrations, his celebrations, and his experiences with the phenomenon of flow.

Goals

Assisting students to grow. Throughout the interview series, Nick refers often to the kinds of results he strives to achieve with his students. He believes that students will achieve certain results on their own and that one of his goals is to assist them to go even farther. He explains, "It's not when kids go that extra distance where they would have gone on their own, it's when you truly see what you've done to help them grow." He adds, "Nobody pounds information into kids' heads. You just put them into the position to learn and to get an aha, and you raise their expectations for themselves." When relating the goal of helping students to grow and experiences of flow, Nick uses the word joy to describe the feeling. He states "And that's a joy. It's finding kids seeing, 'Gee, I can do that where I didn't think I could do that before, where I didn't even believe it was something within the realm of possibility.' And that's really beneficial."

Getting students to care. In a more specific way, Nick describes a goal he has that was initiated his first year of teaching 13 years ago. He was working with a group of students who were absolutely unmotivated to write or express themselves.

Nothing he tried was making any difference with them. It was a time when he was still “establishing who Nick Latin was with these kids.” He finally decided to try an affective approach to catch their attention. He explains,

I couldn't get them to write. I couldn't get them to express themselves. And so I realized I had to hook their emotions in a huge way in something that really mattered. I couldn't give them something that didn't matter. I had to give them something that really mattered. And I gave them something that mattered, and I got pieces of writing that were the most phenomenal in the world from them. And I realized that I had to hook their feelings; they had to care. They had to care to begin to learn, to learn to the level that I knew they could.

Providing real learning situations. Throughout the interview series Nick refers to his concern for making situations real for his students. He was able to achieve this, in the specific situation he described to me, by creating a role play situation for them. He placed the students in a scenario where they experienced what it was like to lose valuable possessions such as their heritage and culture. Nick role played with them and hooked into their emotions. From that point on he has felt that getting students to care and feel strongly about what they are learning is a key to having them take responsibility for their own learning. Without the aspect of having students take responsibility for their own learning, Nick feels the fulfillment that he needs in order to experience moments of flow is missing.

Believing in self as learner. Related to this goal is a belief that students must understand how much they can learn and the importance of believing in themselves. To explain further, Nick speaks of a student he is presently working with who has been diagnosed as attention deficit. The boy was tested for autism as a young child and is now in Nick's science class. Nick describes the boy and his progress.

He's got terrible fine motor control and yet this is a kid who is totally eager to learn. And his parents are saying, you know, "we're just seeing such a difference in this kid this year." He loves it; he loves the class, he loves doing science, and he's the same [pauses] he's one of the joys for me. He makes it worthwhile going to school because here's a kid who is a pest. He's not going to be a scientist, but he's going to be a lot more than people ever gave him credit for in the past. He's a kid who's recognizing how much he can do, not how little he can do. A lot of education points out to kids how little they can do, and I think what my goal is always, is to point out to them how much there is to learn and how well they can do if they just believe in themselves.

Being prepared for the unknown. To be able to meet all the challenges of teaching, Nick feels he must plan for any eventualities that may occur. This represents another of his goals, that of being prepared for unforeseen occurrences. To achieve this goal, he must know his subject and his students well. He compares his job to that of a surgeon where the surgeon knows his or her discipline perfectly yet must be ready for the differences among his or her patients. Nick perceives this to be similar to the way he approaches his job of teaching and concludes, "It's not in the routine that he [the surgeon] finds his joy. I suspect it's in the things that aren't routine." He adds, "As a planner, I plan for the eventualities, but I know that I'm not going to have planned for every eventuality. I look at the big picture, 'What am I trying to accomplish?'"

Teaching for discovery. As we continue through the interview series, Nick continues to identify his goals. Numerous times he refers to the importance of assisting students to experience an "aha." An aha represents the discoveries that, as a biologist, Nick felt was lacking in his work. An aha occurs when an individual suddenly makes all the intellectual connections needed to arrive at an understanding of a concept. He explains, "I teach for ahas. You recognize that you don't get them

every day, but that's what the planning's about." Nick adds, "You don't know what that aha is going to look like. You don't know how they're going to make that aha. You just know that that's what you're working for, this huge leap."

Becoming the invisible teacher. Another of Nick's goals would seem to be an unusual one. He discusses his goal of making his role of teacher in the classroom a redundant one. As we talk more about this goal, Nick clarifies:

One of the standards of teaching is you teach yourself out of a job . . . the truth is that's exactly what I would hope to do . . . make myself redundant in the classroom because what I really want to give those kids is a belief in self as learners.

Another way of explaining this goal is that Nick wants to become invisible in the classroom. By this he means that he has planned for the learning so well that the students do not feel his presence. He knows "where they're going with a question. Where they're going with an activity . . . what they want to discover." The students are learning and he is guiding them but the guidance is so skillful and subtle that it is unfelt and unseen by the students. Through this invisible teaching, students begin to experience confidence and belief in self.

Working together to win. Nick has already spoken about competition and refers to it again in his reference to a seventh goal. The goal of establishing a familial environment within his classroom is critical for Nick's fulfillment in teaching. The goal of creating an environment where everyone is striving to accomplish the same things and not competing with or beating others to do so is one that Nick believes adds to the joy of teaching. He detests the situation of win/lose. In the situation of win/lose, the victory is unfulfilling. The ultimate goal in Nick's classes is the

achievement of a sense of “we’re all working towards the same thing.” The win/win situation is one that Nick feels he can achieve if he is able to create an essence of striving for something together.

Finding personal joy and delight in teaching. Nick concludes that one of his key goals is “to draw personal delight in teaching.” To do this the other goals must be in place. He strives to assist his students to (a) grow academically and socially, (b) develop a sense of caring about their learning, (c) believe in self as a learner, (d) prepare for the unknown, and (e) work together to win. The goals involving himself require that he (a) teach for discovery, (b) become an invisible teacher, and (c) work together with his students to win. When able to achieve these goals, Nick finds joy and personal delight in teaching. As the process of moving toward each of these goals continues, Nick has moments of euphoria or flow. Each little increment of progress represents a type of achievement and a sense of fulfillment for him.

Challenges

Giving his best. As I look closely at what Nick describes as challenges I see that they parallel many of his philosophies and goals. One of the challenges he first mentions is continuing to be a teacher “who feels like he’s giving his best.” When situations present challenges that seem insurmountable, some teachers might give up. Nick, however, takes a different approach. “So instead of easing off, which I suspect some people would do, what you do is you go and work harder to try to find the right combination of things [to assist students].”

Lifelong learning. Another of his challenges is to be a lifelong learner. He describes his feelings about the options individuals have when faced with obstacles to overcome.

. . . and that teaching is learning and sometimes you get a little staid and it takes a real good wake-up call to bring you out of that. And there's a lot of ways you can deal with that [pauses] you can quit; you can close down or you can fight like hell to make yourself someone who can meet and help those kids meet their needs.

Student ownership and caring in learning. A third challenge involves assisting students to take ownership of their own learning. Nick recalls again the incident where he worked with a group of painfully unmotivated students. His challenge in this situation was to “hook their emotions in a big way,” in order to create a situation where caring about what they were doing would lead to success. “They had to care to begin to learn, to learn to the level that I knew they could. That’s the time, that’s the one [experience of flow] that I think is most significant.”

Student belief in self and confidence. Following closely on the heels of caring and ownership of learning, is the challenge of assisting students to believe in themselves as learners. Nick’s personal challenge involves orchestrating the learning so that students can be successful and begin to believe in themselves. He has a very visible approach at first, and as his students become more skilled in the learning process, he becomes what he calls invisible. He supports them just enough to give them confidence and to coax them to begin discovering on their own. He elaborates,

Science isn’t important in life, language arts isn’t important and social studies isn’t important. All those things are not by themselves important, but all those things are important in having the kids recognize what they can really do, what they can really be as learners and as people. The rest of it, the facts, mean very

little except in the way they [students] reduce them [facts] to believe in themselves. Every child needs a different set of motivations to make them believe in themselves, but they also need to spread that; they need to understand that they're [students are] more than just visible blocks of information.

Nick has used the story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull to connect students to the principle of believing in self. "They wouldn't get it the first time and they'd start to get it as the year went by . . . about really believing, having a real belief in yourself and it [success of any kind] doesn't happen until you do." This is the challenge that Nick seeks to overcome with his students.

Balancing student encouragement and challenge. For many of Nick's students quitting is the easiest way of dealing with obstacles. A critical challenge for Nick as a teacher is to balance the fine tension between applauding student attempts and asking for better work. "We can't say, 'No that's not good enough.' What we have to keep saying is, 'Yah, OK. That's a start.' Because it's real easy to get those kids to quit, and these guys are ready to quit, you know." At risk of sounding manipulative, Nick explains further.

I'm sounding very manipulative, but in a sense, that's what it is because part of manipulation is understanding the client. You're not doing it to hurt them; you're doing it to help them. You're doing it so that they can see what powers they really possess as learners. And how much believing in themselves, how much believing that they can do better. You know, "Is this the best piece you've ever done? Are you so proud of this that you would want to show this to everybody?" Or, "Have you done anything this year that you would say that about?" I won't even ask them that question because I'm afraid of the answer I'll get of, "I don't care," and you see, I don't want to hear that because if they say that, "I [the student's voice] don't care," they'll try to live up to "I don't care."

Nick is unwilling at this time, to ask the students he is working with questions relating to pride of work. His students' egos are very fragile at this point and the

challenge again is to balance the scale between encouraging and challenging them to believe in themselves and to do better work.

Teaching for the aha. A sixth challenge Nick discusses is planning and teaching for student discovery or what he calls the aha. He speaks with passion as he explains, “I mean that’s the key. That’s what I’ve always tried to teach for [pauses] I teach for ahas.” He continues to explain that this kind of revelation for students is the challenge that starts the flow experience for him. It’s what starts or keeps the optimal experiences going in the classroom. When one of Nick’s students experiences an aha they are led to “honor their own learning, honor what they’ve done, honor that they’ve really made a jump, then they start to look for that [more ahas].” Planning for students to experience an aha is one of the critical challenges Nick faces. It involves knowing his students well which is the next challenge he speaks about.

Knowing each other. Achieving a family-like environment, one in which everyone is striving to achieve the same goals, involves knowing one another well. This is Nick’s next challenge and he discusses the difficulty in achieving a family-like environment when each day presents students who vary greatly in temperament and motivation. Because Nick is new to the school, he is also faced with the challenge of getting the students to know him. He confirms, “The thing that makes the biggest difference [in connecting for success] is the learners, and them knowing you [the teacher] and me knowing them.”

Getting it right. A personal challenge that Nick faces relates to the self proclaimed importance of “getting it right.” This perspective is a large part of Nick’s

make-up and he is uncomfortable with any of his attempts that are deficient. As he discusses the issue of rightness, he refers to the significance and role of writing in being able to analyze and critique his work. Nick experiences flow when he is writing and uses writing to prepare for his lessons. When I ask him to explain how writing assists him in his preparation to teach, he elaborates.

It's the feeling that you get in terms of how you see it [a lesson] unfolding. You can't write down every word but the picture you painted [pauses] to me that's totally affective. You see, I don't write it so I can read it, I write it so I can think it. I write it so I think it. That's the key with me. Because I never teach the lesson that I write. I simply write it so I can work through the problems I can see, the hitches I can see, what's right with it, and I can see what's wrong with it. It's like walking through a maze, I guess [or] standing above it and viewing it with your eyes. And that's what I do when I write.

From pen to computer. In addition to the challenge of getting things right, Nick has taken on a new personal challenge, that of processing on the computer. The kinaesthetic sensation of writing on paper is slowly being transferred to the keyboard and the visual stimulation of seeing the written word on paper is being replaced by the letters on the screen. Nick admits, "I'm learning more to be able to do it with a computer, and to look at the screen and see what it says and to get the feel from that . . . and I wouldn't have done that before."

Summoning the energy. As we talk about school and the situation Nick is in this year, he refers to the amount of energy that is needed to keep going. He suggests that finding the energy to keep going is especially difficult following a break such as Christmas. Prior to a break, Nick may have just begun understanding his students. Following the break, the level of understanding and accomplishment drops. Nick uses

the analogy of hitting the wall as a runner to describe the difficulty he experiences in gathering up the energy he needs to keep going.

You go, “I quit, I quit, I’ve done everything I can, I’m done.” And then there’s that extra little bit of effort, and suddenly it’s real easy. And you see the finish line. That’s the same feeling that’s there [when you finally start to break through with your students]. It’s just there. And you know, that’s my history and I think that’s the history of a lot of people. If you don’t quit now, if you don’t give up now, if you just give it a little bit more push, if you just stay persistent and patient, what will happen is you’ll have that [the break through]. You’ll push through it.

When Nick speaks of history, he refers to his successful career as a teacher.

Without this confidence and knowledge that he has the skills to push through the wall, Nick believes he would not be able to summon the energy needed to break through.

The challenge of pushing through is a difficult one for Nick. He is spread thinly in the responsibilities he has taken on, and with his natural tendency to give his all in everything he does, he feels the pressure. Having a broad range of responsibilities sometimes leaves Nick feeling he has short-changed individuals who are relying on him in areas other than his classroom. He states, “I was feeling a lot of pressure to be perfect at every one of them [responsibilities].”

Patience as a challenge. Related to summoning energy to push through difficult times in teaching is the aspect of having patience. Nick admits that he is not a very patient individual. He understands how having faith in his own experience and skills and allowing himself to be patient is to his benefit. Still it is a challenge to wait for the results of his labors, and he strives to remember to believe in himself as a teacher. Waiting for things to happen is frustrating for him and he must remind himself that change and growth take time.

Winning with respect. “I don’t want to have it easy.” These words jump right off the page at you from Nick’s transcript. He talks about his Dad allowing him to win at crib when he was a child and how that was unfulfilling for him. He is thoughtful and suggests, “I don’t want to be let win, I want to work for what I get. I want to feel like I have done it.” He struggles with his thoughts. “Maybe that’s part of the thing that drives me to be so down when I’m at this stage [feeling like he can’t go on, hitting the wall], because I don’t want to be let win.” As he works with the different ideas surrounding the theme of winning, Nick comments, “I don’t want to have it be easy. Maybe that’s it; maybe I know; maybe someone inside me says you have to fight like hell before you can win in a way that you’ll respect. Maybe you’re [Nick is] making it hard.” It is a perspective he has not addressed before and he considers this aspect with interest before he moves on to work with other ideas related to winning. For Nick, the challenge is to win in a way that he respects. He is the one who must work out the difficulties. He wants no quick fix, he wants to work at it and overcome the obstacle himself. He concludes, “I won’t allow someone to let me win. It has to have some difficulty in it or it’s not balanced.”

Nick has many challenges in his life. It is his way of looking at the world. When he witnesses a problem, or an obstacle, or even something that is working well but could be better, he feels compelled to take it on and do the best job he can. This can be frustrating for him because he runs out of time to do all the things he would like to do in the way he likes to do them. He is not a man who agrees to be responsible for a task and then completes it with mediocrity. Instead, he pours heart and soul into whatever endeavor he accepts. This results in a world that is filled with

challenges. In his responsibilities at school, Nick identifies many challenges: (a) being the best, (b) life long learning, (c) student ownership and caring, (d) student belief in self and confidence, (e) balancing encouragement with challenge, (f) teaching for the aha, (g) knowing each other, (h) getting it right, (i) from pen to computer, (j) summoning up the energy, (k) patience as a challenge, and (l) winning with respect. These challenges at times are rewarding; at other times they are terribly frustrating. Nick, however, needs this sense of challenge and would not live his life any other way.

Preparation/Laying the Groundwork

Preparation. Part of the preparation for teaching involves establishing who you are as a teacher with your students. This is a belief that Nick has and is in the midst of establishing with his classes. A second part of the preparation is to present his expectations for them in terms of their knowledge, attitudes, and ability. He must make sure that each child's expectations correspond with where he or she is in the curriculum. Nick explains, "I have to back up to the kinds of things that I would expect of kids at grade two, and three, and four in terms of ability to work on task, in terms of pride in work, ownership, and responsibility." If his expectations are out of line with the child's ability, there will be failure.

A third kind of preparation is the work and planning that go into each unit of study and lesson. Nick believes this kind of preparation is critical to experiencing flow. He states, "I think a lot of it [flow] has to do with orchestration. I think a lot of it has to do with being perfectly prepared." He also believes, however, that much of what happens is serendipitous. There are so many variables that it is difficult to

predict which lessons will be successful and which ones will not. By being prepared and ready for the unexpected, Nick feels he has the best opportunity to have successful and fulfilling lessons. As he reflects on the aspect of being prepared, he begins to shift his thoughts slightly and draws an unusual parallel. Being prepared, he decides, is closer to the readiness an assembly line worker feels. He knows the thing he is servicing so well that “he can’t make a mistake with it. Knowing exactly how to respond when it doesn’t quite work the way you thought it would . . . it’s not a flat piece, it’s three dimensional.” Nick’s preparations include knowing the learner, and he elaborates, “You know that learner so well; you know where they’re going The teachable moment comes, you don’t know what it’s going to be, but you’re prepared for it.” He works hard at “getting it right” and uses writing and scripting of his lessons to make sure he identifies all the stumbling blocks. He feels that, “These kind of behind the scenes things that are happening, that are really significant . . . [can] change how the lesson came off.” He tries to plan for all the unexpected situations that might arise. This he calls “invisible planning.” Invisible planning is flexible, not rigid and with it, Nick hopes to account for all the possible variations that may occur within the presentation of a unit or lesson. He strives to be ready for any additional enrichment he can provide for his students.

Groundwork. Nick considers one of the most critical aspects of preparation to be laying the groundwork. While working through the grouping and sorting segment of the interview series, he captures the essence of groundwork in this way:

I pulled out a number of them [statements] . . . all those things that say “gotta work, gotta work, gotta work, get nothing from it but, gotta work.” The feeling that says, you know, “You just keep at it, you just keep slugging, you just keep

trying, even though you're not sure any of this is going to work, and eventually all that energy you're expending is going to come back."

The group of ideas related to preparation and groundwork that Nick is considering represents beliefs that are very fragile. He explains, "That's the pile that relies completely on faith. If you keep working, it'll [achieving success with students] happen." He admits that he has nothing to base this prediction on except his previous experiences and his belief in himself as a teacher.

Connection

Nick discusses the importance of establishing a family-like environment in his classroom. The family-like environment includes all the interactions that would occur in a family setting. "You have the same family squabbles and you have the family joys, and I think that's really where I see that connection." When Nick speaks about connection, he is referring to the understanding that occurs between teacher and student, and student and student. It is a critical component of the momentum that builds during a term. Nick describes the preunderstanding interaction between teacher and student as being neutral. Once you really know your students then "you know exactly what makes them tick and a bad day, you write it off as a bad day." Nick feels so connected with his students that "when they fail, I'm failing, and when they succeed, I succeed."

Expectations

There are two kinds of expectations that Nick discusses during the interview series, the expectations that exist between his students and himself, and the expectations he has for himself. The expectations he has for his students are determined by

knowing his students and where they are in the curriculum. He explains, “You really need to lay it very clearly on the line with these guys exactly what the parameters are [pauses] what’s acceptable and what isn’t.” He also believes that student and teacher must get to know each other to establish expectations that exist for one another.

Within the knowing comes trust and belief that together they can achieve goals. For Nick, the expectations most significant for his students are that they learn to take responsibility for their own learning and that they gain confidence and belief in themselves as learners.

The expectations that Nick sets for himself involve very high standards. He is assigned to a number of responsibilities within the school. He teaches, he looks after discipline, he coordinates a learning center, and has other administrative duties. Nick explains his feelings regarding this collection of responsibilities:

I was feeling a lot of pressure to be perfect at every one of them, and there’s, you know, always options to how you respond to that need to be perfect at everything, and one of them is that you can do a less-than-perfect job in all of them, which, for someone who needs that sense of having done an incredible job and getting that feedback, isn’t the answer. Because there’s no point. Because you don’t do it for the pay cheque; you do it because it’s so rewarding for you.

Conditions That Enhance Flow

Witnessing growth. In the course of the interview series, Nick affirms that when students achieve what he wants them to, his feelings of flow are enhanced. They don’t give him the answers he wants, as in memorizing, but they work through the learning process and achieve growth. Nick gives as an example, writing that students did for him that showed phenomenal improvement. He recalls, “It wasn’t the awards that made me feel good. It was when I said, ‘Now stop, sit down, write it

down. How do you feel?' When I read the first few pieces, I was ecstatic." The students had responded to all Nick had done to prepare them to write. He admits, "I can still remember every child in that class. I can remember what they looked like, what they said, what they did, how they reacted to the activity, and it [the specific situation with that class] was phenomenal."

Planning for growth. Nick had an aha of his own the day that his students responded so well to the writing assignment. He describes his own learning and how that affects his experiences of flow:

And so that taught me a lot about putting kids in real situations . . . simulated, as real as possible for kids, about having them learn. And then it became a joy because I knew [pauses] when I was preparing lessons like that [pauses] because I would get that surge. I knew when it was right. It was awesome. You could feel it and you knew how it would work with kids! You knew it! You knew it before you ever walked in, and that's what I'm searching for now.

Nick adds that part of his flow experience occurs when he is planning and writing. Not only does the planning assist him in achieving his goals with his students, it provides a vehicle which allows him to have experiences of flow while writing. The writing helps him to see the objectives more clearly and to "get it right."

Student pride, ownership, and responsibility for learning. Having moved from one school to another and from elementary to junior high, Nick notices some obvious differences. The biggest difference is that the students in junior high have a greater history with which to work. If the history is positive, working with the students is wonderful, but if it's negative, the situation becomes very difficult. Nick describes his interaction with a boy in the first few days of school. The boy had been in four other schools before Nick's and was struggling. He made derogatory remarks

to Nick and was suspended from school. On his return there had been a change in his attitude, and he began to take responsibility for his learning and to have pride in his work. This kind of growth in a child creates a situation where Nick feels great joy. He sees a student achieving and can assist him to reach even greater heights. Being able to connect with someone and then to have him or her respond by learning and growing is a condition that enhances flow for Nick.

Teaching for ahas. Nick makes it very clear why he left his career as a biologist. He explains that he never had the opportunity to witness the look of discovery in someone else's face. He refers to this as having an aha. Planning and teaching for an aha creates a positive environment for Nick which enhances his experience of flow. He talks about students achieving that "huge leap" and how that achievement is one of the conditions that enhances his experiences of flow. Making an intellectual discovery is critical to having students "honor their own learning, honor what they've done, honor that they've really made a jump." These attributes create growth for the child and enhance the environment of flow for Nick.

Win/win. Nick describes win/win as being "like winning a competitive event except better, because you beat somebody when you win at a competitive event. In this case [experiencing flow related to student growth], everybody wins, because you feel it and they [students] feel it." Nick continues to elaborate on the conditions and feelings of a win/win situation. He explains, "So the feeling is joy because it's unencumbered by competition. You walk away from it [pauses] 'Gee, that was great,' . . . it touches pleasure centers in your body that tells you 'this is really good.'"

Energy and performing. Nick draws a parallel between the work he does as a teacher and the work of a performer. Within this parallel, he describes the performing teacher as one who needs an audience. He continues on to draw similarities that are strikingly evident once they are identified. Nick creates this analogy:

And then there's performers. I'm one of those. And performers need an audience, and when the audience goes away, the energy level drops. And then bringing back that energy is really difficult because, first of all, you have to bring the audience back to the level they were at, that they were feeding you with. The energy that would allow you to perform and bring more energy out of them. I mean, they talk about [pauses] performers talk about that. Musicians and comedians talk about that, too. The more laughter they get, the more they go; the more applause they get, the more whistling and screaming and shouting, the more they go.

This analogy accurately describes the ebb and flow of energy Nick receives from and gives to his students. The slowing or destroying of momentum, such as when there are extended holidays away from school, makes it very difficult for him to pick up where he left off. When he finally draws the students up to the previous level of commitment and connection, his experiences of flow return. Nick expands the discussion about performing to introduce new thoughts regarding levels of joy. According to Nick, one level is achieved when a teacher observes students experiencing an aha, and the other is reached when students are "interacting with you up front [pauses] when you're up front and very visible. I teach to be invisible but I really like to be visible." He speaks about the visibly performing kind of persona as being "very much egocentric." It is a, "Hey, look at me. I'm funny. I can teach you anything and I'm having a blast," scenario. The interesting and critical aspect of this condition is that it is prolonged only as long as the audience is connected and the sharing of

energy is reciprocal. Once the energy sharing is interrupted, the optimal experience or feelings of flow are interrupted as well.

Nick refers again to the win/win situation and how it relates to energy and performing.

And that's that whole thing about my dad again, and my sense of everybody needs to win. And the more winning, the more joy, the more energy that's coming from that [pauses] the more energy that comes from that, the more energy I get back, the more positive. In a sense, maybe that links right up to me as a performer because that whole essence of performer is energy. It's "I perform for the energy I get from making others laugh, from the energy I get from making others learn." So maybe that's it; maybe that's what I wanted, just the energy of others. Like an old Star Trek episode.

Nick continues to explore the aspect of working [teaching, performing] for the exchange of energy and revisits the ideas relating to working hard and getting no reward. He now suggests that working and feeling no success or reward eventually ends in a payoff. The payoff is in the form of energy. He explains, "You just know that you've got to work hard. You continue to work hard and suddenly it [student discovery, learning, ownership, flow] comes. And that's that sense of energy from within." By being patient and having faith that teaching strategies and skills are going to get results, Nick allows for positive energy to build. When students arrive at the point where all the positive efforts converge there is a surge of energy and a discovery is made. Students have an aha and Nick has an optimal or flow experience.

Conditions That Detract From the Flow Experience

After discussing the conditions that enhance the phenomenon of flow in teaching, I ask Nick to describe the conditions or occurrences that detract from his

experiences of flow. He responds by depicting situations that are immensely irritating and frustrating to him.

Interruptions. Nick perceives his teaching on a large scale. When he refers to interruptions, he is not talking about a knock at the classroom door; he is referring to breaks during the school term. Extended breaks such as Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays create a break in the connection and momentum that has been developed within Nick's classroom. He gives an example.

. . . that was very frustrating for me because, you know, you've made all these strides up till Christmas, and then there's been this big break at Christmas. It's like summer holidays and you suddenly feel like, "Gee, I'm starting all over again" and you're not sure you can summon up the energy to do it, and it's like withdrawal.

Nick refers to withdrawal as the physical sensation that occurs when he is deprived of feelings of accomplishment and success. He works diligently from September on to create a connection with his students that allows him to have feelings of success and positive energy. When there is a break in the school year, all his connections, routines, feelings of trust, and understanding with his students fade. Building the connections up to the previous level is very difficult and seems a daunting challenge.

Interruptions and the impact on body chemistry. Nick links feelings of success and achievement with the release of chemicals within his body. He refers to literature and to people who believe in good health through positive thinking and laughter. As he considers this perspective, he decides that, for him, the link to good

health and good feelings occurs through the sensations he receives when he experiences joy within his teaching. He explains how this theory plays out for him.

It's withdrawal from that sense of success, and again, that whole linking to the changes, you know, the release of chemicals in your body that success brings. And we talk about people who laugh a lot, or people who are happy a lot, or think positive thoughts a lot, how that keeps them healthy, and I believe that absolutely.

Nick is normally a robust person who does things with gusto and flair. When I meet with him, however, he shows little of this spark and energy. He is concerned about his lethargy, but as the interview continues, he gains some understanding of what has been amiss within his situation. Being able to talk about the situation and mull through the different aspects of it seems to enable him to regain some of his lost energy. In the days following the first interview, he begins to make plans to overcome some of the obstacles in his school situation.

Falling short of standards of success. Nick is experiencing frustration at this time in his career as a teacher. He is concerned for his own health and admits that "I've been sick more this fall than I've been sick in 20 years." He is an individual who has and does experience the phenomenon of flow. At this time, however, he is paying close attention to the things that take the joy out of his daily responsibilities. He believes he understands why he is feeling the lack of joy and euphoria that was a familiar part of his life before this year. Nick explains,

It's the stress that's accompanied with the lack of what I would accept as success for myself. So I've been told, "Oh, no, accept this, you're doing great," but that's not [pauses] You see, the only thing that gives me that sense of success is that internal feeling. That sense of [pauses] if not euphoria, at least, internal joy.

Nick relates his negative feelings toward parts of his job to his lack of control of the specific situations. He feels the lack of control leads to diminished levels of quality in the outcomes of the task.

Lack of time, energy, and self forgiveness. As I work with Nick during the interview series, he uses the interviews to take a closer look at what is going on for him at work. He begins to feel more positive about the situation because he has a better understanding of why he has been feeling so taxed. Because of his analytic nature, Nick returns for one of the interviews having carefully sifted through his concerns and with a very different outlook on his professional circumstances. He is a problem solver and has made some constructive decisions that will alleviate his stress and create a more positive environment for him at his school. He is excited about this turn of events and tells me of his plans. They are such that he will be able to maintain his standard of performance, but he will have one less responsibility. He doesn't have time to perform the extra responsibility the way he would like and so is feeling immense pressure related to his philosophy of being "the best you can be." By dropping the extra assignment which he does not feel he is doing well in the first place, he is able to create more flexibility in his schedule and devote more time and energy to the remaining assignments. The most critical of these assignments is teaching.

Nick is also trying to gain an understanding of and control over the undue pressure he places on himself as a perfectionist. His high standards and perhaps unrealistic expectations for himself lead him onto a treadmill that is dangerously close

to running out of control. He recognizes that he must control the treadmill or he will be carried away.

Joy zappers: kids who are disturbed. Although Nick believes he has had success with different types of students, he admits that there are some with whom he cannot connect. He refers to them as individuals who are “on the dark side of the forest.” He elaborates in the following way:

You can have someone who’s on the dark side of the forest, if you like [pauses] someone who refuses to be [pauses] not who can’t [pauses] but who refuses to be reached. Someone who refuses to believe in himself. Someone who chooses to take, I guess from the perspective of me looking at that person, the low road for themselves, the easy way out. Or maybe in some cases, kids who are really disturbed, who break that [experiences of flow]. It isn’t just their goal . . . simply to not do their own, it’s to disrupt others They see great joy in lose/lose There’s some kids, you can struggle and fight and who only seem to get [pauses] only do get joy from making others lose as much as they feel a failure. And that really breaks that [experiences of flow]. That really significantly breaks that. They are, or they can be very destructive in the classroom.

