Pausing at the Threshold

Opportunity Through, With, and For Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices

Abby Cameron-Standerford, Bethney Bergh, & Christi U. Edge

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Abby Cameron-Standerford, Bethney Bergh, and Christi Edge

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Introduction

To engage in S-STEP is to engage in a search for pedagogic turning points or threshold opportunities that can enrich personal understanding of practice through raising new possibilities, perspectives, and discourses (Hamilton et al., 2020). The theme for the Castle 2023 biennial meeting asked self-study researchers to mindfully pause and purposefully reflect on how we might realize the contributions the Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education (S-STTEP) community has made, is making, and could make to different communities and audiences. Drawing from the metaphors of threshold and becoming, we invited the S-STTEP community to explore the "powerful potential for speaking and contributing" (Berry, 2020, p. 4) to teacher education and to broader communities of practice and audiences.

> *Figuratively, a threshold …. signifies a place of transition or turning point. It can be a productive place, a space of tension, and also potential and opportunity. For the work of S-STTEP, this threshold moment represents both enduring and new challenges …. the current pressing issue for the S-STTEP community--and what may be seen as its threshold of opportunity -- is in realizing its powerful potential for speaking and contributing to different communities and audiences. While the benefit of self-study in supporting teacher educators to recognize and value their own professional knowledge continues to serve a vital purpose, there are others external to the self-study community who can profit from the knowledge and understandings developed through self-studies of practice. (Berry, 2020, p. 4)*

Recognizing our individual S-STEP researcher identities as always becoming (e.g., Pinnegar et al., 2020), we wondered how and in what ways our collective S-STEP identity may be ever emergent and always becoming. Drawing from the work of Deluze and Guattari (1987), the metaphor of becoming represents open, ongoing, process(es) of ever-emerging, multiple selves, and ever-expanding understandings and connections in complex and ever-changing contexts (e.g., Barak, 2015; Berry, 2020; Pinnegar et al., 2020; Strom & Martin, 2013). We envisioned the 2023 Castle Conference as a dynamic nexus of S-STTEP past and the present; of being and becoming; of teaching and learning; of research and scholarship; of creating and sharing; of the here and there; of me and you--and we. Together, we strove to provoke, challenge, and illuminate the threshold(s) of opportunity/ies for S-STTEP in teaching, teacher education, and beyond.

The S-STEP community has long valued the collaborative, intimate, and interactive nature of relationships within the practice of self-study as researcher practitioners bring forward the past, acknowledge the present, and re-imagine possibilities for the future. Simply put, collaboration is built into the foundations of self-study research design and practice.

We invited self-study researchers to consider the following:

- How can we position, reposition, reframe, re-imagine, integrate new learnings from the past, present, and future?
- What inspires you to pause, deliberate, consider, or take a mindful stance to determine new or enduring practices?
- What opportunities are you considering, contemplating, exploring, or embracing to contribute to different communities and audiences?

These questions became the framework for how we organized the book Pausing at the Threshold: Opportunity Through, With, and For Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices.

Section one illuminates the why—by lending focus to the process of exploring and making meaning from theoretical perspectives and a focus on Self-Study methodology.

Section two illuminates the how— by attending to the tools and processes in studying teaching and professional experiences, researchers shared their processes for identifying new and enduring practices in real and practical ways.

Section three illuminates the what—by exploring the creation of new wonderings and knowings we envisioned and generated (Langer, 2011) through engaging in self-study research. Chapters in this section lend insight into the purposeful practice of collaboration, the extension of boundaries, and the inviting of new audiences.