Nick concludes his opinion by stating, “So, the joy zappers, I guess, are those kids who don’t have any belief in themselves [and] are the things that bring that feeling down.”

Heavy-handedness. The concept of dysfunctional students detracting from the conditions of flow relates to the idea of being a disciplinarian. During the interview we make an easy transition from the idea of disruptive students to the ways in which they are disciplined. As part of Nick’s responsibilities he has created and presented to the faculty a discipline plan for the school. He feels, however, that staff members are looking for him to be the model disciplinarian. He uses the term, “the school heavy.” This identity does not match intellectually with Nick’s goals in teaching. One of

Nick's most important goals is to draw "personal joy and delight from teaching."

Nick explains,

If you see yourself as a teacher and your teaching as being an expression of joy, then it's very difficult to become the heavy hand because you see teaching/learning as joyous. And when that [the need for heavy-handedness] happens what you feel inside is anger, not joy [pauses] or frustration, not joy [pauses] and your responses then really drain that positive energy.

Feeling disempowered. Because of the macro view with which Nick identifies his experiences of flow, it makes sense to look at the overall conditions of his work and their impact on his flow experiences. Nick analyzes his experiences in relation to what is happening in his whole work life, not just what happens in his classroom. As he works within this perspective, Nick quickly isolates a negative aspect of his work situation relating to problem solving. He begins by stating that he is most definitely a problem solver:

I am a problem solver and I wasn't seeing any solutions to the problems, staying exactly as it was. I am a great problem solver, but I'm also impatient. . . . I was feeling myself going the opposite direction to where I wanted to go. I wasn't feeling myself more empowered; I was feeling myself more disempowered. And that is a really negative [pauses] I mean, once you start on a down-slide it's really difficult to get yourself moving in the other direction.

In the early stages of the interview series Nick admits that he isn't having the joyous, euphoric experiences that he has had in the past. There are some factors that are stopping the positive experiences. One of the factors is the sense of having no power or being disempowered. Nick feels powerless in some situations and until he overcomes that feeling, he will continue to have fewer and fewer of the joyous sensations that have been such an integral part of his teaching.

Self-doubt. During the interview series I interject ideas from other participant interviews. I want to know if Nick has had similar feelings. I mention the issue of having confidence as a teacher. This is an issue that has surfaced in other interviews. He concedes that for him, having confidence as a teacher is definitely impacting. He explains that he has not been in a school setting for 6 ½ years, and that he carries a certain amount of self-doubt in some areas. Nick discusses the difference between teachers who have been at a school for a few years and someone who has just arrived and is establishing himself or herself within the school community. He refers to the advantage teachers who are known within the community have. Nick feels they have a stronger foothold or advantage in establishing expectations that are understood by both students and parents. Teachers who are established in the school have a sense of assurance that provides a feeling of confidence when dealing with different situations. Nick, on the other hand, is having to search 6 years into his past to draw from feelings of competency and confidence as a teacher. When we speak about remembering how things are at the beginning of any cycle, Nick highlights “and you see, my beginning, my last beginning, was a long time ago.” Considering the issue of teacher confidence, he understands how other participants would say that self-doubt affects the conditions that promote experiences of flow. He adds,

When I look at our student teachers and how much trouble, particularly one of them, is in in terms of how much heat the kids are putting [on her] and how few strategies she has to cope with that [pauses] I just don’t know how she’s making it.

Although his base of confidence as a teacher was established some years ago, Nick is able to reach back and draw support from it. For first year teachers, this is almost impossible to do. He has empathy for them and fully understands how difficult their

situation must be in light of the lack of confidence he periodically experiences as a veteran teacher.

Physiological Cues

Euphoria, being “new,” and sneezing. As we discuss different aspects of flow including the physical sensations accompanying the phenomenon, Nick discloses that he experiences a most unusual reaction to feelings of excitement. He prefers to address the feelings of excitement within flow as feelings of euphoria and describes to me his perception of what is occurring and his reactions to the happening.

It's another step beyond. It's almost where you're connecting with endorphins, if you like. You're so excited that, that [pauses] with me, there's a certain trigger. I actually sneeze when I get so excited [pauses] when I am [pauses] it's something new. There's a story called A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle [pauses] a Newbury Award winner for children's literature, and in that story they talk about Charles Wallace. He's a 6-year-old, and they explain about this child being new. He's not brilliant, he's new. He's so brilliant that he can't be defined the way anybody else is that way and they explain about people like Socrates [who] were new and people like Einstein [who] were new. They looked at the world so differently. And sometimes when I work towards something new . . . I get that sense of euphoria [pauses] that it's not been done before. It's not been thought of before. Whether that's true or not, but that's the sense, because it is almost a euphoria.

Ecstasy. As Nick shares specific moments of flow involving euphoria, he describes his reactions to exceptional pieces of student work. He recalls a particular class where he motivated his students to write far better than they had before. They were successful in winning some awards with their pieces of writing, and Nick talks about his sensations related to their much improved work. “It wasn't the awards that made me feel good. It was when I said, ‘Now stop, sit down, write it down. How do you feel?’ When I read the first few pieces, I was ecstatic.”

Joy. The word joy is one that Nick uses when he describes moments of flow. It is a term he uses interchangeably with the word, euphoria. “You see, the only thing that gives me that sense of success is that internal feeling. That sense of [pauses] if not euphoria, at least internal joy in having really done something.”

Nick has a sensation of joy when he observes his students working on their own and taking ownership for their learning. At these times he considers himself to be invisible in his teaching. He is there, but the students have taken hold of the process. He tries to describe the joyful feeling. “You see the kids in the class and you’re invisible, but the reaction to that is you just want to pump your hands in the air. You want to ‘yah, right on!’ That’s more the manifestation of the joy you feel.”

In a particular instance, Nick describes a situation that resulted in the emotional sensation of joy, and in this description he provides an interesting glimpse at how preparation of units, lessons, and strategies, and the results of this preparation create flow for him. Nick recalls a time when he had asked his students to believe they were building a civilization. The students were required to research and build a model of an area. Through Nick’s planning of the unit and accompanying activities, he was able to simulate a situation replicating the loss of culture experienced by a specific civilization. He describes the incredible learning experience for both him and his students and the feelings that accompanied that experience.

You saw a real slice of culture from that class in the response to all the instruction, to the warnings they gave each other. “Oh, he’s trying to get us, too.” And to the fact that they all finally followed a very powerful leader, not me, but somebody else, who took them down the toilet [pauses] and that was important. And so that taught me a lot about putting kids in real situations, I mean, simulated, as real as possible for kids, about having them learn. And then it became a joy I knew when I was preparing lessons like that, because I would get that surge. I knew when it was right. It kicked in as I was writing. I write

pages and pages when I prepare. I'd script it and I knew when it was right. It was awesome. You could feel it and you knew how it would work with kids! You knew it! You knew it before you ever walked in.

Nick speaks often of the feelings of joy and excitement, and the surge that comes with the process of planning. He is one who becomes totally engrossed in planning and experiences powerful feelings of flow as he writes. For Nick, writing is an important aspect of his understanding of how lesson objectives will be met and outcomes achieved. Meeting objectives and achieving outcomes are critical components of Nick's sense of professionalism. Various components of teaching and curriculum must not only be in place for Nick to consider himself a professional, they must be conducted with as much perfection as possible. Whether enacting the role of staff developer, grade eight teacher, or disciplinarian, writing is a critical tool with which Nick strives to create the most imaginative, accurate, and appropriate solutions to specific challenges. To be able to write allows him to experience a sense of control and power which results in feelings of excitement, joy, and success. These sensations are part of his experiences of flow.

Energized. "And then there's performers. I'm one of those." This is the manner in which Nick describes himself as a teacher. He is referring to what happens when a connection with his students is broken. To better explain he describes the importance of connection between a performer (himself) and an audience (his students). A performer is able to continue performing only as long as the audience responds and provides the energy to allow the performer to keep going. Nick elaborates,

Performers need an audience, and when the audience goes away, the energy level drops. And then bringing back that energy is really difficult, because first of all, you have to bring the audience back to the level they were at, that they were feeding you with. The energy that would allow you to perform and bring more energy out of them Performers talk about that. Musicians and comedians talk about that, too. The more laughter they get, the more they go; the more applause they get, the more whistling and screaming and shouting, the more they go.

Nick concludes his discussion about energy and teachers as performers by deciding,

“It’s not applause you want, it’s the energy.”

At various junctures within the interview series, Nick refers to energy he receives when he is experiencing flow. One reference is made to the sensation he receives when he wins without the negative crush of competition. This sensation he describes as “joy . . . unencumbered by competition.” He elaborates adding to his description of the feelings of energy received from this win/win situation. “You walk away from it [pauses] ‘Gee, that was great How do I get that again?’ . . . It touches pleasure centers in your body that tell you, ‘is really good.’” Nick can obtain this kind of win/win energy by observing students. He explains, “You’re seeing it within the kids. . . . They’re not fighting you or fighting each other for information or for their learning. They’re just moving forward and helping each other along.”

Another reference to energy occurs when Nick is reflecting on some of his ideas from the first interview. He is considering his description of the reaction he has to intense excitement. He reads the statement, “You’re so excited that with me, there’s a certain trigger. I actually sneeze when I get so excited.” He explains that this reaction, luckily, does not happen when he is teaching. It is more of a reaction to something more sudden, like a discovery. He clarifies in the following way:

That's that energy [the kind that is accompanied by sneezing] and the energy in this case comes from writing. I never do that teaching. I'm really glad. I don't get [pauses] my eyes might water, but I don't sneeze. So this one [energy/excitement that results in sneezing], I didn't even know it was coming [pauses] that's the whole sense of aha.

As Nick works through some of his earlier statements from the interview he compares two separate situations. One situation involves the energy received from being prepared and having students as an audience; the other involves working, planning, and hoping or having faith that a breakthrough will occur. He elaborates on the theme of trying everything to reach students and the role trying to reach students plays in gaining energy.

Here [the theme of being prepared and getting energy from the audience] you plan so much, [but] there's no ahas. You're seeing it [energy] in others, and so you're feeding on their [students'] energy, but here [trying everything and having faith] you don't know, you just know that you've got to work hard. You continue to work hard and suddenly it comes. And that's that sense of energy from within.

Interviewer: Is that a more intense feeling that you get?

Nick: Oh huge [pauses] but it's a lot shorter lasting. You know, that [the energy from preparation and student audience] is far more long-lasting, this one [having a discovery or aha that results in sneezing] is way more intense and nowhere near as long-lasting.

After sifting through his ideas about energy and flow, Nick concludes by presenting a larger picture. He considers his reasons for teaching and decides it narrows down to one thing; the obtaining or gaining of energy. It is a startling discovery for him. He considers his comments about the situations that result in experiences of flow and the way these experiences manifest themselves. Statements regarding discoveries and looking at things the way no one has ever done before represent a concept that leads Nick to comment, "And that's part of it . . . I don't

know that you feel conscious of it. I think it's subconscious [pauses] the reaction, the eyes watering, the sneezing. It's hooking right down to your very being."

He continues to interpret the meaning from statements he has made in describing experiences of flow and returns to a statement about a student who is diagnosed attention deficit. "And his parents are saying, 'We're just seeing such a difference in him this year.' He loves it, he loves the class, he loves doing science. And he's the same [pauses] he's one of the joys for me." Reviewing his thoughts from the previous interview, Nick adds, "That's what I get from David. That's the one kid who makes me feel like he's seeing [pauses] I mean, his level of aha is significantly below his grade level [pauses] but that's what I'm seeing in him."

As he continues to interpret the meaning behind some of his previous statements, he questions the impact of successful and fulfilling experiences.

So what it [flow] does for some of us, I know, it drives us to work harder. That's that whole reason. That's why we push ourselves so hard [pauses] why I do this. And that's that whole thing about why I'm doing it [teaching the way I do]; I'm doing it to get those things. Even though they [different sources of flow or different situations resulting in flow] don't look the same, they're all the same thing. That's why I work so hard, because I get that [pointing to a group of descriptors of sensations] [pauses] it makes sense.

Interviewer: The excitement, the joy, the connection?

Nick: The energy, yah.

Teaching the way he does results in many different sensations within the phenomenon of flow for Nick. They present themselves in both physical and emotional ways. The sensations are sneezing, feelings of euphoria, feelings of ecstasy, feelings of joy, and lastly, feelings of energy, both sustained and explosive.

Autotelic Personality

Throughout the interview series, Nick makes statements and expresses opinions that indicate he has an autotelic personality. This kind of personality results in individuals striving to be involved in situations that are motivating by their very existence. People who possess autotelic personalities seem to create exciting and challenging situations out of most incidents they experience. These individuals see problems as challenges and thrive on solving or overcoming them. Nick is one of these people. Although he is experiencing some frustration at the time of the interviews, the frustration is actually a part of his autotelic personality. He looks for challenge and is not afraid to risk. In seeking challenging experiences, he is confronted by difficulties and problems that require tenacity. Solving problems takes time, and along with the time factor comes a certain amount of frustration. Nick admits that patience is not one of his strongest virtues. I maintain that Nick is an individual who looks for challenges, creates his own challenges, and is not content unless he has worked hard for what he has achieved. His sense of challenge and success comes from within.

When asked about the role that this school environment plays in his experiences of flow he replies, "Those experiences never come from my place, they're from within. And that's a real problem because it's very egocentric in saying that it doesn't matter the place. You create the experience."

At one point during the interview, Nick discusses his need for doing a job well and the frustration that comes when he is unable to meet this need. He feels a need to complete an assignment in the best way he can and as close to perfection as is

possible. In his present situation, he does not feel this is possible. If the job is not done to Nick's rigorous standards, he loses hope of experiencing joy. Not achieving a specific standard is a major stumbling block for someone who is autotelic. Autotelic personalities thrive on the feelings experienced in flow that result from meeting and beating challenges. He explains in the following way:

I can't necessarily, given the circumstances which I'm now in, expect the kinds of results that I would [normally] expect. . . . I was feeling a lot of pressure to be perfect at every one of them. And there's, you know, always options to how you respond to that need to be perfect at everything. And some of them [are] that you can do a less-than-perfect job in all of them which, for someone who needs that sense of having done an incredible job and getting that feedback, isn't the answer. Because there's no point. Because you don't do it for the pay cheque, you do it because it's so rewarding for you.

Many issues Nick discusses indicate that he has an autotelic personality. The disgruntled nature he had as a child when his father would let him win is an example of the part of him that seeks challenge as part of his life experiences. Nick explains that there is little joy in being "let win." He must feel that he was challenged and worked hard to achieve the results. The aspect of being challenged and succeeding leaves Nick with feelings of euphoria, joy, and ecstasy. He reflects on how the perception of overcoming a true challenge impacts his emotional well being.

That's that whole thing. I don't want to be let win. I want to work for what I get. I want to feel like I have done it, that I have [pauses] Maybe that's part of the thing that drives me to be so down when I'm at this stage [maintaining patience while waiting for student discovery]. Because I don't want to be let win.

Nick also knows that he is an individual who puts forth his every effort. He states, "I can't be any other teacher than somebody who feels like he's giving his best." When Nick gives his best, he either succeeds or receives feedback that leads

him to success. Giving his best means that eventually he will experience the euphoria and joy that is characteristic of his moments of flow.

It is interesting to note that Nick perceives the sensations that accompany flow such as joy, euphoria, and ecstasy as being the source of his feelings of success. He explains, “You see, the only thing that gives me that sense of success is that internal feeling. That sense [pauses] if not euphoria, at least, internal joy in having really done something.”

Nick strives in his teaching to be the best he can be so that he can assist students to learn. In doing his best, he experiences moments of flow that provide him with the emotional and physiological sensations that keep him striving to succeed. In fact, he admits that he may, at times, be caught up in the dark side of flow; the side that is almost addictive. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to the dark side of the phenomenon of flow and compares it to the addiction an individual might have for drugs or physical activity. The high they get from the activity drives them to do it more, and eventually the high actually controls their lives. Individuals with this kind of addiction related to work are commonly known as workaholics.

Nick has taken a close look at the dark side of flow and understands how this phenomenon might lead to a break down. He relates this personal discovery to teacher burnout and questions if this obsession is the reason so many “high-end teachers” burn out. He proposes that some teachers, including himself, may create a never ending challenge of striving for perfection. In order to receive the kinds of sensations that accompany flow, individuals must continually up the anti, making each challenge more difficult or demanding than the last. He hypothesizes,

And you see, by doing it [any challenge] for yourself, nothing stays better [pauses] that was good enough for yesterday, but that wasn't [isn't] good enough for tomorrow. And I think that that is a dangerous treadmill to get on, because, you know, it keeps gearing down and down and down until you can't turn it any longer. And that's when burnout happens.

Nick understands the need to have a balance in his work life. He is a survivor and recognizes that what has been happening this year in his work cannot go on. He must make some changes in order to stay healthy. Having the kind of personality he does, it is unlikely that he will settle for a less than perfect job in any of his responsibilities. He continues to strive for ultimate results. He is, however, a problem solver and by midway through the interview series, has come up with a workable solution. He receives permission from his administrator to reduce his time equivalent thus removing one of the responsibilities to which he found impossible to attend. He now has more flex time and is able to do the kind of job he would like in the other areas of his assignment, the most significant being his direct work with the students in his classes.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Narrative

This section of the description and analysis of Nick's narrative will involve an interpretation by Nick of his own experiences. It will also include my interpretation of Nick's experiences and their relationship to the frame created by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1991, 1992) representing the common characteristics associated with the phenomenon of flow. Nick's interpretation includes the presentation and discussion of 12 categories or groups containing the main ideas embodied in the description of his experiences of flow. I will introduce each category and discuss some of the ideas within. This will provide an understanding of Nick's perceptions regarding his own

experiences of flow and the environments that enhance or detract from them. For a complete view of the ideas contained within each of Nick's main groupings, see Appendix N.

**Nick's Interpretation of Key Themes
Related to His Experiences of Flow**

I ask Nick to examine key ideas from the descriptions of his experiences of flow and to organize the ideas into groups. The groups are to be formed according to how Nick feels they best fit together. I ask him to think out loud as he works, allowing me to hear and understand his thought processes. The groups of ideas can be any size and can be formed for any reason. Nick forms 12 groups and titles the groups as follows:

1. What I see when kids are there/the high.
2. On the way: Output = input.
3. Energy drain: Laying the groundwork.
4. Emotional rewards: Energy gain!!
5. Intellectual beliefs.
6. Why I teach!: What I want students to know/understand about the world.
7. Win/lose—losing energy.
8. Energy required to seek the optimal.
9. Preteaching.
10. Students as energy drainers: Negative thoughts (personal).
11. Nick's learning curve.
12. I can see!

Each of these categories contains ideas from Nick's narrative interview, some containing as many as 20 ideas and some as few as one.

What I see when kids are there/the high. This category describes the kinds of behaviors and activities Nick experiences himself and witnesses in his students when both he and his students are experiencing flow. It includes descriptions such as (a) I think they become family in a sense, (b) it's finding kids saying "Gee, I can do that, where I didn't think I could do that before," (c) I gave them something that mattered and I got pieces of writing that were the most phenomenal in the world from them, (d) you see it on their faces. They make the discovery about what you're teaching, and (e) it's an aha where they make a jump from one level to an entirely different level. It is apparent that Nick's experiences of flow rely on the students' experiences of flow. Without student success and joy, Nick does not experience flow.

On the way: output = input. Nick describes the ideas within this category as output equals input. He explains, "You're starting to see from the kids, you're starting to feel from within yourself that the energy you're expending actually has some purpose. Because you're getting an equal amount of energy back." This theme is a critical one for Nick because it seems to be the long awaited turning point of his teaching process. Up to this point, he is investing incredible amounts of energy into working with his students. This investment is based on his faith that he is doing the right things and that if he is patient, he will see results. Without the return of energy, Nick does not experience flow.

Some of the individual ideas within this category are (a) that's [assisting them to grow] both the frustration of teaching these guys and the joy, (b) as a planner, I plan for all the eventualities, (c) I think a lot of it has to do with orchestration, (d) I realized that I had to hook into their emotions, (e) then they start to see themselves as being positive to their learning, and (f) you don't know how they're going to make that aha, you just know that that's what you're working for, this huge leap. The ideas within this category revolve around Nick's belief in himself as a teacher and his students as learners. He desperately needs his students to take responsibility for their learning before they can experience growth and he can achieve his goal of assisting them to move ahead. Once they begin to see themselves as learners and to believe in themselves, Nick is able to experience moments of flow.

Energy drain: laying the groundwork. In order to arrive at a place where there are equal amounts of energy being exchanged by Nick and his students, there is much work to do. This is the aspect of teaching that seems to be unyielding and cruel. Nick expresses the situation of laying the groundwork in the following way:

All those things [ideas in the category] say, "gotta work, gotta work, gotta work," get nothing from, it but gotta work. The feeling that says . . . you just keep at it, you just keep slugging, you just keep trying, even though you're not sure any of this is going to work, and eventually all that energy you're expending is going to come back. . . . That's the pile that relies completely on faith.

Some of the ideas that make up this theme are (a) I was establishing who Nick Latin was with the kids, (b) it's the stress that's accompanied with the lack of what I would accept as success for myself, (c) there's some kids who only seem to get joy from making others lose as much as they feel a failure, (d) it's too easy to quit and

not push, and (e) if you see yourself as a teacher and your teaching as being an expression of joy, then it's very difficult to become the heavy hand.

Part of the title for this category is "laying the groundwork." It represents for Nick a critical part of teaching that is considered a necessary evil. Laying the groundwork is the part of teaching that is just plain hard work. It is the part of teaching that if not done, results in a sense of frustration and futility. Without creating the frame or groundwork with which to base the rest of the learning, there is little student progress and fewer experiences of flow. Getting to know his students and establishing expectations are critical components of Nick's teaching. Without them, the connecting with and understanding of students which leads to shared energy is missing. The solid groundwork creates conditions that enhance the opportunities of flow for both Nick and his students.

Emotional rewards; energy gain!! This group of concepts involves the emotional and physiological responses associated with Nick's experiences of flow. The concepts in this group include (a) when I was preparing lessons like that, because I would get that surge, I knew when it was right, (b) it's hooked to a huge amount of excitement, (c) you want to pump your hand in the air, (d) I feel like I've discovered something new and I get that sense of euphoria, (e) the pleasure from succeeding drives you to work harder so you can get that sense back, and (f) it's almost where you're connecting with endorphins. These descriptions and the others in the category are representative of Nick's extreme sensations while experiencing flow. He explains that his experiences are always of this intensity. He understands that some people have experiences of satisfaction, but Nick's sensations accompanying flow are always

much more profound. To conclude, Nick states, “That’s the emotional rewards of teaching, not what causes them so much, but just why I do it [pauses] why I teach, why I write, what I hope to get.”

Intellectual beliefs. Nick is an analyst. He involves himself deeply in thinking about how his actions mesh with his beliefs. His actions represent his beliefs in many instances and he is very deft at teasing out the statements he has made during the interview that represent his intellectual beliefs. Some of these statement are (a) teaching is learning, (b) it’s not when kids go that extra distance where they would have gone on their own, it’s when you truly see what you’ve done to help them grow, (c) learning is something you do every time you open your mouth, (d) every child needs a different set of motivations to make them believe in themselves, and (e) those kids just need to be taught to succeed, and to feel personal success. Nick discusses the importance of balancing intellectual and emotional perspectives. He clarifies,

I think they’re the intellectual view of what I believe as a teacher. . . . these need to be matched with what you need emotionally from teaching These need to be matched very carefully. . . . What I mean is that if you don’t match your emotional needs with your intellectual beliefs, you’ll never reach that sense of personal quality of life in the profession.

Why I teach: what I want kids to know/understand about the world. This category falls in step with Nick’s intellectual beliefs. It contains the concepts he believes are important for students to learn from him. The concepts range from the way students see themselves to the way in which they see the world. This category stresses the realities of the world and the importance of these realities to Nick’s success as a teacher. Ideas within this category are (a) I look at the big picture; what

am I trying to accomplish, (b) I'm not teaching just a word, I'm teaching about the world, (c) I'm really looking at how kids view themselves as learners, (d) I'm just a little slice of fact about the reality, and (e) so that taught me a lot about putting kids in real situations. I mean, simulated, as real as possible for kids, about having them learn. Nick expresses the ideas in this category very explicitly in this poignant passage:

. . . and science isn't important, language arts isn't important and social studies isn't important. All those things are not by themselves important. But all those things are important in having the kids recognize what they can really do, what they can really be as learners and as people.

Once again Nick refers to the importance of students learning about real issues, including taking responsibility for their own learning. He keeps returning to a key issue of having students understand how much potential they have as learners and as citizens. It seems that unless this understanding is recognized by his students, the resulting environment is one that detracts from Nick's experiences of flow.

Win/lose—losing energy. Another theme that keeps surfacing throughout the interview and that is highlighted during Nick's analysis is the situation of having a winner without having a loser. To explain more fully, Nick recalls when his Dad had let him win at cards and then how he became good enough to beat his Dad consistently. The feeling he received from being a winner at the cost of the loser was not uplifting for him. Part of this condition has to do with the negative energy surrounding the idea of forcing someone to lose in order to win. Another part of it has to do with succeeding with little effort. The ideas in this category include (a) the sense of winning in a team sport means that you share that joy, (b) it [winning, succeeding]

touches pleasure centers in your body that tell you, “this is really good,” and then you need that fix again, (c) it’s like winning a competitive event only better. Everybody wins, because you feel it and they feel it, and (d) when we started to play crib, he’d let me win, he’d let me win, he’d let me win, and I didn’t like that.

Nick believes intensely in the power of energy gained from positive actions in life. He perceives a terrible loss of energy when students are fighting among themselves or with him as a teacher. Instead of trying to make others lose, Nick wants his students to create positive energy by seeing the best in themselves and each other and assisting one another to learn. As the students approach the point where their behavior and beliefs have generated enough positive energy to transform the learning environment into a positive one, Nick anticipates and keeps pushing toward a breakthrough. When the breakthrough finally happens, when the positive energy is finally at a point of equilibrium, there is a sharing of energy. As Capra is quoted in Wheatley (1994) regarding quantum theory, there is a “continuous dance of energy” (p. 32). It is my belief that for Nick to have experiences of flow in teaching, the energy involved with his teaching must reflect a smooth passage of information, understanding, effort, and respect. These circumstances enhance the conditions of the teaching/learning environment such that both Nick and his students have experiences of flow.

Energy required to seek optimal experiences. This category is composed of ideas related to the efforts required to reach the optimal experience. Nick determines that his actions, within his role as a teacher, are tied directly to his feelings of success which are a result of his experiences of flow. These experiences produce sensations of euphoria and joy. Nick states, “The only thing that gives me that sense of success is

that internal feeling, that sense of, if not euphoria, at least internal joy in having really done something.” Within this category he groups the following ideas: (a) you’ve made all these strides up till Christmas, and then there’s been this big break and you suddenly feel like, “Gee, I’m starting all over again,” (b) and you’re not sure you can summon up the energy to do it and it’s like withdrawal, (c) you go and work harder to try to find the right combination of things, and (d) then it gets harder and harder and harder to reach that because you keep setting your goals higher and higher and higher. The essence of the category Energy Required to Seek Optimal Experiences is based on Nick’s hypothesis that the energy required to reach the level of success/fulfillment leading to experiences of flow becomes more and more difficult to summon when interruptions occur. Breaks increase the difficulty of maintaining the environment that is conducive to experiencing flow. Even more importantly, Nick believes that because of the type of personality he possesses, he is driven to consistently increase the difficulty of goals he achieves in order to feel challenged. He seeks intricate paths to success and doesn’t want to be “let win.” Nick explains that this constant increasing of the anti or difficulty of goals to be achieved makes the amount of energy necessary to overcome the challenge ever more difficult to muster. At times he feels he is on a treadmill where the effort needed to keep pace keeps increasing with each step he takes. Nick wonders when creating this category if this is one of the causes of teacher burnout among highly motivated teachers.

Preteaching. This category includes all his references to the reason why he abandoned his career as a biologist and chose to become a teacher. The ideas in this category are (a) you never got to see a discovery . . . You never saw the discovery in

someone else's face, (b) you never saw the "Wow, I did it!" and (c) there was no sense of accomplishment which can come from working with individual kids in a classroom. These concepts all complement the ideas that represent Nick's philosophies and his reasons supporting his choice of teaching as a profession. He experiences flow when he is able to assist students to have an aha or to make discoveries about themselves as learners. He feels joy which leads to feelings of success when his students learn about the reality of the world. Joy at having students make discoveries about themselves and their real worlds was not something that was possible in Nick's preteaching career as a biologist.

Students as energy drainers: negative thoughts (personal). One of Nick's strongest beliefs is that working in the classroom involves sharing energy. He feels that when episodes of teaching are positive and students are responding and learning, energy is given and taken on an equal basis by all involved. It is when there is a crisis or rift during a teaching episode that an imbalance of energy occurs. This crisis can be represented by a single incident such as an altercation between himself and a student or the occurrence of a break like Christmas holidays. It can also be portrayed by a situation occurring over a period of weeks or perhaps months, such as consistent struggling and negative interactions between the teacher and students. In a situation where there is crisis or trauma within the teacher/student relationship, energy is lost or drained away from both parties. Nick refers to students in these situations as energy drainers or joy zappers. They are individuals who feel successful only when others are brought down. The specific situations or concepts he includes within this category are (a) that connection's [between teacher and student] broken and I think that's [the

break] a significant part of it [flow], (b) you really have to lay it on the line with these guys exactly what the parameters are [pauses] what's acceptable and what isn't, and (c) so the joy zappers are kids who don't have any belief in themselves and are the things that bring that feeling [of flow] down. These are very personal thoughts expressed by Nick, and as he is working through the analysis of his words and ideas from a previous interview he explains,

I see it as a time when there are a lot of win/lose [situations]. A lot of losing energy along the way. And kids do that to each other. Kids do that to themselves. Teachers do that to kids. Kids do that to teachers. Because there's no sense of self there . . . I mean, if you know enough, you say the class is struggling, the teacher's struggling, the kids are struggling . . . maybe the whole class isn't. And you see that's because of the energy drain that's happening. There's no sense of joy, and I think that's because you have no idea where you're going [pauses] no idea what it is that's going to make that happen. I see that as being involved in a lot of knowledge of kids to start with. Getting ready for it, knowing what they need to learn, which hooked back to your intellectual beliefs about what kids need to learn.

Nick's learning curve. During the first interview, Nick spoke of a recent challenge he has taken on. It involves learning to use the computer and to receive the same kind of feedback or sensations from what he is able to place on the screen as he received when he was writing and putting characters on paper. There are only two statements in this category but they represent an additional way that Nick is able to enhance the environment that leads to experiences of flow. The statements in the category Nick's Learning Curve are (a) and I'm learning to have that [feeling of knowing through writing] better on a computer screen than I could before, and (b) and to look at the screen and see what it says and to get the feeling [flow] from that, from the screen and I wouldn't have done that before.

Although there are only two statements in this category Nick's view of learning for himself is supported by statements throughout the rest of the interview. He believes in lifelong learning as well as learning being challenging. He is constantly striving to learn new things and the more difficult the better.

I can see! There is a single entry in this category that represents one of Nick's ultimate sources of flow. The statement describes why writing is critical to Nick's understanding of himself and his actions in the classroom. The statement is as follows:

I write so I think it. That's the key with me. I simply write it [his plans for teaching his students, or any other problem he is attacking] so I can work through the problems I can see, the hitches I can see, what's right with it, and I can see what's wrong with it. It's like walking through a maze [pauses] [or] standing above it and viewing it with your eyes. And that's what I do when I write.

As he reflects on this category, Nick comes to the conclusion that the feelings of joy associated with flow in teaching, are the same as the feelings of joy associated with flow in writing. He states "And see that's again [pauses] that's the same sense. These two [teaching and writing] are absolutely the same. The sense that you get from this [is the same] as you get from reading a page, or composing a page and knowing it's right." Nick adds,

I have this ability to see [pauses] so I don't know. . . .I can see; there's no mystery now. There's just a whole bunch of "Wow!". . . . Once I write and I'm on the right track. You see, it's not simply writing here that's doing it [resulting in flow]. It's the knowing it's right You know your kids, you know your audience, you know your subject matter, and it's like writing it down and all the hooks are there [pauses] it's the aha, it's the aha feeling.

Nick concludes his explanation by adding, "It's magical, this [the category about writing] is magical. It's like there are a whole bunch of pieces and they just fit inside

themselves. You didn't even have any idea how well they would do that until they were done." He continues, "And then they all were there. And you went, 'Oh, wow, this is cool! I really like this.' This is not anything like what I had intended at the start, but you know it's going to come because you've done it before."

Discussion of the Categories

As we near the end of Nick's grouping, reflecting, and labelling of ideas, I ask him to explain the importance of the most impacting categories. The category Nick returns to is the one referring to energy drain and he makes some final statements of how that theme of ideas relates to his experiences of flow within his teaching. Nick prefers to call the exchange of energy not a giving and taking of energy, but "... it would be sharing. In a positive environment, we're sharing a huge amount of energy with each other. In a negative environment, we're just draining each other." The category is actually titled "Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork." When he speaks about the laying of ground work, he explains the importance in this way:

I see it as a struggle I go through to make the struggle and the energy I give up [worth it] to get to the point where I'm gaining it [energy]. . . . And I think that's the key, you know. It's a struggle between input and output of energy. What gives that to me as a teacher and what takes that away from me as a teacher.

At this point I ask Nick which of the categories is the greatest enhancer of the conditions associated with his experiences of flow. He chooses to elaborate on the categories titled "What I See When Kids Are There/The High and again Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork." Nick reveals the following:

This is it [flow]. "What I see when kids are there/the high." That's what gives me the energy. But to get there this [Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork category] is what I need. . . . This [laying the groundwork] is the one that gets

you there. This is the absolutely necessary step. It's the self-flagellation. It's the masochism of teaching. You get nothing from it, or you don't feel like you're getting anything from it, but it's also the one that gets you there [to experience flow].

This [What I See When Kids Are There category] is what I get from it; this is how I feel about it, what the kids need. But these are the two [categories] [pauses] what I see from the kids is all the energy. . . . If they were a teeter-totter. I'm dangling with my feet up in the air, and the kids are way down there. And there's no way I'm going to get down there and suddenly [pauses] suddenly, it [the teeter-totter] starts to pull down. I've just added [more energy], and I just keep trying more and more, putting more and more these things [routines, expectations, getting to know the students, hooking into their emotions, patience and perseverance] in until this [the side of the teeter-totter representing teacher energy] starts to get heavy enough that the work is here, and suddenly they're [the side of the teeter-totter representing students] elevated and I can see them. . . . It then becomes a natural act. It comes naturally. You know exactly what comes next. And it's like, "I don't even have to work hard at this." You don't feel like there's any work. Maybe when you say, "They make it look easy, they don't look like they're doing anything and yet they're getting these phenomenal results because of all this [laying the groundwork]." You paid your dues, and you get your rewards.

Although it has the least number of passages within it, the category "I Can See!" related to Nick's writing, is also critically important to his experiences of flow. Writing and "knowing it's right" is a compelling source of feelings which Nick describes as euphoria or joy, and the only situation he speaks of where he has the forceful or dynamic physiological reaction of sneezing. The single excerpt within the writing category is so powerful by itself that I cannot help but assume that writing, "to get it right" or to discover something new is Nick's single most powerful situation resulting in a flow experience.

My Interpretation as Researcher

In studying the descriptions of Nick's experiences of flow, it becomes clear that there are many aspects of his experiences that parallel the experiences of flow reported by others. When aligned with the frame presented by Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1993),

Nick's descriptions are found to be similar to the different characteristics associated with flow.

The core characteristics of flow as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), are (a) a balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled, (b) a structure with clear goals, and (c) a structure providing immediate and relevant feedback. The secondary characteristics include (a) a focused concentration of the participant, (b) the merging of activity and awareness, (c) the activity being under the person's control, and (d) a distorted perception of time and temporary loss of self awareness.

A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled. Nick's experiences of flow are definitely associated with situations that embody the core characteristic regarding balance of variable challenge and skill. This is evident in the beginning stories that Nick tells regarding his personality as a young boy when his father would allow him to win at cards. He didn't like this situation and elaborates on his feelings regarding being challenged. "I don't want to have it be easy. Maybe that's it . . . maybe someone inside me says you have to fight like hell before you can win in a way that you'll respect. Maybe you're [Nick himself] making it hard."

In terms of varying the challenge and skills reflected in a situation, Nick admits that he purposely increases the challenges he must face each time he takes on an assignment. He does this by setting his standards higher and higher. He also admits that there is potential for this constant increasing of the standard to become emotionally dangerous. He compares the raising of standards each time a responsibility is taken on to the drug induced heights an addict must achieve in order to get the same high. He states, "And that's sort of fixing back to that whole idea of your next one

has to be better to get the same results, which can be quite dangerous because that means you push yourself constantly.”

Nick speaks about the challenge within his own learning and I ask him if the learning is more fulfilling if it proves to be difficult. He responds, “It’s essential. Again, that’s bad, too. I won’t be let win. I won’t allow someone to let me win, so [pauses] it has to have some difficulty in it or it’s not balanced.”

A final example of the core characteristic of balancing of challenge and skill that can be varied is evidenced in Nick’s explanation of sharing energy with his students. He actually uses the analogy of a teeter-totter where he is striving to strike a balance between his efforts to reach and teach his students and their efforts to take responsibility for their learning and to have recognition of themselves as learners. He explains,

If there were a teeter-totter. I’m dangling with my feet up in the air, and the kids are way down there. And there’s no way I’m going to get down there and suddenly [pauses] suddenly, it starts to pull down. I’ve just added, and I just keep trying more and more, putting more and more these things [skills; routines, expectations, understanding students] in until this [his effort toward the student’s learning] starts to get heavy enough that the work is there [in place] and suddenly they’re elevated [beginning to learn] and I can see them.

Nick controls the challenges and the skills involved in his role as a teacher. He prefers to have difficult challenges and strives to keep his skills in line with them.

A structure with clear goals. In Nick’s district and state, education is rigorously governed by law. To this end the procession itself has incredible structure and standards surrounding it. In addition to the legal structure supporting education, Nick has goals and philosophies of his own that provide specific guidelines for his teaching. As we progress through the interview, Nick very easily verbalizes his philosophies and goals as a teacher. They surface throughout the interviews and are

consistently forceful each time they are discussed. The first of Nick's philosophies, which may be translated into one of his goals, is his belief in being a lifelong learner. He states, "Learning is something you do every time you open your mouth, every time you breathe air, every time you see anything [pauses] that you should be a lifetime learner." This philosophy manifests itself in the way Nick pursues his own learning and in the way he strives to have his students understand the significance of being a lifelong learner.

A second philosophy or goal that Nick emphasizes is the belief that students must be made aware that learning is not related just to material from the curriculum, but that "learning has context; learning has meaning. And it has value for their lives." He states, "You see, my optimal experience is knowing that when one kid leaves my classroom, they're ready for the next step in the world." He adds, "I think that my goal always is to point out to them [students] how much there is to learn and how well they can do if they just believe in themselves." Nick perceives this goal or philosophy as being similar to that of a surgeon's. A surgeon strives to return someone to health. Nick strives to have learners leave his care with a healthy attitude about learning and life.

A third philosophy or goal that Nick values is to "draw personal delight in [from] teaching." This goal is related to his hypothesis about sharing of energy between students and teacher. Nick is able to experience positive energy when his students begin to work with him and each other toward achieving. His goal is to experience delight and this cannot happen while he is deprived of positive energy from his students. The positive energy he requires from his students begins to course when

they recognize and respect themselves as learners. Positive energy also occurs when students have an aha or discovery.

The last philosophy or goal that Nick expresses is the importance of being absolutely prepared for his responsibilities. By being prepared, he hopes to be ready for the unexpected. In this goal, Nick compares himself to an assembly line worker. The worker knows his material and product so well that when the product does not work, or when something unexpected happens, he knows exactly why and can correct the situation.

Teaching is an autonomous responsibility. Nick knows the curriculum he must teach and has free rein in how he will teach it. By having such control over the situation, Nick is able to utilize his own personal philosophies and goals to shape the structure of his teaching approach. His goals provide him with a target to shoot for. By aiming for his goals he is able to establish the kind of environment that will support his experiences of flow.

A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback. Nick is the kind of teacher who receives his cues from the students he teachers. He watches their behavior to know how to adjust his strategies. He talks passionately about students who have experienced discovery. "You can see it on their faces. They make the discovery about what you're teaching, or really more importantly about themselves. . . . They understand and they go, 'Oh, I get this. I can do this.'"

A second kind of feedback received by Nick is related to sharing and acquisition of energy. He relates this kind of feedback to the response sought by a performer. The feedback is in the form of energy and Nick speaks about his view of himself as a

performer and the feedback he needs to be able to keep performing. “That’s exactly what I am as a teacher. I’m more of a performer. . . . And performers need an audience, and when the audience goes away, the energy level drops.” Nick parallels the audience going away with (a) the withdrawal of his students’ energy because of an emotional disconnection or crisis, or (b) the withdrawal of his students through prolonged breaks such as holidays in the school year. He provides an example of emotional disconnection through a description of a student causing difficulties in a classroom.

. . . or in maybe some cases, kids who are really disturbed. It isn’t their goal simply to not do their own [work], it’s to disrupt others. There’s some kids who only seem to get joy from making others lose as much as they feel a failure, and that really breaks that [connection and flow]. That really significantly breaks that.

Nick also discusses the kind of disconnection from his audience he experiences after a prolonged holiday. “Those natural big breaks [holidays], or unnatural big breaks, seem to be a stop in that momentum.”

A third kind of feedback has to do with the feelings Nick experiences personally when he knows he is close to success or discovery. This happens as he is teaching and he feels a sense of joy and euphoria. These sensations alert Nick to the fact that he is achieving his goal. He states, “And sometimes when I work toward developing and teaching kids, sometimes I feel like I’ve discovered something new and I get that sense of euphoria.”

The physiological emotions and feelings are the first indication that he is on the right track. He discusses his experiences when he is preparing lessons, a situation that is a most powerful source of flow for him. “It became a joy when I was preparing

lessons like that, because I would get that surge. I knew when it was right.” He adds, “It’s almost where you’re connecting with endorphins.”

Nick explains the physiological feedback he receives when he is successful. Again he emphasizes that the physiological cues usually happen before he is aware he has been successful or has reached a goal. He states, “You see, the only thing that gives me that sense of success is that internal feeling, that sense of euphoria, at least, internal joy in having really done something.”

Focused concentration of the participant. One of Nick’s strongest experiences of flow occurs when he is writing. During this activity he becomes fully absorbed and actually produces great volumes of work. He talks about this situation. “It [the optimal experience or flow] kicked in as I was writing, as I write, I don’t simply [pauses] you know, I write pages and pages when I prepare. I’d script it and I knew when it was right, it was awesome.”

A second example of focused concentration is implied in the way Nick prepares for his actual lessons. He works hard to ensure that he is prepared for the unexpected during his lesson. Nick anticipates the occurrence of a teachable moment which is a snapshot of time when something unexpected happens. The short span of time seems to be suspended from the rest of the lesson and allows the teacher to capitalize on a specific quality of the moment and to teach a valuable concept or lesson that would not have been possible during the ordinary lesson. Watching for the unexpected or the teachable moment requires great concentration and focus. The teacher must remember what has occurred previously and project ahead, predicting directions students might take once they have received specific information.

Nick refers to focus of concentration throughout the interview series. He also demonstrates total concentration during the interview, making connections and interpretations of ideas as we progress. From Nick's descriptions of his experiences of flow, it is evident that he has the same intensity of concentration during his planning, writing, and teaching that he demonstrates during the interview.

Merging of activity and awareness. An indicator of the characteristic merging of activity and awareness is embodied in the momentum that occurs during Nick's teaching. He parallels the momentum with the kind of energy observed when a train rolls down a hill. The train picks up speed as it continues down the hill. During his classes, Nick strives to achieve this kind of momentum. He strives to achieve momentum minute by minute during his lessons and day by day over the course of the school year. The activities and strategies he plans for his lessons draw both him and his students into the lesson. Nick describes one episode where he placed his students into a simulated situation and was part of the simulation himself.

I came in dressed as an alien, dressed in a very funny costume, and I spoke to them oddly, and I gave them instructions and I offered them prizes for certain things, if they did things. And at first it was building your own culture, and then I started to ask them for things that would take them away from the building [of the culture]. And pretty soon, they were so hooked on those things, I asked them for the culture. I asked for all of it, I wanted to control it. And . . . when they started to fight that, I demanded it and I said, "Stop, tell me how you feel."

This kind of involvement in the activity of a lesson is typical for Nick. He quickly becomes part of whatever is happening in the class. When I ask him how total involvement in an activity or lesson begins, he suggests that it has to do with the orchestration of the lesson. He states, "I think a lot of it has to do with being perfectly prepared." For Nick, the blending of activity and awareness is a result of

being absolutely knowledgeable about the subject area and the students with whom he is working. This knowledge allows him to move himself into the activity and to become part of the students' learning. He compares his knowledge of his topic and his students to the way in which an assembly line worker knows his materials and his product.

It's that whole feeling, the connection between knowing . . . that the thing you're servicing, knowing it so well that you can't make a mistake with it. Knowing exactly how to respond when it doesn't quite work the way you thought it would at first. It's not a flat piece . . . it's three-dimensional.

The kind of planning or "orchestration" that Nick does to connect with his classes enables him to merge with the activities. He is able to leave the other issues going on in his day outside the moments he spends with his students. Like the assembly line worker, he is fully involved with the activity and unaware of irrelevant outside distractions.

The activity is under the participant's control. The manner in which Nick discusses this characteristic lends itself to addressing not only the effects of control in a situation, but the effects of lack of control in a situation as well. Nick sites a number of situations that are beyond his control and adds that they are times in his teaching or work where he is not in flow. The situations out of his control are actually times of frustration for him. One example he provides is his lack of control over the year calendar and the impact of not being able to control time and momentum. He views success in teaching as related to the connection he is able to establish with his students. When breaks in the school year occur he feels great frustration and experiences a letdown of momentum when his students return. When he is able to

have solid blocks of time with his students, he is able to build the groundwork necessary to achieve desired results. This groundwork creates a positive environment where he is able to experience optimal moments or flow.

A second example of situations beyond Nick's control and their impact on his experiences of flow is provided when Nick discusses "joy zappers." Joy zappers are dysfunctional students who "refuse to be reached." These students also strive to create lose/lose situations within the class and disrupt others. Joy zappers can be beyond a teacher's control and detract from the positive learning environment. Overcoming the student's negative energy field takes time and skill. Some students may never become a part of the bigger peer group within their class. While a dysfunctional student or joy zapper is working against Nick's intentions and plans, Nick experiences no joy. If Nick is able to assist the student to gain self-esteem and self-confidence, the energy field changes from negative and unidirectional, to positive and multidirectional. This sharing of energy is a result of Nick's ability to control the learning environment once again.

The last example of control Nick describes is directly related to his need to be absolutely prepared. Nick states that, "A lot of it has to do with orchestration. I think a lot of it has to do with being perfectly prepared." Perfect preparation is achieved through meticulous planning and scripting of units and lesson. This kind of planning enables Nick to catch any oversights or mistakes in his own logic. He is able to visualize what will happen in his lessons and thus be able to better control the situation. Nick takes this aspect of control to the point of wanting to be prepared for

the unexpected or teachable moments. If this kind of preparation and orchestration of his plans can be achieved, Nick is more likely to experience flow.

A distorted perception of time and temporary loss of self-awareness. As Nick speaks of his experiences of flow in teaching, he returns to a previous topic, that of momentum. His discussion of momentum is related to the passing of time that occurs during the school year and the value of having uninterrupted spans of time in which to work with the students. As Nick invests more and more energy, the momentum within the class increases. The students understand better what is expected of them and the time is used more productively. The concept of uninterrupted blocks of time suggests an increase of momentum which impacts the passage and quality of time. Nick explains,

You're getting more and more gain all the time with these kids because they're sensing their own power as learners. They're sensing how much they can do and that feeds them. There's that same feeling for them that feeds their self-belief that the sky's the limit, and then comes the breaks. And there goes the momentum.

When speaking about different kinds of teaching, Nick explains that he is a performing kind of teacher. By this he means that he enjoys being actively involved in his lessons. As a performer, he can be totally into his performance and eliminate any feelings of self-consciousness. Nick, when performing, responds to his audience (the students) and experiences segments of time where he is unaware of himself as the teacher performing for the students. He loses temporarily any sense of self-awareness that is unrelated to what he is doing with his students. In his analogy of the performer responding to an audience he states,

. . . performers talk about that [being totally responsive to the feedback and energy from the audience]. Musicians and comedians talk about that, too. The more laughter they get, the more they go, the more applause they get, the more whistling and screaming and shouting, the more they go.

When Nick is interacting with his students in this way, there is incredible momentum and he feels free to be what ever he needs to be in order to connect with his students. When Nick senses the momentum in his classes, he is freed from any self-awareness and is able to respond to his students in an uninhibited manner.

Concluding Thoughts Regarding Nick's Experiences of Flow

One of the most significant conclusions about Nick's experiences of flow is that his experiences are greatly influenced by his own autotelic personality. He strives to achieve perfection in everyday activities and thus challenges himself consistently. He looks for different ways to reach students and is not content until he has done so. In this way, Nick turns mundane experiences into ones that are incredibly challenging and exciting.

A second assumption made is that Nick experiences flow in various situations and receives several different sensations associated with flow. Nick describes these sensations as euphoric, joyful, exciting, and ecstatic. He has these sensations during teaching when he has connected with his students and when they are beginning to demonstrate responsibility for their own learning. This is the beginning of the momentum that is so important for Nick in his teaching.

Nick also experiences flow and all the sensations that accompany flow when he is planning lessons and writing. He receives surges of sensations while he is involved in the activity of planning and writing and often expresses his sense of optimal

experience with a yell or passionate exclamation. He states, “You want to pump your hand in the air, too. And sometimes I get up and do that, too, you know, when I’m writing or when I’m working.”

During flow, Nick experiences all of the characteristics of flow as outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). He controls both the challenge and skill involved in his everyday tasks. He possesses strong philosophies about teaching which translate into goals that he strives to achieve. He is provided with feedback from both students and himself that indicates how he is doing in achieving his goals. When in flow, he is incredibly focused and totally absorbed in what he is doing. Students understand what is expected of them, and thus the activities facilitated by Nick are under his control. When Nick is experiencing flow with his classes, time has a quality of consistency to it which enhances the positive learning environment. This allows Nick to make valuable connections with his students. As a result of the uninterrupted connection with his students, he loses any sense of self-consciousness and is able to fluctuate between his roles as performing teacher and invisible teacher.

As a final reflection, I am especially intrigued by Nick’s perspective on the issues of energy sharing resulting in flow experiences, loss of energy through heavy-handed discipline, and the dark side of flow. He touches on these concepts throughout the interview and is still reflecting on how they fit within his quality of life experiences. His discussions of these issues provide wonderful food for thought. Nick is a most reflective and articulate participant and provides a vivid description of his experiences of flow and the conditions that support them.

Discussion of the Findings

Introduction

The Phenomenological Approach

It is important to clarify that this study has employed a phenomenological approach to inquiry which, as stated by Patton (1990), takes the following perspective:

Put simply and directly, phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: “What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?” The phenomenon being experienced may be an emotion—loneliness, jealousy [*sic*], anger. The phenomenon may be a relationship, a marriage, or a job. The phenomenon may be a program, an organization, or a culture. (p. 69)

This differs from a phenomenological methodology which draws its essence from a philosophical perspective. Instead, a phenomenological approach employs a phenomenological focus which brings out or highlights the descriptions of what people experience and the way in which they experience it (Patton, 1990).

The method used to conduct this inquiry was chosen to allow the fundamental structures of flow as experienced by classroom teachers to be teased out of the narrative descriptions and better understood by both teachers and educational leaders. The analysis of the described experiences serves to identify the basic components of the experience of flow that may be common to members of a specific group, in this instance, classroom teachers. It is important to understand, however, that each described experience is unique to the individual teller. Each specific story is composed of a set of experiences that are, on one hand, very different from other teachers’ descriptions, yet on the other hand, fundamentally the same. My responsibility as researcher is to understand and honor the specific differences of each participant’s experiences, while considering a sameness in those experiences that will be exposed

through analysis. The results of this analysis promotes an increased understanding of different experiences of different teachers and their encounters with the phenomenon of flow. It also uncovers within the teachers' experiences, any common traits germane to the phenomenon of flow as studied and reported by other researchers.

The Interview

Different disciplines utilize the interview for different reasons. Those in the discipline of sociology may employ the interview to gather information regarding social opinion. Those in the discipline of psychology may use interview for the purpose of studying individuals' self-perception or their perceptions of others. Ethnographers engage the interview in order to understand specific issues belonging to a certain culture. The interview as used in the area of phenomenology may serve to explore and gather narrative material that furthers the understanding of a specific human phenomenon.

Within this study, a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews is used. The interviews follow closely a protocol of other studies conducted in the area of the phenomenon of flow. During the interview series, participants are asked to describe their experiences through story. The interviews serve to highlight differences among the participant's experiences and also to uncover common essential themes of the phenomenon of flow as experienced and described by classroom teachers in their narratives.

The Questions of the Study

From analysis of the narratives told by individuals within the study, I am able to address the questions of the study. Close scrutiny and dissection of the participants' described experiences of flow allows me to understand more completely episodes of flow as experienced by the teacher participants, and in doing so, address the following questions of the investigation.

1. What are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon of flow? Specifically, what conditions or circumstances (a) start the flow experience, (b) enhances the flow experience, and (c) stop the flow experience.
2. How do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?
3. What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

In this final segment of chapter 4, I will use the participants' described experiences to address the research questions of this study. Earlier in chapter 4 I present, in detail, descriptions of each participant's experiences. I will at this time, draw only the clearest examples and episodes from the narratives to assist me in conveying the findings relative to the specific questions of the study.

I will also use Csikszentmihalyi's dimensions, essential themes, or characteristics of flow to compare teachers' experiences of flow with the experiences of flow described by participants in other walks of life, vocations and leisure activities.

Lastly, discussion will be presented regarding the implications of the understanding of the phenomenon of flow among teachers, for leadership practice.

Addressing the Research Questions of the Study

What Are the Experiences of Flow for Classroom Teachers?

Participant selection. It must be made clear that, based on the criteria that was provided for selection of participants, the participants in the study are individuals believed to have had experiences of flow. The criteria was utilized to identify individuals who, through what they say and do, demonstrate characteristics that could be found in individuals who have flow experiences. The criteria was gleaned from literature regarding flow and rendered into eight specific descriptors. The criteria includes such demonstrated characteristics as expression of enjoyment and enthusiasm in their work, positive discussion about their work, consistent seeking of challenges in their work, perception of obstacles as challenges not road blocks, and demonstration or discussion of total absorption in their episodes of teaching. For the complete list of criteria see Appendix B.

General perception of the participants' experiences of flow. All of the participants in this investigation describe experiences of flow. Their descriptions vary in terms of the duration of the flow experience, the intensity of the flow experience, as well as the emotional and physical reactions to the flow experience. Each participant's descriptions are specific to the individual and represent a unique happening occurring for that individual on that particular day and at that specific time. The individual participant's reactions from one flow experience to another are consistently similar, but are described quite differently when compared one participant to the next. Each participant's conditions supporting the flow experience and his or her emotional and

physical responses to it are unique to each individual. The task at this point is to recognize the importance of each participant's individual experiences while searching for common themes or dimensions of flow woven throughout the experiences of all. The critical responsibility of describing, analyzing, and depicting the findings of this kind of study are spoken clearly by Eichelberger (in Patton, 1990) as he states,

Some researchers are misled to think that they are using a phenomenological perspective when they study four teachers and describe their four unique views. A phenomenologist assumes a commonality in those human experiences and must use rigorously the method of bracketing to search for those commonalities. Results obtained from a phenomenological study can then be related to and integrated with those of other phenomenologists studying the same experience, or phenomenon. (p. 70)

During the following discussion, I will shed light on the findings within the experiences of the individual participants, as well as the findings common to the experiences of the group. I begin by suggesting the very general differences and similarities of the participants and the ways in which they share their stories.

Four of the participants are very articulate and demonstrative regarding the explanations of their experiences. These people tend to describe intense responses related to their experiences of the phenomenon of flow. The other two participants are much more subdued in the discussions of their flow experiences, maintaining a very calm and matter-of-fact demeanor throughout the entire description. They describe much more subtle responses to flow within their experiences. The participants who sense a smaller range of response to flow tend to be less verbal yet no less clear about the conditions and circumstances of their experiences of flow. All participants, extreme or moderate in their descriptions and responses regarding flow, tell very

moving, sometimes hilarious, and sometimes sad renditions of experiences within the environment of teaching.

As different as the individual participants are from one to the other, so too, are their descriptions of their flow experiences. There are, however, threads that weave through each description of flow that represent an essence or essences that are shared among the collected stories. The essences are core meanings that are common to the human experience of flow. These threads or characteristics, in their own unique way, exemplify the dimensions of flow as determined by studies reporting hundreds of other descriptions of flow.

Specific episodes of flow for teachers. In describing specific episodes of flow, all but one of the participants respond by telling very detailed experiences of flow within their classrooms. Some participants describe their experiences in a very passionate and emotional way, as though the episodes were occurring that very second. Others describe the situations with calm and meticulous detail, stating opinions and assumptions in a factual manner. Derek, instead of telling about a specific experience, discusses the conditions that he knows need to be in place for him to experience flow. He cannot think of a specific experience but suggests that certain circumstances have to be present in order for him to know that he is feeling fulfilled. Derek's physiological sensations are very subtle which might account for his being unable to identify a specific incident where flow has occurred. As the interview series continues, Derek admits that he experiences flow in activities outside of work, and that his sensations during those experiences could be described as exciting or satisfying. He is then able

to transfer this new understanding of his experiences of flow to situations while teaching.

Some of the described situations are similar to each other, while other situations greatly differ. All of the classroom situations involve interaction and connection with students. The participants describe, with much thought and sincerity, their personal experiences of flow in the classroom.

For Louise, the specific situation of being creative and assisting a student to produce a quality piece of work results in feelings of flow for her. Being creative herself and drawing creativity from her students is a condition that always results in flow experiences.

Heather, on the other hand, speaks passionately of the flow she experiences when she is able to have powerfully intellectual dialogue with her students. She also states that she experiences flow when she starts something new with her students. Heather never teaches the same lesson twice. The excitement of trying something for the first time starts her experiences of flow.

Both Derek and Barrie experience flow when their students begin to demonstrate confidence in and responsibility for their own learning. Derek states, "It's as good a feeling as I can get when a kid says, 'I'm going to get an A', and they get an A." Barrie believes he should be a facilitator and that students "have to be a key participant." Recognizing that students are involved and taking responsibility for their own learning creates moments of flow for him.

Dana receives her optimal experiences from witnessing growth in students. She explains, "It was such a moment of growth for a certain individual or a group of kids,

I feel so happy for them that I actually, you know, my eyes fill up and I feel warm inside.”

Some of Nick’s experiences of flow occur when he witnesses discovery in the face of a student. He states, “I teach for ahas. You don’t get them every day but that’s what the planning’s about.”

Once the participants describe for me their experiences of flow, I begin to see that each of their specific episodes of flow involves very unique situations between the student and teacher. There are threads of common condition, however, that seem to be present in all the participants’ descriptions. Each participant, through the telling of a unique experience, refers to a number of common characteristics that are contained in the story. I now attempt to make clear the common conditions that are present for all the participants and the way in which the commonality is experienced for each participant.

What Starts the Flow Experience?

Teachers’ perceptions that students are experiencing flow. For all the participants, there are similar critical conditions that need to be in place to experience the phenomenon of flow. One of these is the teachers’ belief in the mutual experience of flow by the teachers’ students. Each of the participants discusses the need to have the students with them in the flow experiences. They use different phrases to describe the condition of student experience of flow such as:

in another world together, sensing this excitement in them carried over to me, the connectedness doesn’t go away, there’s a direction or chemistry that is happening between yourself and them, to see other kids being moved by it; then it starts for me, and you can see it on their faces.

For all of the participants, flow during instruction is not possible if the students are not involved in the experience as well. There is common agreement among participants that to have an optimal experience in teaching without the involvement of the students would be not only impossible, but pointless as well. Each participant also speaks of the incredible connection and bonding that must be present for flow to occur. One participant explains that she and her students are “in another world together.” Another participant explains the connection between her and her students while in flow, in the following way:

I will be presenting something to the students and I will see every eye on me and not a sound in the room. And I just, I almost, it's scary. You realize you've got them, like they're with you and I honor that experience and wonder. It's a feeling of wonder. You think, “What am I doing that's doing this?” And it happens enough that you know that it's a part of you and your experience and you sit back in awe of it.