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Castle Conference 14 Event Schedule

Sunday, Aug 6, 2023

Time	Event
2:00 p.m.	Check-In Begins at Bader Hall
4:00 p.m.	Opening Session with S-STEP Luminaries Tom Russell, Linda Fitzgerald, & Stefinee Pinnegar in the Castle Conference Room
5:30-7:00 p.m.	BBQ & Brews in the Castle Courtyard Barbeque Menu Grilled Chicken with Spiced Pineapple Salsa Chipotle Prawn and Pepper Skewers Halloumi & Zucchini Skewers (v) Sides: BBQ Sweet Potatoes with Chickpeas and Tahini (v) Salads : Potato Salad with Lemon Crème Fraiche Mayo (v) Vine Ripened Tomato, Red Onion and Basil (v) All Served with a selection of breads, relishes and sauces Desert
7:00 p.m.- Pub Closes	Methodological Discussions in the Castle Pub

Monday, Aug 7, 2023

Monday, August 7

Time	Dacre Room	Seminar Room 1	Conference Room	Boardroom	Film Room
7:30-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast				
9:00-9:50 a.m.	Alyson Lischka, Natasha Gerstenschlager and Jennifer Webster: Interrogating Grading Practices in Mathematics Methods: Creating Threshold Opportunities for Examining Institutional Norms	Tanya Manning-Lewis and Kerry Robertson: Liberating Our Anti-racist Selves: A Collaborative Self-Study	Elizabeth Y. Stevens, Kristen L. White, Tess M. Dussling, Nance S. Wilson, Amy Tondreau, Wendy Gardiner, Tierney B. Hinman and Sophie Degener: Collaboratively Cultivating Critical Racial Literacy Practices for Teacher Education	Charlotte Frambaugh-Kritzer and Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle: Making the Familiar Strange Again: Pausing to Re-evaluate How Self-Study Scholars Describe Their Critical Friendships	Laura Haniford and Rebecca Sanchez: From Tourist Teachers to Place Rooted Educators: Road Blocks on the Journey
10:00-10:50 a.m.	Kevin Patton, Maura Coulter and Chris North: Navigating the Thresholds and Crossing Boundaries Into Academic Leadership	Tammy Mills, Rebecca Buchanan and Kevin Roberge: Ungrading: A Collaborative Self-Study Into the Intersection of Vulnerability and Assessment Practices	Kathie MacKay, Cecilia Pincock, Shelby Forsyth, Mina Money, Miriam Richards, Eliza Pinnegar and Stefinee Pinnegar: Experience as a Clinical Faculty Associate Shifting Teacher and Teacher Educator Identity:	Jason Pearson and Michael Richardson: Something Happened: Exploring Student Religious Experiences Through the Eyes of Their Teacher	Melanie Shoffner: Pedagogical Care: Considerations of COVID and Care in Middle Grades ELA Methods Instruction
11:00-11:20 a.m.	Tea and Coffee Elizabethan Room				

11:30-12:20 p.m.	Elizabeth Stolle, Katarina Blennow and Martin Malmström: New Understandings of Liminality: Pausing at the Threshold of Action	Tanya van der Walt and Tamar Meskin: Dancing With Others: Exploring Critical Friendship As Creative Collaboration	Valerie Allison, Laura Haniford, Pamela Powell, Christi Edge, Carol Moriarty and Laurie Ramirez: Learning About Self Through a Multi-Institution Inquiry Into New Teacher Preparedness Post-COVID	Barbara McNeil Vulnerability, Ontological, and Epistemological Assault Confronting Award-Winning Children's Literature	Melva Grant and Signe Kastberg: Critical Friend Intimacy and Individual Transformations
12:30-1:50 p.m.	Lunch				
2:00-2:50 p.m.	Eve Zehavi, Diane Miller and Laura Link: Three Thresholds in a Single Crossing: Harnessing New Alliances Within a Critical Friendship	Shaun Murphy, Trudy Cardinal, Janice Huber and Stefinee Pinnegar: A Course That Explores Indigenous Perspectives of Assessment	Alicia Crowe: Navigating Leadership With an Eye Toward Equity: Understanding My Practice and Experience As an Educational Administrator	Brandon Butler and Diane Yendol-Hoppey: Trials and Tribulations of Transitioning Into Leadership: A Self-Study of Teacher Education Leadership	Ronny Johansen, Siv Svendsen, Bjarne Isaksen and Janne Madsen: “It Is a Bit Like Cooperating As Teachers”: Group Supervision of Master’s Theses in Teacher Education
3:00-3:50 p.m.	Margaret Mnayer & Pamela Schmidt: Threshold Inertia: Fearful to Move Without Redefining Pedagogy and Elucidating Praxis	Amy Staples and Deborah Tidwell: Me Versus We: A Self-Study On The Power Of Collaboration In Analyzing Data	Edda Óskarsdóttir and Megumi Nishida: Living Up to Expectations: Learning to Be Critical Friends in Foreign Contexts	Ian Matheson and Tom Russell: In Pursuit of Quality Teaching and Learning: Self-study of an Online Teaching Experience	Signe Kastberg, Lizhen Chen, Mahtob Aqazade and Sue Ellen Richardson: Voices in Debriefing Mathematics Methods Teaching
4:00-4:20 p.m.	Tea and Coffee Elizabethan Room				
4:30-5:20 p.m.	Jane Cooper, Christine Beaudry and Leslie M Gauna: Listening Pedagogies : Teacher Silence as the Threshold to	Candy Jones and Alysha Farrell: Parallel Performance: Constructing Identities in a New Teacher	Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir and Svanborg R. Jónsdóttir: Discovering the Value of Ticket Out of Class As Critical	Kristina Doubet: Implementing Standards-Based Grading in the University Classroom: Do My Practices Align	Elaine Marhefka: Developing a sense of belonging in spaces for community curricular collaboration: A