Each participant speaks about connection with students in a specific way. As the discussions continue, each teacher makes reference to the kind of environment that must exist for the bonding or connections to take place. These connections occur between the teacher and his or her students as well as among the students in the particular class. This condition is referred to by many phrases including a community of learners, a base of common expectations, an environment of trust and risk taking, an essence of harmony, and positive learning environment. I have chosen to use the phrase “positive learning environment” to mean the conditions that must be present for connection and bonding to occur and for flow to result.

Positive learning environment. A second critical component or condition that is described as essential to all participant' experiences of flow is the kind of ground

work that is put into place to allow students to risk and be all that they can be. At no time do participants discuss having flow experiences that occur as if by magic within the classroom. There is always hard work that goes into preparing the environment and the students for the growth that teachers anticipate and hope will occur. They express the essence of this condition in the following ways:

building a personal connection, a real feeling and sense of love between a teacher and a student, they have to get to know you; you have to get to know them, my expectations; their expectations. Things don't happen unless you create a really safe environment and kids feel they can take risks, you actually have to have kids learn what it is that you expect of them and what they, in a sense, expect of you.

It is interesting that each of these teachers expresses, although in different ways, the same sentiments about the importance of building harmony among the people in the class. The teachers reaffirm again and again that their experiences of flow in the classroom are dependent on the students' feeling that they belong and can risk without fear of exclusion or ostracism. Once this kind of base is established, moments of flow can be experienced by students. The flow experiences of students coincide with the flow experiences of teachers. The participants are unable to determine which flow experience occurs first. Regardless, it is sufficient to say that teachers and all that is involved in teaching revolve around the well-being and growth of students and that it is understandable that teachers' experiences within the classroom are directly and closely associated with the experiences of the students.

Seeing growth in students. For all participants of the study there is agreement that observing student growth is a source of flow for them. Some describe student growth as a sustained condition that they work toward over a period of months; others

define it as witnessing students having an “aha.” In this kind of situation where students suddenly make an intellectual connection within a concept, the particular time lapse of the leap of understanding is almost instantaneous. Having a student discover a concept in this way often involves a great deal of work on the teacher’s behalf.

When the student finally makes the leap of abstraction, the revelation is a great source of flow for the teacher. This occurrence called “the aha” or “the discovery” is a situation that all participants speak of as being one of the conditions that initiates flow.

The second type of student growth which I describe as more sustained is one that all participants depict as an important aspect of their flow experiences as well. The feelings that stem from the situation of witnessing growth over a period of time represent a culmination of hopes and dreams that teachers have for their students. One participant, Dana, explains how her sensations of flow occur when she meets former students and is reminded how far the student has come. She explains,

Yeh, he was in that group And he remembered everything he did, and that just, you know, that says so much for a teacher. . . . I’ll never forget running into him and have him restate everything that he had done in my class to show me, “Wow, you really did learn something.”

For Dana, looking back and remembering where the student was and then recognizing how far the student has come, is a huge part of what makes her experiences of flow possible. All participants express similar sentiments regarding the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of students. Recognizing student growth leaves teachers with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction in having achieved a critical purpose within the realm of teaching.

Achieving goals and feeling successful. All of the participants interviewed have very definite goals for both them and their students. When they are able to achieve these goals, the conditions supporting the experience flow are enhanced. Examples of participants' goals leading to experiences of flow are varied in range and complexity.

Louise, for example, devotes her energies to having students find their hidden potential. This is an incredibly important goal for her, and when Louise's students create pieces of writing that demonstrate a discovery of talent and ability they were unaware of, Louise feels she has reached one of her goals. She and her students celebrate this growth in warm washes of exhilaration and joy.

Heather's goals involve being so well prepared that her students can work on their own throughout a project. She experiences times of flow when her students are working industriously, busily, and in the way in which she has anticipated. Heather draws a parallel between this kind of result from planning and preparing to how she feels after she has done a long day of gardening. She stands back and has a wonderful feeling of satisfaction at the result.

One of Dana's goals involves the creation of harmony within her classroom. Once harmony is achieved, she strives toward her second goal of "going for more and shining." "Going for more and shining" is related to the growth experience of both her and her students. She also calls it "taking it to the max" which means going beyond all expectations of quality. When Dana can create harmony which allows students to risk and "shine," she feels she has accomplished a personal goal and is shining herself.

The most significant goal Barrie expresses is to have his students take responsibility for their learning. He structures his life around some specific truths and by staying consistent with his beliefs, is able to encourage his students to be responsible for their choices in school. Barrie believes that there must be understood expectations, purposes, and involvement in the teaching/learning environment. These are supported by his belief in rules, individual actions, and consequences. Barrie feels that if he can be consistent in demonstrating or modelling his belief in these important ideals, he can bring his students closer to taking responsibility for their learning. The achievement of the specific goal related to student responsibility for learning is one of the conditions that initiates experiences of flow for Barrie.

Derek has a number of goals and describes some of them as standards that he feels are indicative of good teaching. These goals are related to the reactions of his students. He asks questions of himself such as, "Did the child want to learn? Did he feel comfortable in making that attempt? And did he feel good in the social sense at being in the classroom?" Another of Derek's goals involves the simple action of treating all students in a unique way. He regards treating students as individuals to be a challenge and a goal that he holds up for himself. A last goal Derek speaks of is to demonstrate a kind of "long lasting teaching." This involves working with students to instill a love of learning that is compensated by the intrinsic reward of knowledge. When Derek achieves his goals related to students feeling comfortable in his class, being treated as individuals, and being intrinsically motivated, he experiences moments of flow characterized by a sense of contentment and relaxation.

Nick has many goals he is striving to achieve. Some are the same as other participant's goals such as assisting students to grow, getting students to take responsibility for their learning, and teaching for discovery. He also has some very unique goals that he describes as placing students into real learning situations, preparing himself for the unknown, "becoming the invisible teacher," "working together to win," and "finding personal joy and delight in teaching." These goals, when accomplished, result in feelings of euphoria, ecstasy, joy, and energy for Nick.

In order for teachers to know when they have achieved a goal, they must receive information regarding their progress towards the goal. This information is known as feedback. The concept of feedback is critical to knowing when goals have been reached and in feeling successful. Participants speak adamantly about the importance of feedback from students in achieving goals, yet feedback from administrators does not seem to be a critical issue related to participants' feelings of success and experiences of flow.

Being challenged. All of the participants infer that being challenged is a critical condition within their flow experiences. They speak about their thoughts as they teach their students and indicate that they are consistently striving to overcome a challenge.

Some participants refer to creating more difficult challenges for themselves on a continuous basis. Nick speaks of the treadmill he can create for himself if he isn't careful. He places himself in a situation of being challenged at higher and higher levels till it is impossible to achieve success. For Nick, it is critical for the challenge to be substantial in order for him to feel successful. His experiences of flow occur

when the challenge is significant enough for him to feel he must really work in order to succeed.

Other participants suggest that their experiences of flow are initiated when there is a specific situation, obstacle, or challenge that they choose to meet. Barrie speaks of challenging himself to reverse his students' attitudes regarding social studies. He explains the situation, "A lot of them came into the class at the first of the year saying, 'Social studies. It isn't any fun or very interesting.' What I did was that I took that as a challenge." He continues to explain, "What I did was take that as a challenge . . . to change that attitude and be able to have them enjoy social studies. And I think, you know, I was able to."

Louise challenges herself to assist her students to find their deepest inner understanding and appreciation of themselves as unique individuals. Her challenge is to encourage even the most timid of students to express him or herself in a creative manner. She also strives to meet the challenge of teaching each child as an individual. Louise expands on this aspect of her teaching and experiences of flow.

It's when I get into their writing, when they're writing and I want to help every student. I want to get to every child and help them accomplish whatever it is they're working on and I have to force myself to move from one to the next because I can get so caught up in what they want to produce, in trying to help them.

One of Heather's challenges is to reach out to individual students who seem withdrawn. She stresses the importance of relationship with her students beyond the confines of the lesson. She challenges herself to find other ways to connect with her students such as dialoguing about their views, answering questions that go beyond the

particular lesson, and showing a genuine concern for the well-being of her students as unique personalities.

Derek believes that his challenges appear each and every day in the form of the individual students in his classes. He challenges himself to find motivation for each one of them and to teach them individually.

Dana strives to build her lessons so that students have choices and can express their creativity. She challenges herself to orchestrate situations so that students have the opportunity to have “momentous” experiences.

For all of the participants, challenge is a familiar part of their day. They possess an attitude that speaks strongly of the critical importance of being the best you can be and doing the best you can for students. Mediocre performance by them or their students is not acceptable. At the very best it is simply a beginning to much more; the first step on a continuous road of challenge and achievement, of striving to give one’s all.

What Conditions Enhance the Flow Experience?

Throughout the interview series, it is interesting to hear participants’ perceptions about the conditions they deem to be the supporting factors of the flow experience. It is also often difficult to decide which circumstances are considered critical in experiencing the phenomenon of flow and which circumstances enhance the phenomenon, making the experience stronger, more sensational, or long lasting. It is safest to say that the conditions described in the previous section, What Starts the Flow Experience, are circumstances without which flow would be impossible. The

conditions described in this section, specifically those conditions that enhance flow, are circumstances that intensify or prolong the feelings of flow. When the conditions that start flow are in place, the following situations make the flow experience more intense, vivid, relaxing, joyful, sustained, or frequent.

Planning and preparation. As the participants continue to describe the conditions that are associated with their experiences of flow, they invariably come back to the idea of being prepared. Each teacher prepares in a different way, but the ultimate result is that they are absolutely ready for any occurrence that could happen during the lesson or unit. Some participants indicate that the process of planning is itself an experience of flow in addition to what happens in the classroom. Dana states, “When I plan these things, I have those moments, even just in thinking about them, envisioning them.” Another participant, Nick, has similar experiences when planning and says, “It became a joy because I knew, when I was preparing lessons like that, because I would get that surge. I knew when it was right.”

Speaking about being prepared for the work with their students, the participants express their ideas in different ways. Some involve the concept of professional development, others talk in great depth of specific lesson plans and using the most effective teaching strategies. All of the participants, however, are united in their understanding of the importance of being prepared as an essential element of support for the experience of flow. This idea reoccurs throughout the interview series and is expressed by each participant in different ways. The following statements represent some of the thoughts of the different participants:

I have this need to be on top [of my profession]. There is an order to everything; papers are ready and now I can go have fun. It's the attitude and method of learning I'm interested in. At the first of the year I went through with all my classes saying, "This is what I want to do." It took time to think of all those things and how they would plug into different kinds of kids and appeal to them. I think a lot of it has to do with orchestration. I think a lot of it has to do with being perfectly prepared.

For each participant, being prepared and planning is considered a basic condition out of which will grow the fruits of his or her labor. These particular conditions that enhance optimal or peak experiences are the blossoms from which deliciously rich flow experiences eventually develop. These conditions nurture and enhance student experiences of flow, teacher observations of student growth, and teacher achievement of goals and feelings of success.

Autonomy and control. As the participants continue with their story telling and personal reflections of their experiences, they each express the importance of having autonomy and control in his or her jobs. Sometimes the concept is discussed in a positive way, describing the benefits of being able to do what is best without checking with a superior, of feeling responsible for the growth of a student, and having the authority to make final decisions based on experience and expertise. Other times the importance of the concepts of having autonomy and being in control becomes evident in the stories describing negative situations where autonomy and control are out of reach of the participants.

Louise, for example, speaks emotionally about a time where she was "at risk of quitting the profession" because she had too many dysfunctional students in her class. She was feeling powerless. Louise feels that her communication with the administrative team at the end of the year resulted in other teachers not having to go through the

same ordeal. The administrative team recognized that challenging students need to be placed carefully and that no one teacher, no matter how excellent he or she is, can deal with a disproportionate number of special needs students in one class. During the crisis period of Louise's year, she experienced antiflow. Nothing felt as though it was working. She felt no success. There was no observation of growth in her students, no joy in her teaching. She felt helpless in the situation. Her autonomy within her role as a teacher had been reduced because she was not able to make important and critical choices regarding her students and her teaching. Teaching strategies that she knew were best for teaching specific students and content areas could not be utilized because of the nature and number of her special needs students. Her ability to work closely with all her students became limited, controlled by the needs of the dysfunctional students. Her sense of control was nonexistent, both within her specific lessons, and within the confines of her position at the school. She explains, "I couldn't do my job as a teacher."

Other participants describe similar situations where they are required to take on too many different responsibilities in addition to their job as teachers. Barrie discusses the increased time he must spend on classroom management and the effect that has on his time to actually teach. Nick, referring to a similar situation as Barrie's, discusses students he refers to as "joy zappers." He explains, "... kids who are really disturbed. It isn't their goal simply to not do their own, it's to disrupt others." These kinds of students leave him feeling "disempowered," not knowing what to try next.

Nick also discusses the excessive responsibilities he has outside of his classroom and the way in which these demands take their toll on his feelings of success. He

maintains, "It's the stress that's accompanied with the lack of what I would accept as success for myself." Nick feels powerless with the demands of his job, believing they are out of his control. He feels there just isn't enough time in the day to achieve the results he expects of himself in all the areas of responsibility he has been assigned. During the 3 weeks of the interview series, Nick decides to take greater control of the situation and asks to be relieved of one of his responsibilities. Although he has to take a cut in pay, he now feels that he is back in control of his time and the quality of work he is able to do. Nick requires feedback indicating that he is doing a near-perfect job in order to feel he is successful. When this happens, he experiences flow. He reaffirms the correctness of his decision to take control and reduce his responsibilities by stating, "You don't do it [teach] for the pay check, you do it because it's so rewarding for you." When teaching stops being rewarding for Nick, he begins to look closely for ways to regain control and the feelings of euphoria and joy.

Dana describes the feeling of both having and not having autonomy and control in her job. She discusses her frustration in feeling the lack of control of her time. The kinds of creative lessons Dana prepares require time to plan as well as time in which to interact with other teachers. Creating lessons that allow choices and opportunities to "shine" for her students is an activity that results in flow for Dana. Unless she has control over her time, she cannot provide the same high quality of experience for her students. She explains, "If you run out of time to do those kinds of things [creative lesson planning], then the tendency might be to go to less creative ways of doing things." Creativity is critical in Dana's ability to experience flow. She teaches all the core subjects to her home room of grade seven students and feels the

crunch of time as she attempts to provide “momentous opportunities” for all her students in all the subject areas. As we speak about the issue of autonomy and control, Dana recalls her first job as a teacher where her principal gave her complete reign over how she taught. The principal assured her, “The sky’s the limit, you know, be creative, do what you want.” Her first job involved teaching only two of the core subject areas and she was able to be involved so much more in extracurricular activities. Dana believes that when she has control over what goes on in her classroom and the time that she needs to address each student’s strengths and weaknesses, she can create lessons and be involved with students in a way that results in her students exceeding her expectations. “Kids take it and exceed what you anticipated. The kids do open up and the kids do run with it and are totally creative.” When this happens, Dana experiences flow.

Colleagues. All but one of the participants speak of their staff as being important in enhancing their experiences of flow. Louise speaks intensely about the role her staff plays in her flow experiences. They support and encourage her creativity which is critical for peak experiences. Heather, as well, draws strength from her interactions with her staff. Her school seems to be “more conducive to teachers working together,” and provides her with a special connection with her staff, similar to the connection she has with her students. She refers to her staff and school and states, “There’s something unique, something special here.”

Derek’s relationship with his staff is one of appreciation and admiration. Working with a strong staff allows him to focus on the things that enhance his teaching. Although he doesn’t state that the relationship with his staff enhances his

experiences of flow, he does imply that they make his job easier. He states, "If everyone else around here were a bad teacher, I wouldn't feel good being here. The staff is a strong staff. We've got some wonderful teachers here." Alone or with their influence, Derek strives to overcome challenges and has heightened feelings "generally every day."

Dana strongly states that she needs the support of her colleagues in order to experience flow. She explains, "The other thing is human interaction. I'm a people person. Planning ideas with other teachers or just being able to share things and talk to people, that creates positive energy for me."

The importance of Barrie's staff in his experiences of flow is depicted in the way he laments the current loss of the initial familial feeling that existed among staff when Barrie first came to his school. He has received much support from members of his staff in the past and has grown from a fledgling first year teacher to an experienced educator under their watchful and encouraging tutelage. Barrie states, "I was influenced and got a lot of my strategies from watching others. We were almost like family, very much a family attitude." Barrie believes, unfortunately, that his staff is becoming divided, and he feels the impact of this division on his happiness at work. He explains, "I can see a lot of division. That bothers me." The situation with his staff detracts from the positive feelings he is used to receiving from work. He tries to keep his concerns about the staff out of his classroom, but it is difficult.

The one participant who did not indicate that staff members play a significant role in his experience of flow considers himself to be self sufficient in this regard. His lack of need for support from the school environment is clarified in the following

statement, “. . . those experiences [flow] have never come from my place, they’re from within . . . it doesn’t matter the place, you create the experience.”

Each of the participants identified for this study could be considered autotelic in personality. In other words, they find themselves wanting to do things and have experiences for the intrinsic motivation and reward inherent in the activity itself. They are not motivated by pay or recognition but simply by the feelings they receive from the experience. From the group within this study, Nick is the only one who seemed to prefer to be involved in experiences and succeed on his own. The other participants agreed that interactions with colleagues played some role in their experiences of flow.

Professionalism/teacher growth. Half of the people interviewed speak of professionalism as being important to their experiences of flow. The remaining half discuss similar ideas but do not use the word professionalism specifically. They speak of teacher learning, teacher growth, positive learning environment for all, and colleagues. They consider professionalism/teacher growth to be related to feelings of confidence, self-esteem, energy, and creativity. All participants indicate that time and personal connection is a significant part of the concept of professionalism/teacher growth. They refer to professionalism/teacher growth by using phrases such as

professional skills, professional growth out of a bad experience, competence in passing on attitudes and knowledge, a feeling of connectedness or helpfulness, support and resources, you need all those things to be able to do a good job and to plan things creatively.

All of the participants have the utmost respect for their staffs, but not all consider it critical to be linked to staff for their professional learning. Some participants talk about the impact of the professionalism and strength or competence of their staffs.

Being a member of a professional and competent staff makes the participants' job of working with their own students easier.

Time. Each participant confirms the importance of time in experiencing moments of flow. Some of the participants describe this importance in relationship to time for planning or preparing materials. Dana, who teaches all the core subjects to her homeroom students, considers the time for both planning and preparation of lessons to be of utmost significance in her experiences of flow. When the time is not available at school, she borrows time from other aspects of her life. She rarely arrives home before seven o'clock in the evening and spends at least one day out of her weekend preparing for the week's classes.

Some participants declare the importance of time in relation to sharing with colleagues. Dana, Heather, Louise, and Barrie make strong statements about the importance of time in sharing ideas, planning, preparing materials, and team teaching.

Derek speaks of time in a different perspective. He refers to time in relation to the lengthy amount of time he needs to teach students in a manner that results in learning that is long lasting. Derek believes this kind of teaching takes more time as it pulls from the depths of intrinsic motivation for learning. Other methods of teaching he compares to the training of an animal where the animal will learn to do the trick, but will remember it and perform it only when there is promise of extrinsic reward. Derek's belief is that the most real kind of learning requires more time to master, but lasts a lifetime. It involves learning for the intrinsic reward of learning alone. This kind of teaching along with the time that is required to execute it enhances Derek's opportunities of flow.

Nick believes time to be a variable that enhances his experiences of flow. He has, however, a much more macro view of the essence of time and its relationship to his flow experiences. Nick values the momentum that he builds from the beginning of the year. This quantity of time stretches over a period of months, and the greater momentum Nick can establish over time, the greater opportunities he has to experience flow. Where other participants speak of time within a class period, Nick speaks of time within the year. If there were no long breaks within a school year, Nick's experiences of flow would be greatly enhanced.

What Conditions Stop the Flow Experience?

Cessation of energy sharing. Although the participants refer to their flow experiences being stopped by a number of varying circumstances, most of these circumstances fall into a category that can be associated with the loss or cessation of energy.

Nick discusses in great detail the importance that energy plays in his experiences of flow. He describes incidents where he, as the teacher, is investing huge amounts of energy into situations with students and relying on faith that the students will begin to reciprocate with their energy in the form of discovery and responsibility for learning. He also discusses energy in relation to momentum and loss of momentum. Loss of momentum for Nick occurs when there are breaks or extended holidays in the school year. Nick relates to this situation by comparing himself to a performer who needs the energy from the audience to keep performing.

I believe that this comparison of a teacher with a performer can be considered accurate for each of the other participants, as well. The metaphor holds true in that

each of the participants' teaching interactions needs student involvement in order to result in a flow experience. In the teacher as performer metaphor, student involvement is represented by energy that emanates from the audience. The audience represents the students. When student involvement is interrupted, it is similar to having an audience get up and leave.

The other participants in the study discuss their experiences of flow and what stops the experience differently than Nick. Once their experiences and what detracts from their experiences are scrutinized closely, however, the meanings are relatively similar. For example, Heather refers to loss of student involvement as a circumstance that stops her flow experience. When compared to Nick's perspective, that it is the loss of energy that stops his flow experience, Heather's reference to loss of student involvement can be interpreted in exactly the same way. She feels a cessation of the flow experience when her students become uninvolved and stop investing energy into the lesson.

Dana speaks clearly about interruptions during her lessons and the impact of those interruptions on her experiences of flow. Phone calls or a knock on the classroom door interrupt the exchange of energy between her and her students.

Just as Nick discusses the burden of having to be heavy-handed in discipline, Derek speaks of authoritarian conditions detracting and stopping his experiences of flow. Time stands still for Derek when he is in a situation where there is a demonstration of authoritarianism. In Derek's opinion, authoritarianism is a state, no matter who is in control, that destroys the positive experience within a situation. Derek believes that whether it is he who has to be authoritative with his students or someone

of authority who feels he or she must be authoritative with him, there is a disconnecting of the good feelings that come with working and cooperating with others. In relation to Nick's discussion of energy, Derek's description of what stops flow for him involves the disconnection of positive energy as a result of an unneeded and over zealous authoritarian presence.

Louise's examples of conditions that stop flow are provided in a contrary form to the conditions that she states create harmony within her classroom. They are such things as personal disconnection, lack of communication, being out of touch with each other, inability to use professional skills, and a static, insecure staff. The negative conditions that Louise indicates stop her flow experiences parallel the exchange or sharing of energy that Nick emphasizes in his descriptions. For Louise, conditions that stifle her creativity or her students' creativity also stop the flow experience. Creativity is, for Louise, a form of positive energy that is critical to her experiences of flow.

Barrie suggests that situations that stop flow for him include being forced to take on too many responsibilities, division within a staff, a negative environment that results in loss of self-esteem and pride as a teacher, and having to spend too much time dealing with dysfunctional students. Each of these conditions involves the loss of, or inability to gain, needed energy. The energy loop is broken in many of these situations and the energy that Barrie is investing is simply leaving him and short circuiting into the ground. He is receiving no energy in return for his efforts. The situation of diminishing returns stops the flow experience for Barrie.

Heather speaks of the conditions that stop flow as being similar to Dana's. She highlights situations where she has been interrupted and has lost the involvement of her students. She also recalls a time when, because she was using some new technology and was focused on its operation, she lost connection with her students. As a result, the flow experience that had been occurring faded away. A last kind of condition that Heather discusses that relates to the stopping of her experiences of flow occurs when her students become disinterested in a lesson. When Heather does not control the interest level and involvement of her students, the energy supporting the flow experience wanes and flow is discontinued. Again, as with the other participants, the conditions described as stopping or detracting from the flow experience can be viewed through Nick's energy lens. Although Heather does not use the word energy in speaking about the conditions that stop flow, I believe that her experiences of interrupted flow are indeed a result of interrupted energy between her and her students, and her students and their work.

When I hear Nick's description of what stops his flow experiences and the way in which he relates his loss of a flow experience to loss of energy or energy exchange, my interest is immediately peaked. The analogy made the entire aspect of conditions detracting from or stopping flow much more clear. Positive energy collects and stays dormant until there is enough to create a closed loop of energy between individuals. As long as there is no interruption of the loop, such as loss of student involvement, loss of student interest, loss of teacher focus on students, having to be heavy-handed, or an unnatural break in time, the energy runs freely and strongly, and is experienced

as flow by individuals within the loop. As soon as there is an interruption of the loop of energy, the flow experience stops.

How Do Teachers' Experiences of Flow Compare With the Framework Drawn From the Studies of Flow Conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?

Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1993) and members of his research teams have spent years studying the flow experiences of individuals in various walks of life, vocations, professions, and recreational or leisure activities. It was Csikszentmihalyi's intent to move beyond the study of intrinsically motivated behaviors conducted in the early seventies toward uncovering and understanding the sensations of individuals during intrinsically motivating experiences. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) state, "[Our] first concern was about the quality of subjective experience that made a behavior intrinsically rewarding. How did intrinsic rewards feel? Why were they so rewarding?" (p. 7). He and his research teams purposely selected groups of individuals who were involved in very different disciplines to determine the kinds of similarities and differences that existed within their experiences of intrinsically motivating activities. His studies are reflections of the experiences of artists, amateur athletes, chess masters, rock climbers, dancers, high school basketball players, composers of music, assembly line workers, surgeons, university professors, blue collar workers, and talented teenagers. The contributions of the participants in Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) early studies was to "Identify, across widely diverse activities, a common experience that the respondents felt was autotelic, or rewarding in and of itself. Eventually we came to call this

experience flow” (p. 8). After arriving at an understanding of the kinds of feelings experienced during participants’ intrinsically motivating activities, Csikszentmihalyi proceeded to establish the essence or basic characteristics of the phenomenon of flow. As Csikszentmihalyi continued his work establishing the dimensions that are characteristic of flow experiences, he was criticized for using a frame that was too Western in its influence. Some researchers felt it was too “active and goal-directed a process to represent a panhuman, species-specific trait” (p. 9). Csikszentmihalyi argues that the specific nature of the activities varied from culture to culture, and that in the West, it may be true that the endeavors represent a “more active, competitive and controlling” (p. 10), attitude than in other cultures. However, he also stresses that the qualities of the experience reflected in the enjoyment of the activity are the same no matter what the endeavor or culture.

Dimensions of the Flow Experience

When a person’s skill is just right to cope with the demand of a situation—and when compared to the entirety of everyday life the demands are above average—the quality of experience improves noticeably. It does not matter whether one originally wanted to do the activity, whether one expected to enjoy it or not. Even a frustrating job may suddenly become exciting if one hits upon the right balance. (Csikszentmihalyi & Csiksentmihalyi, 1992, p. 32)

Csiksentmihalyi and Csiksentmihalyi (1992) identify three core dimensions of the flow experience. In their simplest forms the dimensions inherent in an activity resulting in a flow experience are described as having:

1. A balance of challenge and skill.
2. A structure with clear goals.
3. Immediate and relevant feedback.

Individuals involved in activities that result in flow experiences also report five other secondary or resultant sensations or characteristics. People in flow describe themselves as having a sense of:

1. Focused concentration.
2. Merging of activity and awareness.
3. Being in control of the activity.
4. A distorted sense of time.
5. A temporary loss of self awareness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, pp. 32-33).

The experience of flow occurs at varying levels of intensity. At one of the most challenging levels, individuals describe having a transcendence of self. Participants report feeling at one with their surroundings. They feel a part of the activity. The runner feels in synchronization with the road, the air, and his or her muscle movements. The artist feels a part of his or her brush, stroke by stroke, drop of paint by drop of paint. Other reported levels of intensity reveal sensations that are described as varying between relaxed and calm to excited, joyful, or euphoric. No matter what the intensity of the experience, when all the dimensions and characteristic sensations are present, consciousness is in harmony. The individual experiences an optimal moment in time that results in a stronger self. The negentropic quality, or condition of balance between the consciousness and the environment of the flow experience, results in the experience having an autotelic essence. The experience is intrinsically rewarding.

The Teacher Participant's Experiences of Flow

Although Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1981, 1982, 1990, 1992) reports specific descriptions of his interviewed participants, the basis of his work in the area of flow can be reflected in the overall dimensions of flow. Every individual who describes his or her experiences in Csikszentmihalyi's investigations has a unique story to tell, one that was different from any other story told or waiting to be told. Such is the case with the participants in this study. Each of their descriptions of their experiences, their stories of what occurs in their classrooms, of what makes them passionate or joyful, is unique to that individual person. The only thing that is common among them as teachers is that they are charged with carrying out the same responsibility—the teaching of junior high students. Even in this aspect, the teaching styles are different, the experiences of teaching are different, the attitudes and understandings of teaching are different. The teachers' perceptions of professionalism are different, their students are different, their facilities and resources are different. Similarity occurs, however, between the dimensions of the participants' experiences of flow and the dimensions that Csikszentmihalyi has identified as being characteristic of flow experiences.

As part of the description and analysis of each person's interview series, I earlier described their experiences in detail, including their own analysis of the storied experiences. I then used Csikszentmihalyi's dimensions and characteristics of flow to search for similar dimensions within each participant's story. It is interesting to note that the participants' descriptions of their experiences include all of the dimensions and characteristics inherent in Csikszentmihalyi's frame of reference for autotelic

experiences. The levels of intensity of the different secondary characteristics vary, but the basic dimensions are inherent in each of the participant's experiences.

Finding Dimensions of Flow in the Participants' Experiences

A balance of challenge and skill. The dimension of a balance of challenge and skill is reflected in each of the participants' experiences of teaching. Louise struggles to find ways to connect with each child in her class. She reaches down into her repertoire of skills in hopes of matching the appropriate approach with a specific student. She attempts to balance the challenges she faces motivating each student with her skills, expertise, and knowledge. She also challenges herself by demanding that she use her creativity in addressing the needs of each child. In this way, she increases the challenges she faces each day, and must utilize her skills to their utmost to be successful. When she is faced with a challenge that is beyond the scope of her abilities, as in the situation where she had more special needs students than she could cope with, she sought out the assistance of her colleagues. Louise was able to stay on top of the difficult challenge by gaining additional ways of addressing her difficult students' needs. In this way she increased her skill level to match the challenge she had to overcome.