	Responsive Teaching	Education Program	Reflection and Formative Assessment: Self-Study in Teacher Education	With My Professed Beliefs About Assessment?	self-study of indigenizing and localizing
5:30-7:00 p.m.	Dinner				
7:00 p.m.-Pub Closes	Methodological Discussions in the Castle Pub				

Tuesday, Aug 8, 2023

Time	Dacre Room	Seminar Room 1	Conference Room	Boardroom	Film Room
7:30-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast				
9:00-9:50 a.m.	Candy Jones: Rural Experience and Its Impact on the Identities and Practice(s) of Teachers/Teacher Educators	Alyson Lischka, Signe Kastberg and Susan Hillman: Articulating a Pedagogy of Discussion	Alan Ovens, Rod Philpot and Blake Bennett: Teaching As Orchestration: A Self-Study of Adapting to Forced Change	Rodrigo Fuentealba and Tom Russell: "Listen Before You Push": A Dean's Self-Study of Leadership and Critical Friendship	

10:00-10:50 a.m.	Gayle A. Curtis, Michaelann Kelley, Cheryl J. Craig and Annette Easley: Looking Into the Rear-View Mirror While Moving Forward: Drawing on Past Collaborative Experiences to Inform Present Practice	Jeff Spanke and Devon Lejman: "Buoys in the Sea": A Collaborative Self-Study of Teaching as a Sacred Practice	Inbanathan Naicker, Daisy Pillay and Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan: Revisiting collaborative editorial initiatives to learn more about our academic motivations: A collective poetic self-study	Tanya van der Walt: Who Is the 'I' in All of This? Learning About My Self Through Self-Study
11:00-11:20 a.m.	Tea and Coffee Elizabethan Room			
11:30-12:20 p.m.	Gretchen Whitman: Pedagogy in Progress: Self-study of a Novice Teacher Educator	Dawn Garbett, Rena Heap, Linda Fitzgerald and Ronnie Davey: What Advice Would We Give Ourselves on the Threshold of a VUCA Environment? An International Collaborative Memory-work Project	Julian Kitchen: Enacting a Relational Approach As an Editor: A Self-Study	Laura Haniford, Valerie Allison and Laurie Ramirez: Building and Modeling Warm Demander Teaching Identities
12:30-1:15 p.m.	Lunch			
1:30-5:00 p.m.	Optional Bus Tour to Seven Sisters (please meet outside the Castle with everything you need for the afternoon for a prompt departure) or Afternoon Contemplation, Collaboration, and Reflection			
5:30-8:00 p.m.	Banquet Dinner and Reflections with S-STEP Luminaries Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir and Deb Tidwell (Please see the Castle Conference website for the menu)			
8:00 p.m.-Pub Closes	Methodological Discussions in the Castle Pub			

Wednesday, Aug 9, 2023

Wednesday, August 9

Time	Dacre Room	Seminar Room 1	Conference Room	Boardroom	Film Room
7:30-9:00 a.m.	Breakfast				
9:00-9:50 a.m.	Brandon Butler, Rosemarie Caraballo, Danielle Christian, Kerstin Devlin, Angela Fair and Simone Stallings: "It Helps Us Remember Our Why": Instructional Coach Learning in a Self-Study Community of Practice	Elizabeth Dorman and Elizabeth Grassi: Perspectives on Trauma-Informed Practice During Pandemic Zoom Teaching	Dawn Garbett, Linda Fitzgerald, Rena Heap and Ronnie Davey: Contemplating the Academy Using Memory-work as Method: Pausing at the Threshold	Linda Abrams, Charity Dacey, Kathryn Strom and Tammy Mills: "We are Going to Need a Bigger Bottle": Surfacing and Leveraging a Decade of Relational Knowledges	Monica Anthony and Michael Krell: Reflecting on Supervision During Emergency Remote Teaching: How Two Novice Teacher Educators Supported Each Other and Teacher Candidates
10:00-10:50 a.m.	Derek Anderson: A Self-Study of Whiteness and Teaching About Teaching Race in a Social Studies Methods Course	Mark D. McCarthy: Imaginary Critical Friends: Three Perspectives on Practice	Karen Rut Gísladóttir, Svanborg Rannveit Jónsdóttir and Edda Óskarsdóttir: Constructing Spaces for Professional Development in an Action Research Course: A Self-Study of Teacher Educators' Practice	Tony Sweeney, Richard Bowles and Maura Coulter: Looking Back to Move Forward: Identifying Value in Collaborative Self-Study	Mary Rice and Mark Diacopoulos: Responding to Pandemic-Centered Nihilism With Democratic Renewal and Restoration in Teacher Education
11:00-11:20 a.m.	Tea and Coffee Elizabethan Room				
11:30-12:20 p.m.	Lavina Sequeira, Charity Dacey and Kevin Cataldo: Exploring the Role of Mentorship, Resistance, and Affirmation: A	Mark Diacopoulos: What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher-Educator? Using Self-Study to	Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Linda van Laren and Lungile Masinga: "An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect": Pausing for Creative	Kathleen Sellers and Stephanie Baer: Missed Connections: How the Quality of Teacher Education	Kelly Lormand: Questions of Feminist Power: A Self-Study of a Critical Incident

	Self-Study of Developing Leaders	Understand Teacher to Teacher-Educator Identity Shift During the COVID-19 Pandemic.	Co-reflection on Our Arts-Inspired Collaborative Self-Study Research Initiatives in Teacher Education	Community Impacts Student-Teacher Practicum and Teacher Educators	
12:30-1:50 p.m.	Lunch				
2:00-2:50 p.m.	Nikki Aharonian: Uncovering Care in My Pedagogy and Collaborative Self-Study	Megumi Nishida and Deborah Tidwell: Building the Boat, Growing the Tree: Exploring the Development of Self-study Analytic Methods	Maria Assunção Flores and Tom Russell: Learning How to Be a Better Teacher Educator Online: A Self-Study in Times of COVID-19	Micheal Flannery, Mary Nugent and Frances Burgess: Examining the Value of Integrated Arts in Teacher Education From a Collaborative Cross-Border Cross-Institutional S-step Perspective	Luiz Sanches Neto, Luciana Venâncio, Willian Lazaretti da Conceição and Luciano Nascimento Corsino: Pausing to Breathe, but Is It Possible to Pause Whiteness in Teaching and Teacher Education?: Narratives of Four Brazilian Physical Education Teacher-Researchers
3:00-3:50 p.m.	Tamar Meskin: Me, Myself, and I: Finding the Self in Self-Study Through Scholarly Personal Narrative	Rebecca Buchanan and Margaret Clark: Beyond Critical Reflection: Breaking Old Habits and Shifting Pedagogical Values	Shaun Murphy, Celina Lay, Eliza Pinnegar and Stefinee Pinnegar: Exploring Our Knowledge of Narrative S-step Methodology Through Collaboration	Richard Bowles and Anne O'Dwyer: Taking Stock: Retracing and Recalibrating Our Self-Study Learning Journey	
4:00-4:20 p.m.	Tea and Coffee Elizabethan Room				
4:30-5:20 p.m.	Mona Zignego and Kathleen Sellers: Reading the Room: Teacher Literacy	Christine Beaudry, Jane Cooper and Leslie M Gauna: Ungrading As	Mia Sosa-Provencio, Helena Omaña Zapata, Ybeth Iglesias and Jackie Cusimano:	Kevin O'Connor, Gladys Sterenberg and Tom Russell: Enacting Theory-	