Heather, like Louise, challenges herself to connect with her students. She also strives to keep them involved in the lessons. She achieves this by planning lessons that are interesting and by preparing the students to be able to work through the assignments independently. Heather is an experienced teacher and tries to balance her skills with the challenges that she faces each day as a teacher. When a task or

responsibility in teaching no longer represents a challenge for her, Heather looks for ways to increase the difficulty or uniqueness of the lesson and in that way, increases the challenge to match her skills. She designs new lessons each time she teaches a familiar concept and admits that by doing so, she is actually responding to her own needs as much as the students'. In this way she demonstrates control of the balance between challenge and skills.

Derek feels that the challenges within his profession are enough to keep him busy without looking to add to them. He refers to the amount of skill needed to simply motivate, teach, and react to the students already in his classroom. He states, "I am not trying to challenge myself to do anything in particular other than treat kids individually." Derek, similar to Heather and Louise, finds challenge in trying to connect with his individual students. He uses humor and an incredible amount of energy at the beginning of the school year to establish an atmosphere of respect and trust within his classes. Derek believes that this challenge is one of the most important ones that he takes on. He clarifies, "From that time on it's individual to individual, it isn't adult to child or child to adult. It is a mutual respect between the two, trust."

Barrie, in his own quiet way, is a tenacious type of individual. He has very strong beliefs that guide the way in which he does his job. He is not afraid of a challenge and actually creates many of his own. The first challenge that becomes apparent is when he discusses his early years of teaching and decision to try to change the attitudes of students towards the subject of social studies. As one challenge is overcome, Barrie searches for other areas that could be improved. He challenges

himself to learn new teaching strategies and to create new lessons that will attract the interest of his students. He feels he is challenged each day by the task of determining the kind of approach to take with his students. Barrie explains, "You have to be able to recognize that there's certain strengths within the students or within yourself at a certain time of year, that you can build upon and work with and have success [with]." By monitoring the students and situations within his classes, Barrie is able to understand and control the intensity of his challenges and to utilize different skills to overcome them.

Dana adds to her everyday challenges by insisting of herself that she "take it to the max." By this she means that she will attempt to fulfill each of her responsibilities regarding her students to the utmost of her ability. From planning to conducting lessons, she feels it is her responsibility to address each student's learning strengths and weaknesses and strives to do so. She utilizes her creative nature to construct lessons allowing many different responses from students. This opportunity for varied response allows students to demonstrate their learning in different ways. Through this hard work, Dana is able to motivate many of her special needs students and win them over. She feels she is challenged on a daily basis to maintain the family-like environment within her class, as the environment is incredibly fragile and requires constant nurturing. In the midst of creating, nurturing, and enjoying aspects of her teaching, Dana finds time to learn new strategies, make improvements in her teaching skills, and seek new school environments. She is undaunted by the challenge of a new class, grade, subject, or school. She craves newness and originality and being able to "create momentous opportunities for her students."

Nick believes that he creates challenge for himself each day. He states, “I don’t want to have it be easy. Maybe that’s it . . . maybe someone inside me says, ‘You have to fight like hell before you can win in a way that you’ll respect. Maybe you’re [Nick himself] making it hard.’” He believes that he has a need to be constantly testing himself beyond the regular challenges of his job. For Nick, accomplishing a task or fulfilling a responsibility must have an aspect of difficulty to it in order for him to feel fulfilled. For this reason, he knows that he constantly increases the complexity and difficulty of the challenges in his life. He strives to learn new techniques in teaching and to use them appropriately. He struggles to reach dysfunctional students whom he calls “joy zappers” and feels a loss if he cannot connect with them. It is interesting to discover that Nick pictures the way challenge and skills balance in his teaching as though the two were on a teeter-totter. He represents the skills high in the air and must increase his efforts and techniques in order for student learning, which represents the challenge on the other end, to be lifted past a critical point. Finally the two are in balance, and at that point, Nick experiences flow.

A structure with clear goals. For all the participants interviewed, there exists a solid structure represented by the curriculum they must address. Each participant in Canada is legally bound to teach specific curricula that is provincially approved. The participants in the United States are bound by the curricula that is approved by their specific districts. This kind of structure is basic to teaching in the public school system. There are standards of achievement that teachers must know and communicate to students. These standards represent the most fundamental kind of goals that are common to the realm of teaching.

Each teacher, as well, has a specific set of goals that he or she maintains for the smooth running of his or her classes and for establishing a positive learning environment. Expectations, rules, and consequences are aspects of each teacher's plan that must be communicated and achieved in order for the teacher to assist the student to grow. In addition to rules, all of the participants have heartfelt philosophies with which they conduct their working lives. These philosophies serve to create standards and goals that must be achieved in order to fulfill the essence of the teachers' individual philosophies.

A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback. All of the teacher participants speak of feedback either directly or indirectly. Some participants relate to the way in which students respond to certain teacher actions. Others discuss the issue of feedback in terms of observing the actions of students. They also refer to the ways in which students do not respond, a means of feedback just as powerful as an observable response. For these teacher participants, feedback from their students is critical for them to do their jobs. Sometimes the feedback is frustrating as in the instance where Nick discusses the fragile state of one of his theme categories titled "energy drain." He describes the category as, "Gotta work, gotta work, gotta work, get nothing from it, but gotta work."

Feedback also takes the form of physical and emotional sensations that the teachers experience. Nick discusses his situations where he first feels joyful or euphoric and then he knows that he has succeeded. His physiological feedback alerts him to the awareness that he has achieved success.

Dana discusses feedback she receives in the form of appreciation. This kind of feedback occurs after the optimal experience, sometimes years later, as in the incident where she met a former student in a social situation. The student was still recalling the lesson that Dana had provided for him, and the fond recollection was a form of feedback for her although the feedback occurred years after the experience.

Derek speaks passionately about his sensations when a student boasts that he or she will get an A. This kind of comment from a student is feedback for Derek that indicates the student is beginning to take responsibility for his or her own learning.

The participants' descriptions of their experiences are filled with examples of feedback that occur during their days as a teacher. The feedback assists them to know how they are doing and how to adjust the situations within their lessons to achieve their goals.

Focused concentration of the participant. Focused concentration of the participant is experienced by each of the participants and is described in different ways. Louise speaks of this attribute as “You immerse yourself in the subject matter,” and “going deeper and deeper into their [the students'] thinking.”

Heather discusses how she can be having a discussion with her students and feel absolutely focused and connected with them. She refers to the dialogue as “unbelievable discussions.”

Dana recalls a moment of flow from the past where “I was so into what I was going to do. I didn't care what just happened five minutes before.”

Nick discusses his focused concentration in this way. "I would be working and it would be like everything, every word that went down wasn't just a word, it was a huge number of ideas."

Barrie refers to his focused concentration in a slightly different way from the others. He explains that in his role as a teacher, he can't afford to allow himself to become too focused on one specific thing. Instead he is focused on the entire situation. He states, "As a teacher I feel it's important for me to be able to know what's going on. I'm very much conscious of the surrounding and things that are going on around [me]." He adds, however, that when he is working with a smaller group, he is more able to focus on just that specific situation. With a large group of students, Barrie's focused concentration is on everything that happens in his room.

When analyzing the participants' experiences for the characteristic of focused concentration, I find examples of it in each participant's story. When I reflect on situations of my own teaching, I know that when circumstances are right, either the optimal number or combination of students, a specific unit of study, or a particular teaching strategy that I enjoy using, my concentration can become absolutely focused.

The sense of merging activity and awareness. All but one of the participants discuss in different ways their sensations of forgetting all else and becoming totally involved with an activity. Derek's experiences have such a subtle quality to them that he has difficulty isolating specific situations representative of some of the attributes of flow. The merging of activity and awareness is one that he cannot articulate in relation to his teaching. He does, however, recall a situation where he was working with a group of adults instead of adolescents and experienced a sense of becoming one

with the group. Other participants relate examples of situations in their teaching when their awareness of the external environment became one with the activity of teaching or the action within the teaching/learning activity.

Louise explains in a very poignant way and describes it as, “Window/mirror/truth. They are looking in on your life and you are looking in on theirs.” Her descriptions also indicate that she experiences this characteristic each day when she works one-on-one with individual students. She becomes so involved with each student’s work that she loses herself in the moment. She states, “I’m right there with them.”

Heather describes what occurs for her using the word connect. She states, “There’s a connectedness. A connection beyond the subject matter.” She explains that for her, getting close to her students is something that happens, “when we’re in discussion, those are the times that I sense it.” She calls them “unbelievable discussions.”

Dana has many experiences where she feels a merging of activity and awareness. One of the more descriptive statements that she makes about this characteristic of flow describes her excitement during a flow experience. “I was so excited by what I had seen and I couldn’t think of anything else. It was one of those moments where I just thought ‘Wow!’”

Nick’s description is very vivid as he tells me about his reaction to an exhilarating moment in his work. He explains, “You want to pump your hand in the air, too. And sometimes I get up and do that, too.” Nick, who uses the analogy of teaching being similar to performing, becomes one with the subject that is being taught or the

activity conducted within the lesson. He readily takes on roles with his students and plays the devil's advocate.

All of the participants interviewed describe events from their experiences that are strong examples of the characteristic of merging activity and awareness. Some individuals are more able to articulate the essence of the experience while other participants' experiences have such a subtle quality to them that it is difficult for the participants to express the details of the incident.

The activity is under the person's control. Throughout the interview series, all participants are able to recall and discuss specific situations where they were either in or out of control of a particular scenario. Situations where the participant does not have control are described as times when they are not fulfilled and definitely not experiencing flow. Barrie recalls a situation where he felt powerless to explain his assessment of a student's achievement to the student's parent. His professionalism was being questioned by the parent, and he felt he had no way of correcting the situation. The questioning by the parent of his expertise and knowledge of teaching left him feeling at a loss in terms of self-esteem, pride, and confidence. There are times when Barrie feels that teachers and teaching are being battered by society. This creates a negative environment for him, that he feels he has little control over. He adds, "A negative environment leads to a general loss of self-esteem and pride." In situations where he feels he is not in control and has a sense of loss of self-esteem, Barrie does not experience flow.

When Nick and I first meet for the interview, he confides to me that he is having a difficult year. He is tired and feels like he is not doing a good job. As we begin

the interview and he recalls times from his past where he has had more frequent experiences of flow, an awareness begins to develop of why he is not feeling as fulfilled or productive this year. By the second interview, Nick has made an important decision regarding his responsibilities at school. He understands that up to this point in the year, he has not felt as though he has had control of his situation at work. He has a tremendous workload which combines teaching, administration, staff development and curriculum development. Once he is able to make the anticipated reorganization of his responsibilities at school, Nick is convinced that his energy level and sense of well being will return to their previously high level. By January, less than 2 months after our last interview, Nick has reorganized his time at school and is feeling much more in control of his situation. This leaves him feeling more successful, fulfilled, and productive. There are two sides to this story; one side is that Nick was feeling his situation was out of his control; the other side is that by taking charge of his situation he demonstrated that he was not out of control after all. Someone who is not similar to Nick in personality may have continued on in the same unfulfilling manner or possibly have been forced to take an extended leave. This sequence of events leads me to view the power of the autotelic personality demonstrated by individuals such as Nick with great awe and respect.

Louise refers to autonomy within her teaching as being important to her. She is especially cognizant about the impact of autonomy on her ability to be creative. Creativity is a critical aspect of Louise's teaching style and she strives to touch the creativity of each child in her class as well. To do this she needs free reign over how her classes are conducted. Within the structure of a regular school situation, Louise

feels she has the control and autonomy of the activities within teaching to enable her to fulfill the obligations of her profession. For Louise, this means going beyond the basic standards expected in most situations.

Louise also speaks of times when she has felt she is not in control of the situation. This occurred two years before the year of our interview and involved a situation where she had too many special needs students in her class. She felt she had no recourse but to work with the students as best she could. She did not speak with her administrators about the problem, believing that disclosing her sense of difficulty with the situation would be seen negatively by others. In looking back, Louise recognizes that the entire scenario was composed of misconceptions and assumptions that should have been dealt with sooner. Louise did not feel she was in control of the situation. She was receiving more and more special needs students as the year progressed and she felt that their placement was something beyond her control. While in this situation, Louise states that she was, “at risk of leaving the profession.” Not feeling in control over her situation absolutely stopped her experiences of flow.

The remaining participants, Derek, Dana, and Heather all felt that they were in control of their situations. The work they did with their students in their classrooms was within their control. Dana and Heather attribute the way they plan and prepare for their lessons as being a large part of their sense of control. They know what they want to have occur and how the plan is likely to play out.

Derek reflects during the second interview about the various kinds of challenges he takes on. After some consideration he questions the importance of being in control in his life. He suggests that it is very important and adds, “Maybe I need to be in

command. Probably I'm a control freak." When he looks back over the situations he has been involved with both within his profession and beyond, he sees that the times that he was experiencing flow are also the times when he felt he was in control.

The characteristic of control over an activity is a concept that is strong for all the participants. It is most conspicuous in its absence, as is supported by the stories told by Barrie, Nick, and Louise. When their sense of control is missing, the impact is felt immediately. The sense of being in control of a situation is more a normal part of their daily lives and so its presence goes more unnoticed as an indicator. All participants discuss, however, that when they are in moments of flow they are also in situations where they feel they have control over the specific activity being conducted.

Distorted perception of time. As I read the narrative paragraphs at the beginning of each participant's interview series, the aspect of distorted time stands out boldly and is responded to throughout the interview by each person. Louise, Heather, Barrie, Dana, and Derek confirm that when they are totally engrossed in something within the class, time does indeed speed by.

Both Louise and Heather provide as examples situations where they have been cognizant of the time left in the class, but even so, have been surprised by the bell. Louise also has the opposite occur. She recalls moments when she has been involved with a student and time seemed to stand still. One recollection she provides involves a little girl who had been listening intently to a poem and then began to contribute to the class discussion in such a deep and meaningful way that the entire class was impacted. Louise remembers being locked into the little girl's gaze and sensing that the whole class was connected as well. The time, although in reality only a matter of

seconds, seemed to be stretched out so much longer. It is one of those magical moments that Louise had mentioned earlier in the interview.

Derek explains how a task that he finds interesting, whether it occurs when he is working with students or adults, makes the time seem to go by very quickly. Barrie describes his feelings during a time of flow and explains, "It's very exciting. As you say, you do lose that passage of time, where you'd like to hold onto that type of feeling."

Dana discusses how time takes on a surreal quality, neither speeding up nor slowing down. Time, while Dana is experiencing flow, seems to be just suspended there. For her, the surreal moment occurs when her students are exceeding her expectations. This suspension of time might take place during an assignment presentation but time moves back into normalcy when Dana has to attend to the logistics of the lesson. She explains, "You're just so into the person and what's going on. . . . It just kind of peaks there and then things go back to normal. . . . You kind of catch your breath and go, 'OK, who's next?'" She adds, "I think it would last for them [the kids] a while longer, but I have to get back to the task at hand." Dana's sense of time during flow seems to shift in and out of the regular time frame, depending on how much she has to come out of the moment to direct her class. She finds that she is able to slip back easily into the flow experience after she has had to attend to the directions or logistics of her assignment. Dana also explains how laughter and fun distort time for her during a flow experience. She recalls a situation where the class was having a good laugh over something uproariously funny and Dana had the sense that "time had stopped."

Nick's perception of time during flow takes on a different perspective than that of Louise, Derek, and Heather. For him, time is associated with energy that builds or picks up speed. Nick associates time with the concept of momentum. As Nick works to achieve his goals as a teacher, he feels the momentum gaining energy. Each class he holds with his students adds to the momentum. The energy within the class increases daily, and eventually he has enough momentum to close the energy loop and begin to see real results in student learning. Although Nick's perception of time during flow is expressed differently from the other participants, it is nevertheless distorted. Time for him is a source of energy and power, and he feels that it will lead him to success as long as it is not interrupted. As soon as the momentum built up over time is interrupted, everything grinds to a screeching halt and Nick feels as though he is starting all over. He feels as though he is all alone pushing a huge obstacle to get it moving again. There is never enough time for Nick. There is always more to do, and better ways to do it than his perception of time will permit.

Temporary loss of self-awareness. With the deep concentration that is present in activities associated with flow experiences comes a temporary loss of self-awareness. This means that for the moment, individuals are able to leave their every day or sometimes unusual concerns outside of their focused activity. All of the participants speak about this quality within their interviews. They experience a sense of concentration while involved in certain activities so that they are removed absolutely away from thoughts or worries that only moments before were occupying their consciousness.

Dana speaks of doing a presentation and being able totally to block out of her mind a very emotional difficulty that had occurred just minutes before. Louise speaks of losing herself in the moment and refers to her flow experiences as “a special place” as though she has been totally removed from the real world and all its problems.

Nick, within his analogy of performing, suggests that he becomes so involved with the exchange of energy that nothing enters his consciousness other than what he is working on and performing for his students at that time.

Barrie does not like to bring negative thoughts into his classroom and so is glad that when he begins to teach, any concerns he may have about his staff or a parent are temporarily eliminated from his consciousness.

Derek is less certain about how his experiences of flow play out. He has very subtle sensations that are sometimes difficult to identify. He feels the sense of distorted time, but the aspect of temporarily losing self-awareness is not apparent in his stories about teaching. He does, however, make a comparison between teaching children and working with groups of adults. His feelings are similar in both situations. He states, “I get the same feeling from dealing with adults, groups of adults.” He continues to describe a time when he drew a number of individual war veterans together to reconcile some personal issues and his sensations and awareness at that time. He recalls that he “felt a tremendous feeling of accomplishment.” He just sat back and became totally involved in listening to the conversation. Nothing else was working its way into his consciousness. If working with children creates the same feeling as working with groups of adults, then Derek most likely experiences a loss of self-awareness when he is totally engrossed in teaching and experiencing flow.

Heather's experiences of flow often occur when she is in dialogue with her students. Her students have very intellectual and stimulating questions that leave little room for drifting or thinking of other things. Through dialogue, Heather gains a closeness with her students that she feels is difficult to get any other way. Although she doesn't directly speak about losing self-awareness while experiencing flow, she does refer to how much she is "tuned into what they are thinking." She realizes why dialogue is such an important part of her teaching style and explains, "I realized I've been doing a lot of it [dialogue] in the past few years. I never realized why and now I do. That's the only way that I get this closeness with the kids, that I really feel like I'm tuned into what they're thinking." By orchestrating for the closeness that is so important to her teaching, Heather receives a feeling of being one with her students. Their ideas link with hers, their concerns become her concerns, their joys become her joys. Dialogue is the most common way that Heather interacts and connects with her students. Through dialogue, she becomes synchronized with her students' thinking. This synchronization leads her to be part of the dialogue in a way that leaves no room for thoughts associated with anything outside what is occurring within the dialogue. Until the interviews when Heather has an opportunity to reflect on her teaching style, she has no idea how powerful the technique of dialogue is for her. This power allows her to focus all her energies toward the task at hand and leave other concerns or thoughts outside the moment.

As with the other participants, Nick becomes lost in his work when he is allowed to do so. When the time set aside to work with students or to plan for his lessons occurs, Nick seizes the moment and throws his energy and consciousness into the

situation. Nick speaks of wanting to shout out loud when he has made a discovery. He becomes so totally involved in what he is doing that he forgets where he is or who he is with. He also talks of role playing with his students and becoming incredibly involved with his character for the length of time he is utilizing the role play as a teaching tool. He becomes the character and draws his students into the characterization with him. Although Nick strives to become an invisible teacher, he receives great joy out of being a very visible and performing teacher. He states, "That's exactly what I am as a teacher. I'm more of a performer." This suggests that Nick's energies are directed at portraying a role with his students every day that he is with them. Sometimes he is Nick the teacher, some times he is an alien, other times he is the encourager. Each role he takes on he plays to the best of his ability, and to do that requires the complete absorption of personality into the role. When Nick takes on the different roles that he needs in order to be the kind of successful teacher he wants to be, he loses any inhibitions that are associated with the presence of self awareness.

Concluding thoughts about the participants and the dimensions of flow.

It is my belief that all of the participants, when experiencing flow, experience sensations and characteristics that align with Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) dimensions of the flow experience. The dimensions are the balance of challenge and skill, a structure with clear goals, a structure providing immediate and relevant feedback, focused concentration by the participant, merging of awareness and activity, the activity being under the person's control, a distorted sense of time, and a temporary loss of self awareness. Each participant experiences the dimensions of flow in unique ways and at different intensities. As they teach, they move back and forth

within the dimensions, having intense sensations during specific times and not so intense sensations at other times. They stretch their abilities to the utmost and work with children in ways that carry them to a more complex system of action than they normally experience. Flow does not happen for these people every second of every day. They have their times of low energy and their times of confusion, but over and over again they seem to be able to overcome the challenges they face. In fact, they create challenges when things become too mundane. There are periods where they feel inner peace and other times when they want to shout out, "Yes. Exactly, you're absolutely right!" They are moved to tears and they laugh out loud. They sense great achievement in the form of shivers and sneezes, and there are days where they have experiences and wonder, "What happened just now?" Some of the participants believe they have been given a gift and other participants are not aware that they experienced this phenomenon at all. Yet they do.

Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) suggest that the moments of time where individuals are experiencing flow are the moments of time that are "remembered and built into the memory-storage of the culture" (p. 34). When all of the dimensions of flow are in place, the consciousness becomes ordered and takes on a negentropic state. The consciousness moves into a state of harmony and bathes in the essences of enjoyment, joy, exhilaration, peace, calm, or excitement that individuals the world over try to describe as being associated with the phenomenon of flow. It is an experience that individuals want to have over and over again. They seek to do the kinds of things that result in the feelings that are so pleasurable. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1992) describe this state of flow:

It stands out in its integrity from the formless, confusing and often frustrating conditions of normal, everyday, life. Because it reaffirms the order of the self and is so enjoyable, people will attempt to replicate it whenever possible. This tendency to repeat the flow experience is the emergent teleonomy of the self. (p. 34)

What Are The Implications of This Study for Leadership Practice?

Life requires unrelenting effort, a willingness to try—and contrary to widely-held conception, humans are well fitted for the effort. In humans the long process of evolution has produced a species of problem solvers, happiest when engaged in tasks that require not only physical effort but also the engagement of mind and heart. We are not only problem solvers but problem seekers. If a suitable problem is not at hand, we invent one. Most games are invented problems. We are designed for the climb, not for taking our ease, either in the valley or at the summit. (Gardner, 1990, p. 195)

In reading Gardner's passage, it would seem that he is speaking specifically of the experience of flow as has been described by many individuals around the world. The suggestion that to be happy we must be challenged and that if no challenge exists we must make one, rings clearly in Gardner's words. These words must be acknowledged when we begin to consider the last question of the study: What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

What is evident in most realms of our existence is that the human beings who exist within specific disciplines and walks of life, do so in incredibly different ways. Each discipline is different from every other discipline. And within that specific discipline, the individuals who exist there are each different from one another. The question is now presented to leaders: How does one begin to inform leadership practice so that it assists those in our organizations to grow and excel as healthy and complex working human beings? How does one become involved in leadership practice such that the individuals with whom we work are unencumbered in their

attempts to be successful and fulfilled in their daily work roles? How do we assist members of our communities, businesses, and schools to strive to do their best, to take on challenges, and to have a balance between work and other aspects of their lives?

The dimensions of flow as guidelines for leadership practice. The core dimensions of flow represent guidelines that should be acknowledged by educational leaders as important in establishing optimal work conditions for individuals. By designing work conditions that address the three core dimensions, leaders provide situations that provide for:

1. A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled.
2. A clear structure and goals.
3. Immediate and relevant feedback for the individual.

By developing these conditions, leaders support circumstances associated with flow and plant the seeds of enjoyment within the work environment. Enjoyment, which according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990) is different from pleasure because it results in growth, can only be attained if there is sufficient complexity of consciousness within a series of tasks being attempted. Feedback, goals, and controlled variety of challenge and skill promote complexity within an activity and in an individual's consciousness, leading to memorable and desirable states of enjoyment (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Specific states of enjoyment become sought after by individuals who desire the intellectual, emotional and physiological sensations characteristic of experiences flow.

1. The controlled balance of challenge and skill, from a practical view within leadership, opens different avenues of responsibility for leaders. One area of responsi-

bility for a leader must be considered when placing individual teachers in specific assignments or roles. The individual must have the basic skills required by the assignment. For example, placing an inexperienced teacher into circumstances requiring expertise attained only through years of practice will not satisfy the objective of having a balance of challenge and skill. Nor does this situation address the criteria that places the control of this balance into the hands of the individual in the situation. A new teacher cannot increase his or her skills if the skills are such that they require years of practice to learn and hone. Nor can the new teacher change the make up of the assignment to, in this case, decrease the challenge facing him or her. No teacher has the authority to permanently remove specific students from class who may be beyond the teacher's scope of expertise. As well, teachers may not exclude specific segments of the curriculum. A new teacher may have little understanding of a particular aspect of a subject, or understand just the basics of the curriculum area, and be required to teach from a deficit position. Examples of this occur everyday when new teachers, anxious for a job, accept positions knowing that they will have difficulty being successful in their roles.

Similar situations occur with experienced teachers when they are moved from one grade division to another far beyond their skill, expertise, and comfort zones. A specific example would involve a high school physics teacher who is moved to an assignment requiring skills and expertise in all core subject areas for grades six to eight. The issue within this example relates to the presence or absence of appropriate preparation of the teacher for the assignment. Even competent and experienced teachers must be allowed to prepare for changes in teaching assignments.

In contrast to the situation where a teacher is unprepared and inexperienced for a specific assignment, equally as critical is the situation where a teacher is well-qualified for an assignment. He or she may be so well qualified and experienced in fact, that the challenge of the assignment is inadequate. In this situation, teachers may become bored or complacent in their role. To maintain a balance of challenge and skill, it is imperative that leaders encourage all individuals to seek new challenges within their assignments or to request changes of assignment from year to year.

To provide conditions conducive to flow, leaders must be sure that teachers have the opportunity to develop the skills and to acquire the experiences necessary to address the challenge of specific assignments. Leaders must also make sure that teachers have the appropriate preparation needed for success. Teachers must also have control of the balance of challenges and skills required to carry out daily tasks.

As a second responsibility, leaders must be models of lifelong learning and risk taking. If the leader models risk taking or demonstrates the acceptance of change and mistakes associated with trying new strategies, all teachers may be encouraged to challenge themselves.

2. Having a structure with clear goals establishes and maintains a framework of action or conduct within the school. By providing a structure that is based on clear goals, a leader provides conditions that enable individual teachers to be consistent in their own establishment of goals. The establishment of teacher goals consistent with broader district or school goals assists the teacher to achieve related results. The establishing of goals, preparing to meet these goals, and finally the achievement of objectives as a result of these goals provide a sense of direction, achievement, and

empowerment for teachers. These sensations are identified by participants as being among those that enhance experiences of flow. Clear and consistent goals enable individuals within a district or school to focus on and to establish their own classroom goals or results. Teachers become encouraged and are empowered to plan and to prepare to meet their own specific objectives that align with the goals of the larger organization. When district or school goals or priorities are not communicated and are not used consistently as targets, teachers can feel lost or in chaos.

The phenomenon of flow occurs when individuals have control over the action and know specifically what the goals of the action are. The goal for an assembly line worker may be to complete a specific number of product assemblies in 30 minutes. A surgeon's goal may be to remove an obstruction from a blocked passage. A teacher's goal may be to increase students' achievement in a subject area by 10%, or it may be to improve students' social skills associated with working in groups. No matter what the circumstance, clear goals allow individuals to focus on their plan for achievement of the goal. If leaders do not establish clear goals within the larger organization, teachers' individual goals are like arrows directed toward a hidden or moving target. This kind of situation leaves teachers feeling frustrated, inefficient, and ineffective. They lack the conditions associated with harmony and a negentropic state.

3. A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback for a teacher in a classroom is related to student responses and reactions to teacher actions. This is the front line of feedback as indicated by all of the participants of the study. Without it, teachers cannot monitor how students are progressing or where students are having

difficulties. Similarly, students cannot know how close they are to succeeding without feedback from teachers.

Leaders must be part of this feedback loop as well. Although none of the participants indicate that feedback from leaders in a supervisory sense regarding their performance is a critical condition of their flow experiences, feedback from leaders can assist teachers to achieve better results in their classrooms. As instructional leaders, supervisors can provide valuable feedback to teachers in the form of observations related to professional development objectives. As partners in teaching, supervisors can provide feedback regarding student behavior patterns in class that can be very helpful. The issue of benefit of feedback relates to the relevancy of information provided by supervisor to teacher. Specific and relevant feedback is of value to teachers especially if the feedback is something that the teacher and supervisor have discussed. It is particularly positive if there is a request by the teacher for feedback from the supervisor regarding a specific interest of the teacher.

No matter where the information comes from, relevant feedback is critical to teachers' success in planning and achieving goals. Teachers have indicated that achieving goals such as assisting students to "have discoveries," to experience "ahas," or to achieve incremental individual results in learning is directly related to enhanced conditions for flow.

Implications for leadership practice of conditions that start flow. Throughout the interview series, each participant identifies conditions he or she believes to be critical to his or her experiences of flow. Although participants describe in slightly different ways various critical circumstances of flow, there exists within the group of

critical circumstances, certain common themes. The common themes necessary for flow to occur, as described and identified by all the participants are the following:

1. Participants sensing concurrent student experiences of flow. This includes teacher observations of student reactions, physical appearances, verbal responses, and involvement in the lesson.
2. Participants building a positive learning environment within the classroom. This includes connecting between and among members of the class leading to an exchange of positive energy.
3. Participants observing growth in students. This includes students exceeding expectations, making discoveries, experiencing ahas, risking, and taking responsibility for their own learning
4. Participants achieving success and goals.
5. Participants sensing challenge in the task.

Many of these common themes are circumstances that ultimately exist within the perceptions and control of the teacher. The implications for leadership practice, therefore, are related to leaders creating situations that nurture the maintenance or building of critical conditions for teachers. This requires leaders to know their teachers well and to listen to requests for support or feedback.

A leader must understand the nature of the students taught by the teacher and be able to provide assistance to the teacher in building a positive learning environment that addresses the specific learning needs of the students. Teachers of honor students or gifted students require different theoretical and technical support than teachers of behavior disordered or special needs students.

Associated with the theme of creating a positive learning environment by teachers for students is the responsibility for leaders to create positive learning environments for their teachers. This is done in the same way that teachers create positive learning environments for their students. An atmosphere of trust, shared rapport, and respect among all members of the staff must be encouraged, modelled, and supported by the leader.

Supporting teachers to experience flow means that leaders must know the level at which a teacher is functioning. Just as a teacher must know the level of his or her students, a leader must know the skills, abilities, and experiences of the teacher. A leader must be able to determine what kind of support the teacher needs to achieve his or her specific goals and successes. This relates as well to a leader having the ability to determine what constitutes a challenge for an individual teacher and whether or not the challenge is balanced with the teacher's skills. The leader must also be perceived as someone who accepts and encourages positive risk taking and who understands potential mistakes that can come before resultant growth. In the same way that teachers encourage students to risk in order to grow, leaders must encourage teachers to risk and to grow. Leaders must be supportive of teachers' attempts at new challenges, and accept the occasional mistake or oversight that is a natural part of growth. Michael Fullan (personal communication, September 25, 1989) refers to this as supporting a teacher through the implementation dip of change.

Implications for leadership practice of conditions that enhance flow. It would seem that the critical conditions associated with flow are more in the control of individual teachers experiencing flow than in the control of leaders. Because of the

nature of the identified conditions that are related to initiating flow, I believe it is difficult for leaders to be directly involved with the enhancement of these conditions. It seems less difficult, however, for leaders to effect the conditions that enhance or increase already existing experiences of flow. The conditions that enhance already existing episodes of flow are identified by participants as the following circumstances:

1. Extensive planning and preparation for teaching. This involves the planning of ways of building a positive learning environment, lessons, and units.
2. Control and autonomy in work. This involves feeling empowered, feeling free to be creative, and feeling autonomous in making decisions that directly effect success in one's work.
3. Collegial support in work. This includes support from both teachers and administrative staff.
4. Professionalism/teacher learning. This condition involves creating a professional attitude among members of the staff, assisting others and working as a team, seeking new subject-related information as well as teaching skills and strategies, learning from others on staff, and striving for growth in all situations.
5. The importance of time. This involves time to plan and prepare, time to work with other staff members, and time to work with students in class.

It seems that the kinds of conditions that enhance existing flow experiences can be more effected by the actions of a leader than those conditions required to initiate flow. All of the conditions that enhance existing flow identified by participants are such that they should be introduced as part of a larger philosophy held by the leader

and staff members. By providing an overall culture of professionalism, the leader addresses each of the conditions required to enhance experiences of existing flow.

1. Planning and preparation are two attributes that participants identify as enhancing experiences of flow. Moments of flow can happen without specific planning for them such as in a teachable moment, but even being prepared for the unexpected requires immense forethought. The participants of the study discuss the feelings of having planned for and being fully prepared for student reactions and responses. Having plans and being prepared provide sensations of calm for some participants and heightened anticipation for others. Planning and preparation are elements of teaching that require time. This valuable part of teaching can be impacted by the way in which the school is organized and assignments are distributed. By asking teachers to teach classes requiring seven or eight preparations such as the case with Dana, leaders inevitably shorten the planning and preparation time available for each curriculum area. What tends to occur for most teachers is a less than satisfactory job of planning and teaching within the specific areas. Dana voices the concerns of other participants as well as her own when she describes being over subscribed with the responsibility of too many different subjects to teach. She speaks about the time required to be creative in her planning and preparation. When overwhelmed with different areas that require planning and preparation, Dana spends valuable planning time “just to get by.” Planning for so many different areas of the curriculum leaves her feeling that she can barely cover the material, not to mention being creative and stretching her students in the process.

It is critical for leaders to consider this aspect when coordinating teaching assignments for staff members. Knowing staff members well allows leaders to make decisions regarding situations that would be unmanageable for some and challenging for others. Teaming situations could alleviate some of the planning time required and result in more substantial and creative overall preparation. It could also create situations that allow teachers to learn from each other and use each other for advice and feedback. Providing adequate planning time or joint planning time shared by teachers who teach the same subject or grade could improve the quality of planning and preparation conducted by teachers. Requiring teachers to teach fewer subjects would allow for more time to be devoted to exceptional planning. Participants within the study agree that creativity and planning for student discovery and learning takes a great deal of time. The result, however, is greater flow experiences for both teachers and their students.

2. Autonomy and control over one's work is referred to by participants as a condition that enhances experiences of flow. This condition is also considered by numerous theorists (Argyle, 1987; Frase & Matheson, 1992; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Sergiovanni, 1990) to be one of the critical core job characteristics that impact on personal and work outcomes. Their work investigates the effects on workers' satisfaction, motivation, performance and growth, of redesigning jobs to include core characteristics such as skill variety, autonomy, and feedback.

In the situation of teacher autonomy there are a number of different situations where autonomy and control come into play. In the first sense of autonomy and control the feeling extends beyond the classroom to how the teacher prepares for the

teaching. This sense of autonomy is directly related to planning and preparation within teaching. Extensive planning and preparation as suggested by the participants in the study allows teachers to know how a unit of study will play out. It allows teachers to be ready for student responses both anticipated and unanticipated within an episode of teaching. Leaders who communicate with staff members and who design program assignments that allow for adequate planning time provide teachers with an opportunity to have more control over the results of their teaching.

Autonomy and control in the second sense involves teachers feeling they have autonomy in making important decisions that impact their students. Leaders who seek input from teachers and use it in making final decisions enhance feelings of autonomy for teachers.

A third aspect of autonomy and control can be addressed on a larger scale. District leaders who value the expertise, experience, knowledge, and skills of their district employees seek input from school staffs and place important decisions in the hands of those in the schools. Some of the participants interviewed are members of a district that functions through school-based budgeting. The situation of having control over one's budget creates incredible feelings of autonomy and control for all members of the district. Schools receive budgets based on student enrollment and special needs. Leaders and teachers work together to allocate the funds. Authority for decisions that must be made regarding school and student needs is held by the principal of the school and the teachers within the departments. Together they make important decisions about programming and the funds needed to support these decisions. Participants of this study discuss issues of control and authority and suggest that they

want to be able to make important decisions regarding their classes and then to begin planning and preparing to carry out their plans. District leaders can take the issue of autonomy a step farther by placing authority for allocation of funds in the hands of those closest to the work, the hands of principals and teachers. By providing the principal of a school the authority to make key decisions regarding staffing, and the teachers of a class the authority to make key decisions regarding student programming as well as the authority to decide how money will be spent, district leaders can increase feelings of control and autonomy for all employees of the district.

A fourth aspect of having autonomy and control to enhance experiences of flow is also reflected in policies regarding discipline within a district, school, and classroom. Clear rules regarding behavior and consequences established within a district and within a school assist teachers in establishing their own expectations within a class. District leaders can support the issue of principal and teacher control and autonomy by clearly communicating district discipline policies and procedures to all members of the district and community. School leaders are supported by the district in matters of discipline. This additional reinforcement is transferred from principal to teacher and strengthens the teacher's sense of control and autonomy regarding discipline within the classroom. Barrie discusses the issue of discipline in his school and describes his feelings of frustration at having to deal with disruptive students without the support of his administrative team. He feels that teachers are left "with egg on their face" when administrators do not follow up and follow through with agreed upon expectations, rules, and consequences. Barrie feels as though he has to work harder within his own classes to have the control he needs relating to student

behavior. Feeling he has no control or authority regarding discipline of students detracts from Barrie's feelings of success and flow within his classroom.

There are a number of approaches leaders of districts and schools can take to improve the conditions that enhance feelings of autonomy and control for teachers. By putting some of the related ideas into practice, leaders can improve conditions that enhance the flow experience for teachers. As a result, teachers may have more intense, sustained, or vivid experiences of flow in their teaching.

3. Collegial support is a condition that, for all participants except one, is reported to enhance experiences of flow. Nick, who did not identify colleagues as critical to enhancing his experiences of flow, considers his nature to be one of self-sufficiency. He does not feel affected by the personality, moods, or attitudes of other staff members. The remaining participants, however, consider the impact of staff actions and interactions to be powerful indeed. When the issue of collegial support is introduced into the interview series, all participants with the exception of Nick, feel that leaders of districts and schools must create an atmosphere within the employee body that is positive, trusting, and growth inducing. They feel that the kind of positive learning environment they work so hard to create within their classrooms must also be created among the staff members. For leaders, this suggests working to build a school culture that stresses respect among individuals, tolerance of personal differences, encouragement toward professional and personal growth, encouragement of risk taking as part of growth, time and support for individuals experiencing new situations or strategies, and the importance of lifelong learning. It also stresses viewing the school as a learning community, providing a clear vision of what is to be

accomplished, and believing in working together to achieve goals. These ideals are concepts that all participants believe are important to have in place for students to grow. All except one of the participants speak of the importance of having the same quality environment in place in order for teachers to enhance their experiences of flow through positive collegial interactions..

4. Professionalism, which is also referred to by some participants as teacher learning, is directly related to the culture that the leader of a district or school creates. Leaders must communicate the importance of teacher growth, learning, and professionalism to their staff members. Leaders must also model these attributes demonstrating that learning and being professional in one's job are critical aspects of being an educator. Professionalism as discussed by Louise, means "to be able to tap into whatever resources, energy, research, professional growth I can tap into to take it to the highest level it can be in my classroom." If a leader can follow Louise's example, he or she will be an exemplary model of professionalism for other teachers.

Within the issue of teacher learning, leaders must understand that learning whether as a child or as an adult, requires the same kind of preparation by the teacher. If a leader wants to have a staff that appreciates learning, he or she must create the kind of positive learning environment that is needed to support taking risks, asking for assistance, making of mistakes, and growing. Without the safety net of a positive learning environment in place, staff members, like students, will not risk to grow and to learn. With the conditions for strong professionalism and active teacher learning in place, teachers will have opportunity for enhanced experiences of flow.

5. Time is an aspect of all work situations that is in great demand. Rarely do we have all the time we need in which to complete our tasks. One of the important issues related to the enhancement of flow experiences for teachers is that the available time with students must be used as effectively as possible. All participants within the study agree that teachers need quality time with students to be able to do a quality job within their classrooms. Leaders must hear this statement and carefully consider ways of providing sustained uninterrupted quality time for teaching. By saying no to lesson interruptions, leaders are giving a strong message about the importance of the time students spend with their teachers. By encouraging careful consideration of announcements, school involvements in special events, out of school field trips, and other general interruptions of regular class time, a leader communicates the importance of quality uninterrupted time which teacher and student invest in each other. Leaders may look at the organization of their school day and decide that fewer but longer classes with fewer interruptions related to class changes will increase the amount of quality time in teaching. Some leaders are investigating the issue of year round schooling for the same reason. Longer blocks of time with fewer stops and starts resulting from summer holidays and other extended breaks in the school year is one way to increase the length and quality of time teachers spend with students.

The same consideration for uninterrupted time must be provided for leaders who are called away from their schools in the middle of the school day for such things as meetings. The message given in such situations is that meetings are more important than schools, teachers, and students. Participants express the importance of being able to spend quality uninterrupted time with their students. District leaders must listen to

this request to assist their principals. School leaders must address this concern if they hope to enhance the experiences of flow for teachers.

All participants within the study discuss the importance of having adequate time to plan and prepare to do a good job of teaching. More time to plan and create more interesting lessons results in more growth and experiences of flow for both teachers and students. Only Dana, because of her heavy program load, considers her situation to be inadequate in terms of time for planning. She is also a new teacher in the school and is still learning her way around. There are times when Dana's challenges become more than her skills can address. She is inexperienced in some of her program assignments and requires more time to become familiar with the areas and to prepare her lessons. Leaders can alleviate the situation of new teachers feeling overwhelmed and short of time. They must understand the level of experience and skill of the teacher and balance this knowledge with an assignment that is appropriate for the teacher's experience and abilities. The concept of redesigning assignments to fit the skills of the worker is supported by other researchers (Allison & Duncan, 1992; Bandura, 1982; Hackman & Oldham, 1980). By recognizing teacher abilities, familiarity with a program of studies, and comfort with a new situation, leaders can do much to keep the balance of challenge and skill healthy.

One of the actions that can be taken is to make sure adequate time is allotted for teachers to prepare for their assignment. If time is not available, then the teacher must be given an assignment that matches or is slightly higher than his or her level of experience and ability. Sometimes this means teaching fewer different programs of study for the first semester or year. It may mean teaming with a more experienced

teacher. No matter what the circumstance, the leader must make every effort to know his or her teachers to be able to make appropriate decisions related to assignments and time to prepare.

Enhancing conditions associated with sustaining or improving teachers' experiences of flow is a responsibility that leaders must assume for teachers' quality of life in work to improve. For the participants of this study, enhancing their experiences of flow requires that leaders listen, trust, and understand teachers' statements of concern. By striving for a school culture that uses quality as its base, a leader can nurture an atmosphere among the staff and within the school that seeks to have quality in all aspects of education. The conditions described and identified within this study as those that enhance teachers' experiences of flow cannot help but impact, in a positive way, other aspects of the school environment.

Implications for leadership practice of conditions that stop flow. In general, the conditions that participants identify as stopping the experience of flow can all be attributed to the loss or cessation of energy. Specifically, the conditions that stop flow that are identified by participants throughout the interview series are the following:

1. Classroom interruptions.
2. Destructive and negative attitudes among staff members.
3. Teacher's inability to use teacher skills—a result of difficult classroom conditions.
4. Stifled teacher creativity.

In some cases, all participants agree upon the negative impact of a condition on their flow experiences. In other cases, not all participants identify the specific

condition, but the condition is discussed and affirmed by half of the individuals during the interview series. The participants' concern with the conditions that stop flow may be alleviated by administrative actions that counter the negative condition. With this in mind leaders can utilize the understanding of what destroys experiences of flow by altering their leadership practice to eliminate the source of the condition.

1. Interruptions represent a condition that stops flow and are a reflection of the beliefs and culture of a school. If outside telephone calls to the teacher, in-house inquiries of the teacher through classroom telephones, knocks at classroom doors, or intercom announcements during class time are frequent occurrences, the message being conveyed is that the time students spend with their teachers in class is unimportant. These kinds of interruptions demonstrate the belief that it is appropriate and acceptable to interrupt student learning. Allowing interruptions throughout a lesson also implies that the lesson the teacher is conducting has no real structure and will not be effected by an interruption.

The leader has control over the messages that are imparted to the school population regarding the importance of time students spend with teachers. He or she must establish at the very beginning of the school year the understanding that uninterrupted classroom time between teachers and students is critical for student success. Students, teachers, parents, and the community must understand that time spent between student and teacher is sacred and should not be interrupted unless absolutely necessary. Messages, forgotten lunches, money for the bus ride home are all situations that could be taken care of in the office area. This intervention would allow teachers to teach and students to learn in an uninterrupted fashion.

2. Destructive or negative attitudes among staff members is an issue that all participants agree is unhealthy. All except one of the participants feel that this condition affects their performance and fulfillment in the classroom. The pivotal issue is that when concerned about emotional or confrontational situations among staff members, participants feel they cannot focus completely on their own teaching. All participants feel that the culture of the school or the emotional health of the staff is a direct reflection of the involvement of the leader. Each of the participants implied that the role of a principal mirrored the role of a teacher regarding establishing a healthy learning environment. The same kinds of skills and attitudes reinforced in the classroom by the teacher need to be reinforced by the leader to allow teachers to work together successfully. Trust, respect, freedom to risk, and support of one another are all example of the skills and beliefs that must be modelled and communicated by the leader.

3. Teachers' inability to use their skills because of classroom conditions is an issue that poses a challenge for both teachers and leaders. This condition takes more than one form. The first form is identified as teachers' lack of time to plan and prepare. This is a situation that does not allow teachers to use strategies appropriate for particular students or teaching episodes. Cooperative learning, for example, is a strategy that is advantageous in assisting students to work in groups, to take responsibility, and to learn appropriate social skills. It does, however, take an immense amount of time to prepare and may be passed over as a strategy of choice simply because the teacher does not have the time to pull the details of the strategy together.

A second situation that participants identify as a circumstance that prevents them from using certain skills or strategies involves having too many dysfunctional students in one classroom. Dysfunctional students as described by participants are those individuals who cannot function in a classroom with other students. They are the joy zappers that Nick refers to. For them to win, others must lose. These might be students who are on medication for attention deficit symptoms, who are being reintegrated into regular schools from behavior disordered designations, or who are psychologically unhealthy because of family dysfunctions. Their actions within the class are so extreme and so frequent that when more than one or two are together in a class of 30, it becomes impossible to conduct a lesson using the appropriate skills and strategies.

To address this situation, leaders must acknowledge that the problem is critical and very real, but also acknowledge that today's societal conditions are such that the expectation will continue for schools to work with dysfunctional individuals in schools. An integral part of the principal's leadership practice must be to work with his or her staff to create critical shifts in beliefs and actions. A strong and clear school discipline policy, with consequences that are consistently utilized is critical.

Creativity in identifying consequences is important. What is effective with most students in the way of discipline and consequences, is often ineffective with psychotic or dysfunctional children. Close partnership with the home is a must. Support for teachers must be made available to assist them to develop additional strategies, to modify programming, or to understand better the students' needs. School configurations, as we have known them up till now, may not be appropriate for the difficult

situations teachers face today. Teachers, parents, and administrators must investigate different student groupings and programming as one way to confront the challenge. Principals must keep in mind that teachers can work with students needing special approaches and assistance, but they cannot work with 10 in a classroom of 30 and be expected to achieve success with all. The principal must be realistic in his or her expectations and be willing to make reasonable shifts in the demographics of classroom members. The leader must look to the community for resources now more than ever and utilize parents and volunteers as much as possible.

4. Teacher creativity is a condition that is expressed by all participants as a situation that is important in their teaching and critical for experiences of flow. The condition of creativity in teaching relates to the issue of autonomy in teaching in that both situations require direct control by the teacher over issues that directly effect students. When teacher decision making regarding how a lesson is conducted is squelched, creativity is smothered as well. Participants discuss situations where they would not have experienced flow during a lesson had they not been able to use their creativity to plan and conduct the lesson.

For leadership practice, this implies that principals must have a good working knowledge of the curriculum being taught by their staff members. This is critical in determining whether the teacher, in the midst of his or creativity is addressing the curriculum. They must also know their staff members' abilities and strengths in order to assist them in trying new or inventive approaches. The school culture must be such that there is support for different perspectives as well as the sharing of ideas. Leaders must convey the message to staff members that risk taking in striving to make lessons

better for students, the mistakes made in trying new ideas, and growth through exploring new territory are all encouraged. This kind of atmosphere or philosophy within a school allows teachers who must be creative to experience flow to express their creativity and be fulfilled in the process.

Concluding thoughts of implications of flow conditions for leadership

practice. Teachers and leaders in education today are stretched and pressed more than ever before. The fast paced race in which we presently find ourselves is something that educators did not have to experience 30 or 40 years ago. It is also suggested (Barlow & Robertson, 1994) that the education system of the '50s and '60s, although considered by some as less troubled, experienced many casualties in the form of students who fell through the cracks and teachers who hung on for dear life. Perhaps it is because of the dizzying speed at which we conduct our lives today that individuals within society feel more desperate to communicate the highs and lows of their work situations. We now, more than ever, feel the need to let others know what hurts us and what helps us out in daily lives. The participants within this study have provided insightful descriptions of the conditions that enhance and detract from the quality of their work experiences. Although I do not claim to have provided all the implications of the understanding of teachers' experiences of flow for leadership, it is clear that leaders must acknowledge and understand what teachers describe in their flow experiences and use this information to modify their leadership practice. By listening to what teachers say is important to their quality of life experiences in work, leaders can begin to improve the conditions resulting in fulfillment, joy, and flow in teaching.

**Summary of Chapter 4: Presentation,
Discussion and Analysis of the Data**

The participants in this investigation are individuals who were selected from a recommended group of teachers demonstrating qualities or characteristics of flow. These characteristics are rendered from descriptions of other reported experiences of flow and provide the basis for criteria used to recommend participants (see Appendix B). Their stories told during the interview series serve to provide detailed descriptions of their experiences of flow as classroom teachers. The participants' responses to questions relative to the study create a rich and elaborate mesh of description that results in an intricate design depicting their experiences of flow in teaching. The individual strands of description also develop a pattern that answers the questions of what starts the participants' experiences of flow, what enhances their experiences of flow, and what stops their experiences of flow. From this landscape of woven bits of information, comes as well, the word picture of their experiences in comparison to the experiences of flow of others as reported in previous studies.

As part of the investigative process, validation is carried out by the participants in the study. They have an opportunity to restate any of their ideas providing more accuracy to the details of their portrayal. They also reflect on my work of describing and analyzing their data. They validate the telling and meaning of their stories as retold and examined by me. Any inaccuracies within the description or analysis of their experiences of flow are indicated to me and adjusted until considered accurate by the participants.

The findings of the investigation answer the questions of the study. The stories of the participants provide descriptions of the conditions in teaching that start,

enhance, and stop the experiences of flow for them. The descriptions also provide a basis upon which a comparison of experiences can be made with other reported experiences of flow. Lastly, these findings are utilized to determine the implications of the understandings of flow for leadership practice. Implications for leadership practice are drawn from the information and description within the data. These implications provide a foundation for leaders to use in striving to create, increase, and maintain conditions within a teaching environment that participants indicate are critical to experiences of flow.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Conclusions of the Study

Chapters 1 through 4 of this investigation describe the process of the study and can be summarized briefly. Chapter 1 outlines the purpose, questions, and importance of the study. It also defines the significant terms and states the limitations and assumptions of the study. Chapter 2 reviews the related literature of the study. Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodology of the investigation. Chapter 4 presents the data in the form of the described experiences of the participants as well as the analysis conducted by both me and each participant. Chapter 5 now pulls the investigation together by drawing out and describing conclusions and findings from the data.

Listening to participants heartfelt descriptions of what constitutes flow for them is like catching a glimpse of someone's private celebration. Hearing descriptions of their difficult struggles, however, is similar to standing by helplessly as someone mourns. I am glad that I took the opportunity to conduct this study for it will create opportunities for others to gain knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon that will hopefully increase the celebrations and decrease the grief.

This investigation provides responses to the following questions of the study.

1. What are the experiences of classroom teachers when they are involved in the phenomenon of flow?
 - What conditions start the flow experience?
 - What conditions enhance the flow experience?
 - What conditions stop the flow experience?
2. How do teachers' experiences of flow compare with the framework drawn from the studies of flow conducted by Csikszentmihalyi?
3. What are the implications of this investigation for leadership practice?

Teachers' Experiences of Flow

During the interview series the participants respond to an interview protocol that is structured to provide guidance and direction, yet will allow for freedom of the participants to investigate some of their own discoveries within the process. This approach results in very candid, colorful, and poignant descriptions of flow by the participants. Each participant experiences different sensations during his or her experiences of flow. The sensations are described as feelings of excitement, relaxation, inner peace, calm, euphoria, joy, tingling, shivers, moved to tears, gifted, sacred, spiritual, wonderful, warm, harmonious, connected, high, flying, goose bumps, sneezing, and full of energy. The described sensations vary in character, intensity and duration among the participants, but tend to be described the same way each time the same individual refers to an experience. Each participant is consistent in the way he or she describes an experience even when the experience occurs within different teaching episodes.

Conditions That Start the Flow Experience

In compiling the data from all the participants descriptions, I find that there are many descriptions of conditions that represent similar ideas. These groups of similar ideas constitute themes within the data that participants confirm are conditions that must be in place for flow to occur. It is difficult to say that these conditions start the flow experience as the conditions themselves have a building, progressing, constant, kind of quality that defies being labelled as initiating the experience. They are conditions that are created and nurtured by individuals along the way resulting in a constant and stable environment that supports the initiation of flow. It seems more accurate to say that these conditions must be in place for experiences of flow to occur. The themes representing conditions that must be in place for flow conditions to occur are described in the following way:

1. Teachers' specifications of students' experiences of flow. Unless teachers perceive students are experiencing optimal or flow experiences, teachers' experiences of flow do not occur. Student experiences of flow during episodes of teacher instruction do not occur unless there is connection between the student and the teacher and participation with the lesson.
2. Positive learning environment. Participants stress the importance of creating an environment that allows students to feel safe, respected, supported, and encouraged while they learn. This environment also involves establishing expectations, rules, and consequences resulting in order and harmony among the members of the group.
3. Seeing growth in students. This relates closely to the first condition of students' experiences of flow in that students who experience growth are more likely

to have experiences of flow. Growth is described by participants as student ahas, discoveries, abstract connections, taking responsibility for learning, having pride in learning, and risking.

4. Achieving goals and feeling successful as a teacher. When participants feel they are assisting students to grow or when they believe they are using their skills and knowledge to reach their full potential as teachers, they have experiences of flow.

5. Being challenged. All participants discuss the importance of feeling challenged. They do not feel fulfilled and do not have experiences of flow unless the challenge is one of reasonable difficulty. Participants do not experience flow when there is no challenge or when the challenge has a mediocre level of difficulty attached to it.

Conditions That Enhance the Flow Experience

The themes that address this question are more easily explained as they increase the vividness, intensity, duration, and overall quality of the experience. Still, it is difficult in some instances to determine if the condition is one that enhances experiences of flow, or if for some participants the condition may be a critical component of the circumstances that allow them to experience flow. The qualifying aspect of this issue is that the qualities of the conditions that enhance flow experiences are variant. The conditions are in place already, but the strength of the condition determines the enhancement of the experience of flow. For example, the condition of planning and preparation is one that is always in place, even if the opportunity to plan is such that planning is done hurriedly and in the teacher's head. The experience of flow may still occur because all of the critical conditions are in place, but the

experience of flow may be enhanced if the condition of planning and preparation is improved beyond the minimum. If the teacher has an opportunity to plan previous to the lesson, to establish objectives and standards, to commit key ideas to paper, to diagram student groupings, to discuss strategies with a colleague, to get ideas for new activities, to draw materials together, and to adjust segments of the lesson for specific students, the quality, intensity, or frequency of the flow experience is likely to improve. The themes representing conditions that enhance experiences of flow are the following:

1. Planning and preparation for teaching. This includes planning and preparation on a daily basis as well as being professionally prepared for the assignment.
2. Autonomy and control. This condition includes autonomy and control over classroom issues as well as decisions within the school that directly effect the teachers' responsibilities in the classroom. Such concepts as discipline, testing, student placement, student programming, resources, and teacher assignments are areas within which teachers want to have autonomy and control.
3. Colleagues. Conditions within this theme are related to collegial support, sharing, professionalism, teaming, appreciation, attitudes, teaching, and learning. All participants feel that a healthy staff with members who are responsive to each other make it easier to do a good job in the classroom. All but one of the participants feel that the conditions related to positive collegial support, sharing, professionalism, and so on enhance their experiences of flow in the classroom. The impact of collegial interactions has to do with the aspect of emotional safety within work. Participants who identify this theme, feel that infighting and negative attitudes that occur among

staff members detracts from their focus in the classroom inevitably affecting their experiences of flow. Nick does not feel the same as other participants regarding this condition. He agrees that it is desirable to have positive collegial interactions among staff members, but feels his performance in the classroom comes from within and is not effected by his colleagues. He does not feel his work place or environment alters his experiences of flow.

4. Professionalism/teacher learning. All participants feel that professionalism and having the opportunity to learn and stay current in their craft enhances their experiences of flow. The participants are abreast of new strategies and skills within the profession. They feel that to be knowledgeable and skilled within their chosen craft is a natural expectation to have of themselves. All of the participants represent the kind of individuals who need to be learning in order to feel they are progressing. They cannot sit stagnating while the world has wonders to explore. This is part of the participants' personal qualities that make them who they are. They constantly seek additional challenges that need to be balanced with additional skills. Without the desire and opportunity to receive professional development or to learn from colleagues, the participants do not have enhanced experiences of flow.

5. Time. An aspect of this theme has already been mentioned in relation to time for planning and preparing. Another perspective of time involves the uninterrupted time teachers spend with their students. Being able to invest quality time in a situation where students have the opportunity to have the teacher's undivided attention is a condition that enhances teachers' experiences of flow. A last aspect of time addresses the time required by teachers to utilize their creativity. All participants

discuss the importance of creativity in addressing student needs. Some participants describe creativity as being able to discover. Regardless of how it is described, creativity in teaching requires time to first of all work through the creative process and secondly to follow through on the creative ideas that result from the opportunity. If creativity or discovery represents a condition that is important to a teacher's fulfillment and experience of flow, then time must be considered as an enhancement of that situation.

Conditions That Stop the Flow Experience

One way of viewing the conditions that stop flow is to understand that each condition discussed by participants involves the cessation of energy exchange and sharing. When specific circumstances occur such as interruptions during a lesson, there is a disconnection of energy among individuals of the class. All circumstances identified by participants involve this concept of energy exchange. Some instances involve emotional energy, some physical energy, and some intellectual energy. The concept of energy is nevertheless critical to understanding why experiences of flow are stopped. The themes that represent participants' descriptions of circumstances that stop flow experiences are the following:

1. Interruptions of time spent with students. The aspect of interruptions is viewed from a number of perspectives. One perspective has to do with the daily interruptions that occur in the form of knocks on the classroom door, intercom messages, and student misbehaviors. A second kind of interruption is described by participants as losing student interest. This may occur because of inappropriate teaching strategies, inappropriate expectation levels, or mistaken estimates of student

knowledge and ability. This kind of interruption of flow is in the control of the teacher and participants describe how they utilize student feedback to adjust their lessons and reestablish the flow energy. A third kind of interruption involves a more macro view and refers to the interruptions that occur during the year. This kind of interruption takes the form of extended holidays such as Christmas or summer vacation. It also refers to student absences that, although unavoidable, remove a student from the class for long periods of time. Both these situations result in the teacher becoming disconnected from his or her students. The energy in the case of disconnection keeps moving, but after a break invested teacher energy seems to get fewer results. It is as though the energy is simply “running into the ground.” There is no loop of shared or exchanged energy. This break in the loop of energy is a critical cause of terminated flow experiences.

2. Destructive and negative attitudes among staff. All but one of the participants feel that the conditions that create destructive and negative attitudes among staff members impact their experiences of flow. Nick feels that he is self-sufficient and is not effected by what others do on staff. All other participants believe, however, that conditions leading to negative attitudes within a school make it more difficult to feel fulfilled in work. They imply that these kinds of situations result in emotional, intellectual, and physical disruptions. Staying within the metaphor of energy exchange, destructive, and negative attitudes among staff members is analogous to energy trying to move through “dirty” or dysfunctional wires and connections. Much of the energy is lost on route or is so distorted and weak by the time it is received,

that the energy is ineffective. Participants suggest that this negative energy actually stops experiences of flow.