	Education Pedagogy and Its Potential at the Threshold of a Pandemic	Turning Point in “Forever on the Way” to Becoming Critical Educators	Testimonio Pedagogy On the Borderlands in Teacher Education: Breaking Open Spaces to Let the Light In	Practice Pedagogies: Thresholds of Transition from People and Partners to Program and Partnerships
5:30-5:45 p.m.	Conference Photo			
5:45-7:00 p.m.	Dinner			
7:00 p.m.-Pub Closes	Methodological Discussions in the Castle Pub			

Thursday, Aug 10, 2023

Time	Event
9:00-9:50 a.m.	Closing Session in the Boardroom
10:00-10:50 a.m.	Check out of Bader Hall

Updated 7/26/23 4:31 p.m. EST

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Section I: How can we position, reposition, reframe, re-imagine, and integrate new learnings from the past, present, and future?

Contemplating the Academy Using Memory-Work as Method
“An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect”
Imaginary Critical Friends
Me Versus We
Responding to Pandemic-Centered Nihilism With Democratic Renewal and Restoration in Teacher Education
Testimonio Pedagogy on the Borderlands in Teacher Education
Reading the Room
"Buoys in the Sea"
Exploring Our Knowledge of Narrative S-STEP Methodology Through Collaboration
Beyond Critical Reflection
Revisiting Collaborative Editorial Initiatives to Learn More About Our Academic Motivations
Critical Friend Intimacy and Individual Transformations
Constructing Spaces for Professional Development in an Action Research Course
Me, Myself, and I
From Tourist Teachers to Place Rooted Educators
Who Is the ‘I’ in All of This?
Making the Familiar Strange Again
Pausing to Breathe, but Is It Possible to Pause Whiteness in Teaching and Teacher Education?
Questions of Feminist Power
New Understandings of Liminality

What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher-Educator?

Vulnerability, Ontological, and Epistemological Assault

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Contemplating the Academy Using Memory-Work as Method

Pausing at the Threshold

Dawn Garbett, Linda Fitzgerald, Rena Heap, Ronnie Davey, & Lynn Thomas

Self-Study | Memory-work | Method

In this chapter, we detail how we adapted the memory-work method to reflect on our academic lives. We wanted to better understand the factors that shaped our trajectories through the academy and our experiences of it as teacher educators and to make our findings accessible to others. We are an international collective of 5 former teacher educators. We followed a 3-phase recursive process - writing memories evoked by prompts in the third person; collectively analysing the written memories and reappraising them through dialogic conversations. We draw on several of our prompts to bring the theory to life in this, the first of two chapters.

Context of the Study

Self-study of teaching and teacher education practice is not, in itself, a methodology; rather, the self-study researcher has available a variety of tools for data collection and methods for data analysis, according to the context and purpose of any one study (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). We are an international group of five senior or recently retired teacher educators who came together in this project to reflect on our academic lives in order to better understand the factors that shaped our trajectories through the academy. We wanted to tease out and make accessible to others the wisdom garnered through our experiences as senior academics and teacher educators. In this chapter, we focus on how we adapted methods of collective memory work and of dialogic inquiry to serve our purpose. In a companion chapter in this volume, (Garbett, Heap et al., 2023) we communicate the outcomes of using this method, in hopes of giving some support to a new generation of colleagues.