3. Inability to use skills. Using the skills of one's craft and feeling productive are two of the individual circumstances identified by participants as enhancing experiences of flow. Because this concept is also included in the theme of professionalism/teacher learning, it is understandable that participants should identify inability to use skills as a conditions that stops flow. Again the metaphor of shared energy applies here. Energy in the form of satisfaction, pleasure, feelings of being effective, which is gained from working with students and sharing knowledge and skills, is not present when teachers cannot use their skills to do their job. Circumstances that result in teachers feeling unable to do their job include such incidents as having inadequate time to plan or to spend with students, having too many dysfunctional students needing attention in one class, having inconsistent administrative support during issues of discipline, having insufficient or inappropriate resources, having insufficient support from administration during issues between home and school.

4. Stifled creativity. This theme includes circumstances resulting in teachers feeling they can not risk, make mistakes, or try new techniques. The suppressing of creativity may come from either teacher colleagues or from administrative colleagues, but the issue is really one of an environment or culture that does not value difference and diversity in work. For teachers who need to exercise their creativity to experience flow, this kind of restriction serves to disconnect the teacher from their energy source, that of creativity.

Comparing Teachers' Experiences of Flow With the Framework Drawn From Studies Conducted by Csikszentmihalyi

The research conducted in the area of flow has been conducted in various situations involving differences of age, gender, nationality, kinds of leisure, and various professions and vocations. In conducting these studies, researchers add to the knowledge base that assists individuals in each specific situations to understand better what contributes to their flow experiences. A second benefit achieved by the studies of flow experiences in different situations is that the different sensations and circumstances associated with specific experiences of flow can be compared to the dimensions of flow outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). The understanding of Csikszentmihalyi's dimensions of core and secondary characteristics of flow can be used by individuals involved directly within an activity to increase their experiences of flow and by individuals outside the activity who have control of the conditions of the activity. Teachers who know what constitutes a flow experience have greater opportunity to increase their own flow experiences within the classroom. Principals who have control over certain teaching conditions are examples of individuals outside the activity who gain from understanding what makes a flow experience a flow experience. Their understanding of this phenomenon as experienced by teachers provides opportunities for them to redesign conditions of the job to address specific needs of teachers.

In seeking to answer the question of how teachers' experiences compare to experiences of other individuals, I utilize Csikszentmihalyi's frame of dimensions or characteristics of flow as a representative of the characteristics of flow experienced by all other participants studied. The dimensions reflect the work of Maslow (1968) in

peak experiences and represent critical conditions of all experiences of flow as well as the secondary or resultant characteristics experienced by those in flow. Teachers' experiences of flow, therefore, when compared to the frame of dimensions provided by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) are found to possess all of the core dimensions critical to experiences of flow. These include:

1. A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled.
2. A structure with clear goals.
3. A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback.

The secondary or resultant sensations experienced by individuals while in flow are:

1. A focused concentration of the participant.
2. A merging of activity and awareness.
3. Feelings of control over the activity.
4. A distorted perception of time.
5. A temporary loss of self awareness.

The dimensions of flow as outlined by Csikszentmihalyi are found to be inherent in teachers' experiences of flow. Although teachers' specific circumstances of flow and the sensations they receive from the experience may be different from individuals in other professions or vocations, the essences of the phenomenon of flow are present in all the participants experiences of flow.

Beyond the Dimensions of Flow

Data from the participants' descriptions suggest that there is a significant added criteria that makes teachers' experiences unique to those in teaching roles. This added perspective is that teachers' experiences of flow are dependent on connections with

students. In order to experience flow while instructing, a teacher must have an audience of students who are involved and connected to that teacher. Without that connection, teachers may be imparting information, but will not be experiencing flow.

Implications for Leadership Practice

The implications provided here are specifically related to the data gathered from the descriptions of the participants in the investigation and refer mainly to considerations and actions taken by principals of schools. In a broad sense, however, implications for leadership practice is meant to include all leadership practice including teachers, mentor teachers, department chairs or heads, and leaders at the district level. The implications to follow are suggested with principal responsibilities in mind and so use the title principal in place of the word leader. The reader is asked to keep in mind that beyond the specific situations within this investigation, leadership practice is meant to include all manners of leading.

Specific Implications

Specific implications for leadership practice of understanding teachers experiences of flow are associated with each of the themes established as conditions that start, enhance, and stop experiences of flow. The implications are in response to what participants state assist them in achieving experiences of flow. Considerations within leadership practice range in character from attending to very specific needs such as providing adequate planning time or resources to creating very broad changes in leadership practice that attend to issues involving school purpose and vision.

The implications for leadership practice associated with conditions that start flow are more difficult to identify, as many of the conditions are in the control of the teacher within the teaching action. Implications for leadership practice in this case suggests that a principal must ensure that teachers have the necessary control of conditions effecting their experiences of flow.

Implications for leadership practice associated with conditions that enhance teachers' experiences of flow are more easily addressed in leadership practice. They include conditions that have a number of alternative ideas clearly suitable to improving or maintaining the circumstances of flow. Ensuring uninterrupted teaching time, providing adequate resources, and supporting collegial interactions are some of the actions available to principals within leadership practice. These actions are examples of leadership practice that are associated with conditions that enhance experiences of flow.

Implications for leadership practice related to conditions that stop flow are the most blatant and easily attended to. Principals must listen to teachers' concerns and acknowledge blocks to flow experiences. By intervening in situations that stop flow, principals can remove obstacles in the way of teachers' flow experiences. Appropriate placement of dysfunctional students can allow teachers to utilize their teaching skills and experience flow. Encouraging teachers to be creative in their approach to teaching, and modelling acceptance of different methods of teaching for all staff to observe, removes conditions that stifle creativity for teachers and allows for experiences of flow related to teachers' needs to be creative. Providing growth opportunities that assist teachers to skillfully keep students involved in learning, allows teachers

to maintain connection with students. Providing opportunities for staff members to establish good working relations allows teachers to feel positive about their interactions with colleagues and to be more focused in the classroom.

Implications That Relate to Csikszentmihalyi's Dimensions of Flow

By addressing the dimensions of flow as described by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) principals as leader practitioners will find themselves assisting teachers to have optimal, peak, or flow experiences in teaching. The implications for leadership practice of the first dimension of flow, striving for a balance of challenge and skill, means that principals must encourage teachers to in some instances take on new challenges and in other instances seek new skills. The control of that balance of challenge and skill must be in the hands of the teacher and so teacher and principal must work very closely together. Working closely with a teacher allows the principal to develop a relationship with the teacher and to understand the teachers' skills and abilities. Being familiar with the teacher's attributes allows the principal to determine what constitutes a challenge for individual teachers and to be able to increase or decrease the challenge for specific individuals. Principals must, in addition to encouraging teachers to take on challenges, monitor the teachers' skill level and ability. Monitoring in this way will provide information for the principal regarding the kinds of challenges a teacher is prepared to take on. This monitoring will also allow the principal to provide, for the teacher, the specific support needed in the form of professional development or resources.

The implications of leadership practice associated with the second dimension of flow, providing a structure with clear goals, suggests creating a clear vision at the school level. By creating and communicating a clear purpose for the school, the principal can create a situation that allows for more consistency for the teacher within his or her individual classroom. By encouraging teachers to establish classroom expectations, goals, rules, and consequences, principals assist teachers in establishing a teaching/learning environment that has clear goals. By modelling and expecting knowledge of the curriculum, principals establish a situation where teachers receive additional guidelines and goals in the form of curriculum objectives and assessment standards.

Implications for leadership practice of the third dimension, a structure that provides relevant and immediate feedback, means that principals must be able to provide feedback for teachers. To be able to provide relevant feedback for teachers, principals must be knowledgeable in areas of curriculum, assessment, classroom management, programming, instructional strategies, and skills (Frase & Hetzel, 1990; Lovell & Wiles, 1983; Stodolsky, 1990). It is interesting to note, however, that participants indicate feedback from principals as a secondary source of information for teachers and that the primary source is from their students. Implications for leadership practice of this understanding is that principals must encourage teachers to know their students well, to establish the kind of relationship with them that allows feedback to be forthcoming, and to trust that student feedback is accurate and valuable to the teaching and learning process. Assisting teachers to recognize student feedback as being valuable indicators of student progress will help to refocus teachers'

perspectives of student behaviors. Instead of being unaware of the significance of students' behaviors and responses, teachers can be assisted to utilize the information gleaned from student feedback. Knowing that a specific student response is indicative of a particular need or aspect of student growth, teachers' negative views of some student responses can be reversed. For example, restlessness or talkativeness, demonstrated by a student, should be seen by the teacher as valuable feedback regarding the pace of the lesson or the need of the student. To assist the teacher to gain this perspective, the principal must make sure that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to make full use of valuable student feedback.

General Implications for Leadership Practice

Building of Relationship

A broad implication for leadership practice revolves around the concept of relationship. Wheatley (1994) stresses the importance of relationship in leadership. She states, "Leadership is always dependent on the context, but the context is established by the relationships we value. We cannot hope to influence any situation without respect for the complex network of people who contribute to our organizations" (pp. 144-145).

Participants in their telling of stories emphasize the importance of connection and relationship between teachers and students in relation to their experiences of flow. They also stress the importance of relationship between teachers and principals, and among all members of the staff. This relationship allows for positive energy to move unimpeded from staff member to staff member resulting in a positive environment for learning, teaching, being challenged, growing, and succeeding.

Belief in Lifelong Learning and Growth

A second general implication for leadership practice is that with this understanding of what constitutes flow activities, leaders can strive to create situations that challenge teachers in a way that requires growth on the teacher's behalf in order to meet the challenge. The assumption that teachers are fulfilled in their work by tasks that provide pleasure is erroneous. Pleasure is a feeling of contentment that results from having our biological or social expectations met (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Pleasure is derived from many stimulants, but the emanating pleasure alone does not result in growth. The stimulants do not introduce complexity to the self and thus do not create new order in consciousness. Enjoyment, on the other hand, occurs when someone has met an expectation and more. Enjoyment is the involvement of satisfying a need or want, but includes going beyond what was expected, beyond what was ever hoped for. From this happening is born a self that has grown, a self that has become more than it was before the experience. Leadership practice must demonstrate a belief in growth and lifelong learning for all members of a school community.

Addressing the Hierarchy of Needs

A third general implication for leadership practice relates to Maslow's (1969) hierarchy of needs. Maslow's theory regarding growth of the individual human suggests that individuals must possess feelings of safety and of having their needs met in more basic areas before they can reach beyond their present intellectual level of existence. Before individuals can self-actualize, the basic conditions of physical and emotional needs must be met.

Participants, in their descriptions of conditions that enhance flow experiences, paint pictures of self-actualization that can only be realized if all other previous needs are satisfied. If they are paid enough to feel worthwhile, if their work environment is healthy and relatively stable, if they do not fear for their well being in a physical or emotional sense then they can focus on developing their potential. When participants describe the conditions that must be in place for flow to occur and when they describe conditions that stop flow, Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs is evident.

To self-actualize means to extend, to go beyond, to be the very best that one can be. Teachers who strive to go beyond, who need to feel they are being challenged and are doing an excellent job, cannot reach for this goal when their basic needs have not been met in a physical, intellectual, or emotional way. An individual's feelings of safety, confidence, and self-esteem can be decreased by having to deal with specific destructive situations in their work. Situations such as negative attitudes among staff members may translate into feelings of emotional uncertainty for individuals. Inability to use teacher skills resulting in frustration may translate into emotional upheaval for the individual who strives to do a perfect job. Dysfunctional students who are violent and abusive either verbally or physically represent very real issues of safety in both the emotional and physical sense. Fear of being perceived as incompetent can lead to feelings of decreased self-confidence and self-esteem making it impossible for an individual to self-actualize or reach his or her potential.

Leaders must acknowledge as well, tensions stemming from personal and home difficulties. Individuals who feel stretched between work and caring for a family can have feelings of incompetence in both areas. Failed personal relationships may for a

time change an individual's emotional stability and self-esteem. Some teachers lack confidence and self-esteem in areas outside work and drive themselves relentlessly in work as the one place where they feel competent.

The participants within this study described similar fears and emotions to those just provided as examples. Even the most confident of teachers can have their foundation shaken by situations that diminish their feelings of physical, emotional, and intellectual safety. Leaders must acknowledge this and assist teachers to have the foundations in place that will allow them to self-actualize and in doing so, experience episodes of flow.

Understanding the Power of the Dimensions of Flow

A final and very critical general implication for leadership practice is for leaders to understand the power of the dimensions of flow. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) reinforces this idea: "The best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to its limits in a voluntary effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Optimal experience is thus something that we make happen" (p. 3). Understanding the basis and power of flow is also critical for teachers. To assist teachers to utilize this understanding, principals must provide information for teachers regarding the phenomenon of flow and provide opportunity for them to discuss and reflect. Teachers work in a fast paced and isolated environment and would benefit from time and direction in processing both their own experiences of flow and antiflow. The principal may include explanations and descriptions of the phenomenon of flow in the agenda of a staff meeting. The next step would be to

provide opportunities for teachers to talk about their own experiences in relation to flow. This would have to be planned carefully and conducted in a safe environment that would allow teachers to risk and share with their colleagues.

Being in possession of the understanding of dimensions of flow as well as the knowledge of what constitutes flow for teachers must create within principals a sense of obligation to utilize this knowledge in enhancing conditions associated with quality of life experiences in work. Job redesign as supported by Morf (1986), Argyle (1987), and Frase (1995) offers a powerful way for principals to improve conditions associated with flow. Through job redesign, principals can increase the quality of life in work for staff members and at the same time shift assignments and responsibilities within roles that can result in increased performance. LeFevre (1992) suggests that there is a link between flow and performance and states, "Since flow enhances activation, concentration, and creativity, it is likely that performance would improve by increasing the amount of time in flow" (p. 318).

In addition to the knowledge of flow being important for principals and teachers, the understanding of the power of flow is useful and significant as well for teachers' associations and unions. With the understanding of flow, unions can begin to shift their focus from extrinsic motivators such as salary, which is incorrectly assumed to improve teacher satisfaction (Herzberg, 1966). The associations' efforts could be better directed toward intrinsically motivating conditions that can enhance the opportunities for improved quality of life in work.

I conclude by reinforcing the idea that flow in its basic form is control by an individual over his or her own consciousness. Leaders can support and assist teachers

to achieve moments of flow but inevitably the optimal experience is in the control of the doer. By learning all we can about the phenomenon of flow, we make incremental gains in a direction that will make life more harmonious, rich, and enjoyable.

Recommendations

Methodology

1. Although the interview process was very successful, one of the questions addressed within the study is worded in such a way that determining themes related to that question within the data was difficult. The question, “what starts the flow experience?” would be more appropriate if worded to determine what conditions need to be in place for experiences of flow to occur. The exact question or objective from the investigation was used during the interview process, but the discreet meaning of the descriptions provided by participants often did not articulate with the question stated in its original form. When reworded to refer to the conditions or circumstances present when experiencing flow, the participants’ descriptions were much more appropriate to the meaning of the question. The essence of the participants meaning is clear regardless of the awkwardness of the question, but the question’s construction made the writing of the findings cumbersome.

2. Selection of participants was conducted through the use of criteria developed from descriptive narratives of other participants’ experiences of flow. Principals in one district and district consultants in the other recommended individuals they believed fit the criteria. This proved to be an excellent way to identify participants who were appropriate for the investigation. I would recommend this method of selecting participants in subsequent studies of this nature.

3. An interview series was utilized to gather data for this investigation. I recommend that other forms of data collection be used in conjunction with the interview for subsequent studies. Observation would reveal interactions between teachers and students described by participants as characterizing flow situations.

A second suggestion for collection of data is to have participants keep a journal of their experiences over a specified period of time. All participants affirmed that their awareness of flow increased after discussing the phenomenon in the first interview.

Subsequent Studies for Further Investigation

1. I believe that further study directing the focus of the investigation to differences of flow experiences between males and females would be of benefit. Although participants described similar experiences, they described them in different ways. This would be an interesting and valuable addition to the understanding of flow in terms of whether gender is associated with differences of individuals' experiences of flow and/or their descriptions of their experiences of flow.

2. A second recommendation for further study is to investigate differences in experiences of flow and the relationship of these differences to participants' primary subject area backgrounds. For example, do teachers who have strong expertise and preference to teach in the area of mathematics describe experiences of flow as being different than experiences of teachers who have strong expertise and preference to teach in the humanities? Additional questions might include, What are the flow experiences of teachers in the sciences? How are they different from the flow experiences of teachers in the fine arts?

3. A third recommendation for further study is to consider investigating the flow experiences of teachers at various division, year, or grade levels.
4. A fourth and final recommendation for further investigation is to investigate and understand the experiences of flow for leaders at all levels in both the public and private school systems.

REFERENCES

- Allison, M. T., & Duncan, M. C. (1992). Women, work and flow. In M. Csikszentmihalyi & I. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.), Optimal experiences: Psychological studies in flow consciousness (pp. 118-137). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Argyle, M. (1987). Psychology of happiness. London: Methuen.
- Ashton, P., & Webb, R. (1986). Making a difference: Teachers sense of efficacy and student achievement. New York: Longman.
- Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. American Psychologist, 37(2), 122-147.
- Bandura, A., & Schunk, D. H. (1981). Cultivating competence, self-efficacy, and intrinsic interest through proximal self-motivation. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 41(3), 586-598.
- Barlow, M., & Robertson, H. (1994). Class warfare: The assault on Canada's schools. Toronto and Ontario: Key Porter Books.
- Block, P. (1993). Stewardship: Choosing service over self interest. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Borich, G. D. (1993). Clearly outstanding: Making each day count in your classroom: A self-development guide for the classroom teacher. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). Leadership. New York: Harper and Row.
- Callois, R. (1958). Les jeux et les hommes. In M. Csikszentmihalyi (Ed.), Beyond boredom and anxiety (p. 7). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Champagne, P. J., & McAfee, R. B. (1989). Motivating strategies for performance and productivity: A guide to human resource development. New York: Quorum Books.
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (1994). Personal experience methods. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 413-427). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Crook, J. H. (1980). The evolution of human consciousness. Oxford: The Oxford University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1975). Beyond boredom and anxiety. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1981). Leisure and socialization. Social Forces, 60, 332-340.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990). Flow. New York: Harper Collins.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1993). The evolving self: A psychology for the third millennium. New York: Harper Collins.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Csikszentmihalyi, I. S. (Eds.). (1992). Optimal experience: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Figurski, T. J. (1982). Self-awareness and aversive experience in everyday life. Journal of Psychology, 50(1), 15-28.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M., Rathunde, K., & Whalen, S. (1993). Talented teenagers: The roots of success and failure. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Davis, L. E., & Cherns, A. B. (1975). The quality of working life: Problems, prospects and the state of the art. New York: The Free Press.
- Delle Fave, A., & Massimini, F. (1992). Modernization and the changing context of flow in work and leisure. In M. Csikszentmihalyi & I. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.), Optimal experiences: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness (pp. 193-213). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, S. (Eds.). (1994). Handbook of qualitative research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Donmoyer, R. (1990). Generalizability and the single case study. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate (pp. 175-200). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Eisenhart, M. A., & Howe, K. R. (1992). Validity in educational research. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy, & J. Preissle (Eds.), The handbook of qualitative research in education (pp. 643-680). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Eisner, E. (1991). The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practices. New York: MacMillan.

- Frase, L. (1992). Teacher motivation and compensation. Lancaster, PA: Technomic.
- Frase, L. (in press). Comparing and contrasting the job characteristics model and dimensions of flow. The Journal of International Educational Reform.
- Frase, L., & Heitzel, R. (1990). School management by wandering around. Lancaster, PA: Technomic.
- Frase, L., & Matheson, R. (1992). Restructuring the system in Fort McMurray Catholic schools. Challenge in Educational Administration, 29(1), 16-22.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 361-376). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gardner, J. (1990). On leadership. New York: Free Press.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hackman, R. C. (1969). The motivated working adult. Pittsburgh: American Management Association.
- Hackman, R. J., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). Work redesign. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Herzberg, F. (1966). Work and the nature of man. Cleveland, NY: World.
- Janesick, V. (1994). The dance of qualitative research design. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 209-219). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. Administrative Science Quarterly, 24, 285-311.
- Kleiber, D., & Maehr, M. (1986). Emergent motivation and the evolution of the self. In M. Maehr (Ed.), Advances in motivation and achievement: Motivation and adulthood (Vol. 4, pp. 93-119). Greenwich, CT: Jai Press.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1993). Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Langer, E. J. (1989). Mindfulness. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

LeFevre, J. (1989). Optimal experience in work and leisure. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 56(5), 815-822.

LeFevre, J. (1992). Flow and the quality of experience during work and leisure. In M. Csikszentmihalyi & I. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.), Optimal experiences: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness (pp. 307-318). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lepper, M. R., & Greene, D. (1978). The hidden costs of reward: New perspectives on the psychology of human motivation. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). Naturalistic inquiry. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Lovell, J., & Wiles, K. (1983). Supervision for better schools. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Maslow, A. H. (1968). Toward a psychology of being. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). The farther reaches of human nature. New York: Viking.

Maslow, A. H. (1972). The "core-religious," or "transcendent," experience. In J. White (Ed.), The highest state of consciousness (pp. 352-364). New York: Anchor Books.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). Motivation and personality (Rev. ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

Massimini, F., Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Delle Fave, A. (1992). Flow and biocultural evolution. In M. Csikszentmihalyi & I. Csikszentmihalyi (Eds.), Optimal experiences: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness (pp. 60-81). New York: Cambridge University Press.

McClelland, D. C., & Steele, R. S. (1973). Human motivation: A book of readings. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mishler, E. G. (1986). Research interviewing. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Mitchell, D. E., Oritz, F. I., & Mitchell, T. K. (1987). Work orientation and job performance: The cultural basis of teaching rewards and incentives. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Morf, M. (1986). Optimizing work performance. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Moustakis, C. (1990). Heuristic research design, methodology and applications. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

O'Connor, B. P. (1991). How a relationship between thinking and feeling may give rise to a variety of human behaviors. Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 117(1), 29-48.

Omodei, M. M., & Wearing, A. J. (1990). Need satisfaction and involvement in personal projects: Toward an integrative model of subjective well-being. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 59(4), 762-769.

Patton, M. Q. (1980). Qualitative evaluation methods. Beverly Hills: Sage.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). Qualitative evaluation and research methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Pitman, M. A., & Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Qualitative approaches to evaluation. In M. D. LeCompte, W. L. Millroy, & J. Preissle (Eds.), The handbook of qualitative research in education (pp. 729-770). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Privette, G. (1983). Peak experience, peak performance, and flow: A comparative analysis of positive human experiences. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45(6), 1361-1368.

Punch, M. (1994). Politics and ethics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), Handbook of qualitative research (pp. 83-97). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rathunde, K. (1989). The context of optimal experience: An exploratory model of the family. New Ideas in Psychology, 7(1), 91-97.

Rhodes, M., & Ogawa, R. (1992). Teacher motivation, work structures and organizational change: Perspectives on educational reform and compensation. In L. Frase (Ed.), Teacher compensation and motivation (pp. 61-101). Lancaster, PA: Technomic.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1985). Political myths about education reform: Lessons from research on teaching. Phi Delta Kappan, 47, 349-355.

Rusnak, M. J. (1981). An examination of Deci's cognitive evaluation theory of intrinsic motivation. Unpublished master's thesis, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA.

Schatzman, L., & Strauss, A. L. (1973). Field research: Strategies for a natural sociology. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Seidman, I. E. (1991). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences. New York: Teachers College Press.

Senge, P. M. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. New York: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1990). Value-added leadership: How to get extraordinary performance in schools. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Stodolsky, S. (1990). Classroom observation. In J. Millman & L. Darling-Hammond (Eds.), Teacher evaluation: Assessing elementary and secondary school teachers (pp. 175-190). Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Press.

Van Maanen, J. (1983). Qualitative methodology. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Van Manen, M. (1990). Researching lived experience. London, Ontario, Canada: The Althouse Press.

Vroom, V. H. (1964). Work and motivation. New York: Wiley.

Wheatley, M. J. (1994). Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Wolcott, H. F. (1990). On seeking and rejecting validity in qualitative research. In E. Eisner & A. Peshkin (Eds.), Qualitative inquiry in education: The continuing debate (pp. 121-152). New York: Teachers College Press.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

University of San Diego

Consent to Participate in Research Study

Alyson Caouette, a doctoral student in the School of Education at the University of San Diego, is conducting a research study to understand more about quality of life, personal growth, motivation, enjoyment, and fulfillment of classroom teachers in their work.

If I agree to take part in the study, I will be asked to participate in three interviews, over a period of approximately two to three weeks.

I understand that the researcher does not anticipate any associated risks to me related to this project. I understand the potential benefit of my participation is that I will have an opportunity to clarify and enhance my understanding of my experiences in teaching and to add to the body of existing knowledge related to the topic of optimal experiences and classroom teachers.

I understand that participation in this study is purely voluntary and I may withdraw at any time without risk or penalty.

I understand that my identity will not be disclosed without my written consent and that a pseudonym will be used for all participants, schools, and districts. I understand that specific descriptions of events will be disguised to keep the origin of the incident confidential. I also understand that I was recommended as a potential candidate by someone within my own school district.

I also acknowledge that there is no agreement, written or verbal, beyond that expressed on the consent form.

I, the undersigned, understand the conditions of this consent form, and on that basis, I consent to voluntary participation in this research.

Signature of Participant

Date

City, State or Province

Signature of Researcher

Date

Signature of Witness

Date

APPENDIX B

GUIDELINE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATION

GUIDELINE CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPANT RECOMMENDATION

Administrators will be asked to recommend, as respondents for this study, classroom teachers who:

1. Express enjoyment and enthusiasm in the teaching process.
2. Talk about “connecting” with most students, including those who struggle or are difficult to motivate.
3. Actively seek challenges within teaching (take on new tasks, volunteer to work extra hours with students or colleagues, look for new challenges in their work).
4. Talk passionately about teaching episodes or student responses that were “dead on,” exciting, magical, fulfilling, perfectly timed, fun, moving, satisfying, etc.
5. Express satisfaction no matter what curriculum or which group of students they are teaching.
6. Express a preference to be uninterrupted while teaching.
7. Demonstrate or talk about being absolutely absorbed in episodes of their teaching.
8. Talk about how time seems to “just fly by” when teaching or involved with students.

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANTS

November __, 1994

Dear _____:

I am a Canadian doctoral student from University of San Diego who is conducting a study within the profession of teaching. Mine is a descriptive study hoping to better understand the ideas surrounding quality of life, personal growth, and teaching.

Your name has been suggested as someone who would be interested in participating in just such a study. The study involves talking to people like yourself who are interested in understanding more fully, quality of life within teaching, and are willing to share their experiences. This might involve aspects of personal growth, motivation, enjoyment and fulfillment within your work.

The study involves three in-depth interviews. The interviews will revolve around your description of the kinds of things you experience while you are teaching. Participation in this investigation will not involve any risks, discomfort or expense except for the time you devote to the interviews of this project. All records of this study will be confidential and participant anonymity will be assured.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please fill out the enclosed demographic form and return it to me. Returning the form does not mean that you will be selected to participate in the study, it simply indicates your interest. The purpose of the demographic form is to identify a pool of interested participants from which the participant group will be selected.

I will follow up the receipt of the form from interested individuals with a phone call to answer any questions and to discuss next steps in the process. All respondents will be notified as to whether or not they have been selected to be in the study.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and I want to make it clear that should you decide to become involved in the investigation and are selected, you may withdraw at any time without risk or penalty.

I am excited to begin the study and at the prospect of working with you. Please consider participating in this study and return the "interest" form as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Alyson Caouette

APPENDIX D**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FORM**

Indication of Interest and Demographic Information

Please read through the following statements and complete the questionnaire as completely as possible. The demographic information you provide will allow me to contact you and will be used to make final selections for the participant group. Be as comprehensive as you can. Please be reminded that this information is confidential.

1. Yes_____ I am willing to participate in your descriptive study.
2. Name _____ (please print)
3. Address _____

4. Telephone Number Home _____ School _____

Fax Number Home _____ School _____
5. School Name and Address _____

6. Please use the back side of this form to respond to the statement:

My reasons for agreeing to be in this study about classroom teachers are...

APPENDIX E

CSIKSZENTMIHALYI'S INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

CSIKSZENTMIHALYI'S INTERVIEW NARRATIVES

Interviewer: I am going to read three descriptive paragraphs to you. Please listen carefully to each paragraph and we will talk about them after (interviewer reads narratives to the respondent).

1. My mind isn't wandering. I am not thinking of something else. I am totally involved in what I am doing. My body feels good. I don't seem to hear anything. The world seems to be cut off from me. I am less aware of myself and my problems.

2. My concentration is like breathing. I never think of it. I am really quite oblivious to my surroundings after I really get going. I think that the phone could ring, and the doorbell could ring, or the house burn down or something like that. When I start, I really do shut out the whole world. Once I stop, I can let it back in again.

3. I am so involved in what I am doing. I don't see myself as separate from what I am doing (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, pp. 139-140).

The following questions are then asked of the respondent:

1. I would like you to think about these descriptions and tell me if you have ever had a similar experience.
2. What activities were you engaged in when this experience occurred?
3. How does the experience get started?
4. What keeps it going, once it starts?
5. How does it feel?

These questions are Csikszentmihalyi's (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 67) and have been utilized as they are, as well as modified and used by other researchers in order to fit different investigative frames.

APPENDIX F

PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS

PILOT STUDY QUESTIONS

The same narratives as used by Csikszentmihalyi (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p. 67) will be read to the respondents after which they will be asked to respond to the following:

1. What experiences have you had within the classroom, that are similar to the experiences in the paragraphs I have just read to you?
2. What activities were you engaged in when the experience similar to the experiences I have just described to you occurred?
3. How does the experience feel?
4. How does the experience get started?
5. What keeps the experience going, once it starts?
6. What enhances the experience or makes it stronger?
7. What ends the experience?
8. Where does this experience occur outside of the classroom?
9. Please describe this out of classroom experience?
10. What is it about your school site/environment that enables you to have this experience?

APPENDIX G

STEPS OF THE INTERVIEW SERIES PROCESS

STEPS OF THE INTERVIEW SERIES PROCESS

1. Contact districts for permission to conduct the study.
2. Contact suggested principals for discussion of sample criteria and recommendation of potential participants.
3. Send participant letter to recommended teachers.
4. Follow up with a phone call to potential participants.
5. Select and meet with potential participants to explain purpose of study and answer potential participant's questions. Potential participants sign the consent form.
6. Conduct pilot interviews (series of three), transcribe data and give back to participants for member check before each subsequent interview. Adjust the interview protocol if necessary. Work through a complete analysis of the respondents' stories.
7. Continue interview process with adjusted protocol for all other participants. Transcriptions of interviews and observation will be provided to each participant before the subsequent interview will take place.
8. Second and third interviews will utilize information from previous interviews to investigate classroom teachers experiences more deeply.
9. At the conclusion of all interviews, a meeting will be held to provide closure to the process and to thank the participants for their contributions.
10. Follow-up contact will be made at the conclusion of the study, when a summary of findings will be made available to participants.

APPENDIX H

CHARACTERISTICS/THEMES OF FLOW

CHARACTERISTICS/THEMES OF FLOW

Primary Characteristics	Secondary Characteristics
A balance of challenge and skill that can be varied and controlled	There is focused concentration of the participant
A structure with clear goals	There is merging of activity and awareness
A structure providing immediate and relevant feedback	The activity is under the person's control
	A distorted perception of time, temporary loss of self awareness

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1990)

APPENDIX I

**LOUISE'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED
TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW**

Louise's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

Professionalism	Personal Outlook	Harmony	Creativity	Window/Mirror/Truth
Best teaching moments for students	Stories	The school building	Leaves me alone (principal)	They are looking in on your life and you are looking in on theirs
Resources	Life journey	You just could't have cried and fallen apart	Gives me space (principal)	Going deeper and deeper into their thinking
Respect	Spiritual	Their lives, their situations, their stories	Inhibits creativity (ange,)	A very special time
I have this need to be on top	Energy and love	My team partner	I couldn't get them to trust	Every eye is on me. Not a sound
Connected to what you're doing	Balance in life	Support	I'm a social person (sharing ideas, support)	In another world together
Students know if they're getting a quality education	Good things out of bad	They trust and go where you want them to go	Committed	You lose yourself in the moment
Hitting bottom	A humble feeling	Building a personal connection	Anger	Focused
Immersed in professional growth	Vision in life	Being centered	I must be creative	A special place

Professionalism	Personal Outlook	Harmony	Creativity	Window/Mirror/Truth
Pushes and supports me	Holy or sacred	Fascinates me (meaningful times in my life)	Caught up in what they want to produce (students)	In awe of it
Grounding of success	Joyous	Kids feel connected	Go for it, try it (support)	A gift
Strong self-image	Relating on a personal level	For me it's communication	A need to start stretching	You've got them, they're with you
Quitting the profession	Idealistic	Connected feeling	A unique person	Scary
Professional growth	Enthusiasm	Connected with those kids	Nothing's too great a challenge	They were with me
Meaning as a professional	Getting into their writing	Community	Creative and alive (her feelings)	It's so unconscious (the moment)
My self-esteem	Happy	Family feeling	Releases the best you can be (creativity)	That I'm right there (with them in the moment)
My interpretation of myself as successful and contributing	Energy	In touch with each other	Flowing out my mine (creative ideas)	
I couldn't do my job as a teacher	It feels good (creativity)	Close to something really good	Creativity just flows	
Professional	Interpretation	Dynamics and security (the staff)	Creative ideas	

Professionalism	Personal Outlook	Harmony	Creativity	Window/Mirror/Truth
Professional growth out of a bad experience	I'm an emotional and sensitive kind of individual	Choices	Stretching toward a goal	
Feel good about myself	Accepted	Openness of this school		
Confident	They hugged me	Students go with you (in the moment)		
Height of your profession	Inner psyche	Like family		
Ground work	Student stories			
Planning and structure				
Research				
Professional skills				

APPENDIX J

**HEATHER'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED
TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW**

Heather's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

Staff	Sensing the Kids	The High of Teaching	Connecting Thru Feedback	People—Feelings	Sense of Order, & Control	Challenges
These are the people I love	Seeing that they're still with me	Teaching is a big part of my life	Unbelievable discussions	Fulfilling a need	I'm so much in control at school	Starting new things with the kids
A sense of support from the principal	Mainly times when we're in discussion, those are the times I sense it	My life centers around those classrooms	Real timing & connectedness	I would not have to finish sentences. She would know	I don't have the focus & organization in the summer	I need to take a new twist to do it the second time
People I've grown up with, worked with	Losing what was happening with the kids	Amazing... it's two o'clock & schools out	Me being able to interact	True friendship beyond the line of student & teacher	Control is a big thing	I love the challenge of coming up with something new
Vision	Sensing this excitement in them carried over to me	I feel good all over physically	There's a connectedness	There's a closeness there	Teaching is autonomous	The idea of being challenged
There's something unique, something special here	A connection beyond the subject matter	It's like euphoria	It's important for me to be able to hear from them	See one another	There is an order to everything	
We need to stay bonded together	A real feeling & sense of love between a teacher & a student	That is an incredible high	Just looking around there wasn't the same spark	It's OK to say hello & to greet one another in the hall	Papers are ready & now I can go have fun	

Staff	Sensing the Kids	The High of Teaching	Connecting Thru Feedback	People—Feelings	Sense of Order, & Control	Challenges
The physical make up of the school	Something is drawing them in	I enjoy what I'm doing	That connectedness, that bonding I need to feel with people	A closeness I feel with the kids	I love organization	
We share a lot more	I sense an eagerness in them to talk about something	You love what you do	A bonding	Work, be patient and kind to one another	A feeling I have accomplished something	
We need to support one another	I sensed a real frustration level	I feel like I could probably fly out of the classroom	Interact with one another	A true closeness		
Working with colleagues at school	A sense that they want to continue	Very similar to runner's high	Getting feedback directly from them	That personal experience that you went through with them		
My sense of happiness tends to be here	In tune with people's expressions & emotions	A love	I took my focus off the kids	She was into my feelings, understood me		
Share something & it won't be passed around the faculty lounge	The kids were so involved	They didn't want it to end & neither did I	Just listening to them	Something you've done, something to help them		
I just look over & I see her teaching	I like them to feel they should be comfortable in class	Unbelievable how quickly time flies	Being a listener			
Working more closely with each other	I was waiting for a reaction	Was that the bell?	They must want to have a part in it			

Staff	Sensing the Kids	The High of Teaching	Connecting Thru Feedback	People—Feelings	Sense of Order, & Control	Challenges
There's so much that we've built together	But you could tell that the interest was there		Feels good to know they are connecting			
More conducive to teachers working together						
How the teachers react with one another, with the kids						
Nurturing principal						
An open school						
I have guidelines but I do what I want						

APPENDIX K

**DEREK'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED
TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW**

Eclectic Me in the Classroom	View of Colleagues	Professional Needs or Behaviors	Acquainting	Judgemental, Black & White World	Personal Selfish Feelings	Negative Feelings	Positive Feelings
He can take a chance		I probably need to feel efficient		Generally kids are risk takers once there are no stupid answers	I know I'm filling a need		
The ability to transfer attitudes & knowledge to a child		Maybe I need to be in command		There are lotsof different kinds of teachers	They want to spend every moment with you for a half hour		
Some kids, the best way to connect is through athletics					My challenges have been more political than anything		
They feel safe & free, & can learn something							
You see more of the whole child when you throw athletics into it							
A brilliant smile on their face when they see that they did something							
Long term behavior & attitude change							
Some kids don't take chances. That's when I feel a failure							
It's the attitude & method of learning I'm interested in							

Eclectic Me in the Classroom	View of Colleagues	Professional Needs or Behaviors	Acquainting	Judgemental, Black & White World	Personal Selfish Feelings	Negative Feelings	Positive Feelings
Did the child want to learn?	Good teachers could use a little more freedom	Competence in passing on attitudes & knowledge	You need to get to know kids	The most boring kind of person in the world is the one who only does teaching	Time to be alone & reflect		
The connectedness doesn't go away. It becomes much less important	It's too bad we're judgemental about a particular style	A feeling of connectedness or helpfulness		Somebody will tell them [teachers] but that's not the same as experiencing it [seeing kids excel in other areas]	I have challenges that I physically do		
Did he feel good in a social sense?	We've got some wonderful teachers here	It was a challenge, nobody asked me to do it		Most of what kids do is positive	To me something is pleasant or exciting		
Seeing them loosen up and accepting of me	Honestly is pretty much the way the staff will react to anything	I had to see if I could do it or not		An authoritarian feeling makes time go by very slowly	If everyone else around here were a bad teacher, I wouldn't feel good being here		
Did he feel comfortable making the attempt?	This school used to be a lot more free	Probably I'm a control freak		Kids will do things intrinsically because they're getting paid with knowledge & confidence	A feeling of enjoyment or mastery		

Derek's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

Eclectic Me in the Classroom	View of Colleagues	Professional Needs or Behaviors	Acquainting	Judgemental, Black & White World	Personal Selfish Feelings	Negative Feelings	Positive Feelings
Affective not cognitive	They're not more dedicated, they just have no other interests	It's individual to individual, not adult to child	So that's one way, it wanes when the need is gone [connection]	Derek's world	I get the same feeling from dealing with adults, groups of adults	I was doing something I didn't care to be doing	It's as good a feeling as I can get when a kid says, "I'm going to get an A," & they get an A
They have to get to know you, you have to get to know them	I'm not trying to challenge myself to do anything in particular, except to treat kids individually	They bring the challenges to me. I don't invent them	We take chances with each other	They're [teachers] made less different because of inservice	I just had a beer & felt a tremendous feeling of accomplishment [veterans]	Vice principal here is basically "catch em and bust em"	They will gather around me during a break
A cooperative attitude with adults — time goes very quickly	I try to accept it & point out something good about it	Personal interaction	Kids make connections with different adults	Growth and change. The lack of a need. [What stops the optimal experiences?]	I feel good most of the time	Mostly I didn't feel I was helping any of them	"That heightened feeling," generally every day is like that
They must accept it, not just do it	We can't do anything that causes noise	It's a challenge to teach some individual children	It's a mutual respect	Each kid needs to adjust to each teacher & I don't think there's one way to be	The period is almost always pleasant	Positive things occur constantly. They don't stand out	They are the one you remember & actually changed something about your life positively
They need to trust you & they'll accept anything you have to give	The staff is a strong staff	There are a number of regulations I would remove	They simply accept me as the weird guy who does things his own way	They [inservices] attempt to make people less than they are	Introspection	It wasn't working with kids, it was working at kids	Working together on a task, time goes by quickly

APPENDIX L

BARRIE'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW

Barrie's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

Indication Kids Are Sensing This Optimal Feeling	Creating the Positive Learning Environment	Hindrances to Teacher Performance (Outside)	Students Who Take Ownership for Their Own Learning	Always a Growing and Learning Experience
Have them [kids] on your side	We can access information [professional] quite readily	We've gotten ourselves spread too thin	Experience it together	Making the right decision
Just a little insight and she was able to us it and take off with it [the learning]	Military minded (if needed)	The division [staff] detracts from the positive energy	They have to be a key participant	It's very exciting
To make that transition from concrete to abstract for the students	Fair and professional	A negative environment leads to a general loss of self esteem & pride	They know what to expect	I reflect in my mind as the process is going on
Let's continue so the kids can experience something positive	Procedures that I go through with the kids at the beginning of the year	More time on class room management	A facilitator more than a teacher	You're able to do it and do it well I'm trying different things all the time
See them develop	I have my criteria & I go through that	We are battered by society	It starts with the students & their enthusiasm	If you really want to have that feeling, it can be built upon
I enjoy being able to discover	My expectations, their expectations	The administration has a lot to do with the environment of a school	The idea is that Education is important	You can never be a true master of anything
Knowing that I'm making a connection	Getting to know each other	Expectations are clearly stated & teacher or student, if you cross the line, somethings going to happen	Positive learning environment	
You have the involvement of the students	Consequences & expectations	Not comfortable with negotiating with consequences	That same feeling generated within the students	

Indication Kids are Sensing This Optimal Feeling	Creating the Positive Learning Environment	Hindrances to Teacher Performance (Outside)	Students Who Take Ownership for Their Own Learning	Always a Growing and Learning Experience
See the growth they've made & experience they've had	I'm very comfortable with the way I run the classroom	I can see a lot of division [staff] and that bothers me	I took that as a challenge; to have them enjoy social studies	
Their light turns on & they're able to understand	Glasser	I try to keep negative feelings out of my class	I'm getting results	
I'm reaching the kids	They know what's going to happen			
There's a lot of noise in my room, productive noise	To reach & have the interest of your students			
The kids played well	Understand the role as teacher & student & administration			
Kids wanting to learn	At the first of the year I went through with all my classes saying this is what I want to do			
Test performance				
There's a direction or chemistry that is happening between yourself & them				
"Hey this is great"				
I know I'm doing something properly				
Kids are working on home work, asking questions, on task				
Self assurance is there				

Understanding the Environment Necessary for Process to Happen	Sensations Felt	Student Hindrances	Peer Influence for My Learning	Frequency
The kids and you understand the purpose	Sometimes it's more of a powerful feeling	I was able to help him, he didn't have a father	To see how another individual conducts things is good for me	I experience it weekly, daily
Kids know what to do when they get into my class	There's an inner peace	I didn't find engineering to be fulfilling	I was influenced and got a lot of my strategies from watching others	
Understand what our [teacher] role is	I'd be thinking of things and just lose that sense of time	Being able to fit in	We were almost like a family, very much a family attitude	
Communication is one of the key forces to be able to work with a class	A tingling sensation			
You have to be prepared	It's a very calming feeling			
Active in the learning process [kids]	A shivering feeling			
There is something that we're reaching for. A goal or theme we're working on together	A good feeling			
I'm very conscious of my surroundings	Your mind just frees itself above other worries			
Organized and understand what's necessary	Sometimes I'm more aware of it			

APPENDIX M

DANA'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW

Dada's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

Creating a Family	Professional Needs	Creating Momentous Opportunities
They like me and I like them	You need a principal whose going to support different kinds of things	I've always wanted to take things to the max
They feel safe	You also need time because these kinds of things that I like to do, they need time	I would see things as being an opportunity to be incredible. This is my moment
It's connecting with kids	If you run out of time to do those kinds of things, then the tendency might be to go to less creative ways of doing things	An opportunity for them to be creative and let themselves shine through
Things don't happen unless you create a really safe environment and kids feel they can take risks	One is just in allowing time for people to put their energy into creating things rather than just spending time to get by	I put together a pretty dynamic presentation
I knew right away that it was going to be a good weekend because they had made the connection with each other and they were into it	You need time to be able to do the things that you want to do	I'm going to try to make this interesting
They just feel so comfortable with me	The other thing is human interaction	It's the way things were set up in the first place
I got the goose bumps because of the other kids too, because—just to see them so accepting	I'm a people person	When I plan these things, I have those moments, even just in thinking about them, envisioning them
I try to create an environment for those kinds of things to happen	Planning ideas with other teachers or just being able to share things and talk to people, that creates positive energy for me	Giving choices brings in creativity
The kids were so into what he was saying, and they were so accepting of him	You need somebody who's accepting of creative ways of learning and teaching	When I'm given an opportunity, I like to really turn it into something dynamic and having that side to me, when I see that side in kids, it brings back all those feelings and so on
Developing relationships with them and among them	I need to be allowed the freedom, I guess, to go with things, do what I want	It took time to think of all those things and how they would plug into different kinds of kids and appeal to them

Creating a Family	Professional Needs	Creating Momentous Opportunities
Talking with a kid, just listening and hearing what they have to say	And he said, "the sky's the limit, you know, be creative, do what you want"	
Kids just talking about all these personal things, and having everybody listen and respect them and so on	You need to talk to adults and other teachers and bounce ideas off them and get ideas from them	
Getting to know people	Support and resources, you need all those things to be able to do a good job and to plan things creatively	
To feel comfortable with each other because they're going to be working with each other	I love kids but you need adults too	
Then to see them reach out to me and hug me and cry or whatever		
OK, I'm really going to have to connect with these kids		
We feel comfortable and we feel safe with each other and just to create a really warm environment		
I seem to be able to reach or connect with the individuals I'm working with		
The purpose of our weekend training thing was to try to bond the group		
Everybody liking each other and so on		

Evolution of the Moment	Exceeding Expectations	Wow! Experience
They feel that this is an opportunity for them to do something they've always wanted to do	I think it starts with an expectation but not really a high expectation	I get goose bumps even thinking about how it might go
To see other kids being moved by it, then that's when it starts for me	Kids take it and exceed what you anticipated	I was so excited by what I had seen and I couldn't think of anything else
You're just so into the person and what's going on	The kids do open up and the kids do run with it and are totally creative	I was one of those moments where I just thought "Wow!"
When it moves me to tears, then I know it more than worked	It was such a neat experience to see them producing such quality work and getting so into it	It was such a moment of growth for a certain individual or a group of kids, I feel so happy for them that I actually, you know, my eyes fill up and I feel warm inside
You kind of catch your breath and go, "OK who's next?"	I was sitting there, and I was thinking, "I can't believe this. This is remarkable." And they had just exceeded my expectations and more, and they were so into it, and they had done such a great job	Wow, I'm really making a difference
It just kind of peaks there and then things go back to normal	Working with the peer support team. Again, you know it starts with an expectation	Tears of joy
Once they're done, you let the class process it and then, OK it's time to move on	I was thinking of a time when I set up the Social Studies assignment for kids and I gave them six different options that they could do	So it was of those moments for him [my teacher] and for me
They come away feeling so good and so— I'm still having the feeling	It was one of those that exceeded my expectations and here were grade 7 kids from pretty eccentric families too	It doesn't end for me but you have to put it at the back of the brain to get on with the lesson
I think it would last for them [the kids] a while longer, but I have to get back to the task at hand		I would just observe and think, "this is incredible. Look at these kids"
Then it sort of leaves you until you remember it again		

Fun	My Passion	Shining (Personal Growth)
Humor	I think it's partly just me as a person	The joy in seeing the kids shine
Time had stopped [when the class was laughing]	My own positive energy is important to have there too. If I'm over tired or in a bad mood it just won't work	Sometimes even stretching your personality
Letting down their guard	I guess I've always been creative in that sense	Being able to stretch ourselves and grow ourselves with that lesson
Just seeing them all connect so much and have so much fun and be active	You could put me in any school, any place, and whatever the circumstance of the school, I'm going to take my class and I'm going to try to create something of it, create an environment where we can all be creative and individuals and express ourselves	I got goose bumps because I thought this is probably one of the few moments that he's actually shone and felt really good in front of so-called normal kids
Laughter		I remember the first time that she actually raised her hand, and did this incredible speech; and so I got goose bumps and my eyes filled up, because I just thought, "Wow!" you know, that shows such growth for that girl
So that was a neat moment, just again, standing back and watching them do this activity and having so much fun and laughing and joking with each other		
When I would feel the happiest sometimes, a lot would be at our school dances		
When I see that, it brings me such joy to see them having so much fun		
I set it up and then I can just sit there and observe and enjoy and see the whole interaction and watch the dynamics and see the kids giving of themselves and opining up and so on		

Sharing and Reflection	Appreciation	Caught or Lost in the Moment
You have to share it [the moment] with someone else too and when you share it again, the feelings are all there	That's another memorable moment, running into him and having him restate everything that he had done in my class to show me, "Wow, you really did learn something"	As soon as I got into that presentation, then that was it. I forgot about everything
But then it comes up again when you reflect on it, like at the end of the day when you go home and you talk to somebody and you say, "you should have seen this"	That is so exciting, people are still talking about that class they had	You're sort of lost for that moment
When you talk about it again, the same feelings happen for you again	The goose bumps came back and everything came back because I wanted so much for him to remember it and when he did, it was all right there	I was so into what I was going to do. I didn't care what just happened five minutes before
Wow, this is why I became a teacher	When you go into teaching, you think that you can make a difference and possibly save a life, and when somebody actually tells you, "you saved my life, I love you," that's pretty big	

APPENDIX N

NICK'S ORGANIZATION OF KEY IDEAS RELATED

TO THE PHENOMENON OF FLOW

Nick's Organization of Key Ideas Related to the Phenomenon of Flow

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World
I think they become family in a sense. You are the most significant person in their life	That's both the frustration of teaching these guys and the joy	And there's a lot of ways you can deal with that—you can quit; you can close down or you can fight like hell to make yourself someone who can meet and help those kids meet their needs	It became a joy, because I knew, when I was preparing lessons like that, because I would get that surge, I knew when it was right	Teaching is learning and sometimes you get a little staid and it takes a real good wake-up call to bring you out of that	I look at the big picture. What am I trying to accomplish?
You could feel it and you knew how it would work with the kids. You know before you ever walked in	As a planner, I plan for all the eventualities. I know my subject very well but I know I'm not going to have planned all the eventualities	With older kids, you have a lot more history to overcome	It's hooked to a huge amount of excitement. You feel personally very excited, joy—in the sense of excitement	It's not when kids go that extra distance where they would have gone on their own, it's when you truly see what you've done to help them grow	I'm not teaching just a word, I'm teaching about the world
And that's a joy. It's finding kids saying "gee, I can do that, where I didn't think I could do that before, where I didn't even believe it was something within the realm of possibility"	I think that my goal is always to point out to them how much there is to learn and how well they can do if they just believe in themselves	I was establishing who Nick Latin was with these kids	You want to pump your hand in the air too. And sometimes I get up and do that too, you know, when I'm writing or when I'm working	Mine [goal] is to send that person healthy too—to send my learner out into the world so that they can be independent and interdependent, so they're not reliant on others, so they can help others, so they can have others help them	I'm really looking at how kids view themselves as learners. I'm really looking at how they can use what they learn for their lives, not just the facts

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I want Students to Know/Understand About the World
And his parents are saying "he loves it; he loves the class, he loves doing science," and he's the same [pauses] he's one of the joys for me	It's such a change with those kids, and changing your expectations [pauses] learning about them	I think I probably already told you, breaks break that	And sometimes when I work towards developing and teaching kids, sometimes, I feel like I've discovered something new and I get that sense of euphoria	Learning is something you do every time you open your mouth, every time you breathe air, every time you see anything—that you should be a life long learner	I'm just a little slice of fact about the reality, but something that they can carry forward and use and it becomes part of their being
And I gave them something that mattered, and I got pieces of writing that were the most phenomenal in the world from them	I have to back up to the kinds of things that I would expect of kinds at grade 2 and 3 and 4, in terms of the ability to work on task, in terms of pride in ownership and responsibility	So the facility isn't it; the people aren't it, other than your learner. That's your job to be there for them, to provide them with opportunities so they can realize how good they can be	So what that does for some of us, I know, is it drives us to work harder. The pleasure from succeeding drives you to work harder so you can get that sense back	Every child needs a different set of motivations to make them believe in themselves, but they also need to spread that; they need to understand that they're more than just visible blocks of information	And science isn't important, language arts isn't important and social studies isn't important, all those things are not by themselves important, but all those things are important in having the kids recognize what they can really do; what they can really be as learners and as people
That's the biggest joy, when a kid opens up and says, "I really understand a lot more than I thought I did. I'm smart"	I think a lot of it has to do with orchestration. I think a lot of it has to do with being perfectly prepared	It's the stress that's accompanied with the lack of what I would accept as success for myself	You see, the only thing that gives me that sense of success is that internal feeling. That sense of—if not euphoria, at least, internal joy in having really done something	Those experiences have never come from my place [of work] they're from within. You create the experience	So that taught me a lot about putting kids in real situations, I mean, simulated, as real as possible for kids, about having them learn

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World
It wasn't the awards that made me feel good. It was when I said "now stop, sit down, write it down. How do you feel?"	Over the course of time, what I did was I offered them incentives because I wouldn't come in as me, I came dressed as an alien	I couldn't get them to write, I couldn't get them to express themselves	I would be working and it would be like everything, every word that went down wasn't just a word, it was a huge number of ideas. It's that same feeling as teaching a class	Those kids just need to be taught to succeed, and to feel personal success	
When I read the first few pieces I was ecstatic. It was because that was exactly what I was trying to do with these kids	I realized I had to hook their emotions in a huge way in something that really mattered	Someone who refuses to be [pauses] not who can't [pauses] but who refuses to be reached	Chris Wallace (a character in a story), he's new. He's so brilliant that he can't be defined the way anybody else is that way	You just put them in the position to learn and to get an aha, and you raise their expectations for themselves	
You can see it on their faces. They make the discovery about what you're teaching, or really more importantly about themselves	You're interacting with these kids all the time and you become family. You have the family squabbles and you have the family joys, and I think that's really where I see that connection	There's some kids who only seem to get joy from making others lose as much as they feel a failure, and that really breaks that [flow]. That really significantly breaks that	The feeling is joy because it's unencumbered by competition. You walk away from it [pauses] "Gee that was great"		
You know what it is and you set it up so well that the teachable moment comes and you don't know what it's going to be, but you're prepared for it	You're doing it so that they can see what powers they really possess as learners	You actually have to have kids learn what it is that you expect of them and what they, in a sense, expect of you	It's the attitude of wonder, the sense of learning, the sense of, "hey, that's a good question," not, "hey, ask that later "		

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Reward: Energy Gain!!	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World	
Knowing exactly how to respond when it doesn't quite work the way you thought it would at first	Before you wondered if there was any crack there that you could open, and now you see that there's cracks. And now you see that they're just kids	They [kids who refuse to be reached] see great joy in lose/lose	That's exactly what I am as a teacher. I'm more of a performer		
As long as you're willing to put the work in, you find that you're getting more and more gain all the time with these kids because they're sensing their own power as learners	Then they start to see themselves as being positive to their learning and the most important part of it	Or in maybe some cases, kids who are really disturbed. It isn't their goal simply to not do their own, it's to disrupt others	They were feeding you with the energy that would allow you to perform and bring more energy out of them		
And that's the same feeling when I write; that super joy that comes when writing.	The whole thing that we talked about is when the learner believes in themselves as a learner. That's when the teacher gets the aha's, and the teacher hopefully helps that happen.	Those natural big breaks [holidays], or unnatural big breaks, seem to be a stop in that momentum.	And then there's performers. I'm one of those. And performers need an audience; and when the audience goes away, the energy level drops.		

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World
You know that no question is unimportant then.	If we're aware of looking for that having kids think about it when they do that, and really honor their own learning, honor what they've done, honor that they've really made a jump, then they start to look for that.	You can blame your facility, but you have control over the facility or you don't. And it's that simple [pauses] you change what you can and you don't whine about what you can't.	It's almost where you're connecting with endorphins.		
What I really want to do is give those kids a belief in self, as learners	And what we do then is that we continue to give them ways to express that. What we have to keep saying is "yeh, OK, that's a start." Because it's real easy to get those kids to quit, and these guys are so ready to quit, you know	I can't be any other teacher than somebody who feels like he's giving his best	You're so excited that, with me there's a certain trigger. I actually sneeze when I get so excited		
You know what it is you seek from the kids; you know what it is that the kids are seeking from you	Now you see that, you know with some guidance, some direction, these kids can start to believe in themselves and that's the thing that I see most of all	You see, it isn't so much new kids, but it's my experience with that group and them knowing me and me knowing them	It's a sense of euphoria		

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World
It's an aha where they make a jump from one level to an entirely different level	And then you recognize that part of what brought that experience to you is the patience, is having the patience to wait for them [flow experiences]	It's too easy to quit and not push. They have to care about what they produce and some of them are starting to get there, they're caring about work, they're caring about pride, about their own pride and accomplishments and achievements	It's Covey's win/win, and that's so incredible		
I'd script it and I knew it was right, it was awesome	You don't know how they're going to make that aha, you just know that that's what you're working for, this huge leap	If you see yourself as a teacher and your teaching as being an expression of joy, then it's very difficult to become the heavy hand because you see teaching/learning as joyous, and when that happens, what you feel inside is anger, not joy. Your responses then really drain that positive energy			
You know that learner so well you know where they're going	And I realized I had to hook their feelings. They had to care				

What I See When Kids Are There/ The High	On the Way: Output = Input	Energy Drain: Laying the Groundwork	Emotional Rewards: Energy Gain!!	Intellectual Beliefs	Why I Teach!: What I Want Students to Know/Understand About the World
I teach for ahas. You recognize that you don't get them every day but that's what the planning's about	There's lots of situations that might break that moment, especially if you haven't made a real connection yet, that's the key				
The thing that makes the biggest difference is the learners, and them knowing you and me knowing them					

Win/Lose—Losing Energy	Energy Required to Seek the Optimal	Preteaching	Students as Energy Drainers: Negative Thoughts (Personal)	Nick's Learning Curve	I Can See!
So the sense of winning in a team sport means that you share that joy	That was very frustrating for me because, you know, you've made all these strides up till Christmas, and then there's been this big break and you suddenly feel like, "Gee, I'm starting all over again"	You never got to see a discovery. You could feel it for yourself, but you never say the discovery in someone else's face	That connection's broken and I think that's a significant part of it [flow]. I think it's really broken there [when there is an unnatural break—holidays], that's the whole essence of being on a roll	And I'm learning to have that [feeling of knowing through writing] better on a computer screen than I could before	I write so I think it. That's the key with me. I simply write it so I can work through the problems I can see, the hitches I can see, what's right with it, and I can see what's wrong with it. It's like walking through a maze [pauses] standing above it and viewing it with your eyes. And that's what I do when I write
It touches pleasure centers in your body that tells you, "this is really good"; and then you need that fix again	And you're not sure you can summon up the energy to do it and it's like withdrawal. It's like withdrawal from that sense of success, the release of chemicals in your body that success brings	You never saw the, "Wow, I did it!" You never saw the joy in others	You really have to lay it very clearly on the line with these guys exactly what the parameters are [pauses] what's acceptable and what isn't	And to look at the screen and see what it says and to get the feeling [flow] from that, from the screen and I wouldn't have done that before	

Win/Lose—Losing Energy	Energy Required to Seek the Optimal	Preteaching	Students as Energy Drainers: Negative Thoughts (Personal)	Nick's Learning Curve	I Can See!
And they [students] don't attribute it to anything, because the ahas they make are often left unnoticed	So instead of easing off, which I suspect some people would do, what you do is you go and work harder to try to find the right combination of things	There was no sense of accomplishment which can come from working with individual kids in a classroom	So the joy Zappers, I guess, are those kids who don't have any belief in themselves and are the things that bring that feeling [of flow] down		
It's like in winning a competitive event only better; everybody wins, because you feel it and they feel it	Then it gets harder and harder and harder to reach that because you keep setting your goals higher and higher and higher				
When we started to play crib, he'd let me win, he'd let me win, he'd let me win; and I didn't like that					
I started beating him and I didn't like winning [beating him], so I'd let him win, because it wasn't as much fun beating him all the time. I didn't enjoy that					