Self-study and collective memory work have roots in efforts to develop qualitative research methods that go beyond the individual as the unit of analysis and blur the distinction between researcher and research subject (Garbett et al., 2020). The roots of collective memory work are in feminist and socialist politics (Haug, 1980/2021), with some of the early collectives in early memory work being educators (Breiter & Witt-Low, 1991, 2021). While an increasing number of researchers who do self-study are to be found outside of teacher education (Butler & Branyon, 2020), the focus of most self-study researchers continues to be the practice of teaching.

In recent years, a website has been developed to make freely available a cornucopia of publications about collective memory-work. Robert Hamm, the compiler and also a translator from the original German into English of a variety of the works, introduced the website thus:

To start with Collective Memory-Work … what it is, and what it is not.

CMW is a method of research, a method of learning and reflection, developed by Frigga Haug and the group Frauenformen in the 1980s at the intersection of academic research, feminist and Marxist theory, and political practice. In its original format it entails a group reflecting on a topic of shared interest by using short written memory scenes of the group members as the core material. It can be used in, e.g., social research, adult education, social activist groups, professional reflection processes.

The term Collective Memory-Work is prone to a common misunderstanding. Here it refers to a group working collectively with individual memories, hence Collective Memory-Work. It does not refer to working with collective memories (or cultural memories) as, e.g. in history workshops.

Over more than three decades the method has been successfully used in a variety of fields. It has been adapted and adjusted according to purposes of the applications, institutional frameworks, organisational necessities and methodological considerations. (https://collectivememorywork.net/)

From the early years of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practice, researchers have used memory work of various forms in studying their practice with the aim of improving it. Having engaged in a series of collectives spanning 30 years, anchored in Canada and South Africa, Mitchell et al. (2020) detailed the development of their use of collective memory-work for "future-oriented remembering" (p. 22) in a chronologically organised scholarly memoir. To the original method as set forth by Frigga Haug (1987), made available to a wider English-speaking audience by Crawford et al. (1992), these collectives have added arts-based methods of data collection and analysis (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2019), and combined memory-work with such methods as academic autoethnography (Pillay et al., 2016).

Researching across a variety of contexts, Strong-Wilson et al. (2013, 2014) illustrated that memory work is primarily about transformation, and how critically engaging with the past can help to avoid injustice or trauma in the present and future. Recognising the subjectivity of social processes is a key aspect of memory work (Easpaig, 2017), and the gendered nature of the experience of members of our group in academic careers resonated with Haug's original purposes (1980/2021). We chose to use memory work as a way of coming to know our experiences, in order to harness the wisdom of lives filled with transitions and to better understand how our memories can influence current life and future possibilities, for others as well as for ourselves (Fraser & Michell, 2015).

Objectives

Our purpose in the larger project was to focus our attention on how our former selves have often unquestioningly accepted the ways of the academy and to use dialogic memory-work to learn from each other and contribute our findings. However, the contribution this chapter makes is to unpack the usefulness of memory-work as a self-study methodology, rather than to report on what we have learned (which is the focus of the companion chapter in this volume).

Method(s)

In this chapter, we focus on how we built our self-study method, collaborative memory work, from two sources: collective memory-work and dialogic inquiry.

The impetus to form our collective came from two of us whose recently published study (Garbett & Thomas, 2020) begged to be extended, suggesting that collective memory-work might be an appropriate method for senior scholars to generate narratives about our lives as academics. The first step was to reach out to like-minded colleagues who might be interested in joining a collective. In this, we followed Mitchell and Pithouse-Morgan's (2014) principles for collective storytelling: "Work with a group of people (5–9 people) who have already established a sense of mutual trust and care and have agreed on confidentiality. The setting should be comfortable and private" (p. 97). In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we found Zoom video-conferencing to be an effective way to bridge the distances from New Zealand to North America. We shared initial organizing memos, background literature to review, and ethics application preparation by email and in Dropbox.

We started by reading Fraser and Michell (2015) as an example of a recent use of the method in academia. Those authors encouraged us as they pointed out "the potential benefits of using the method, which include its ability to inspire trust and solidarity in a group setting and connect the personal with the political" (p. 321). Vasudevan's (2011) description covered the main points of the method: writing that focuses on the way language is used to construct a memory account, which a research collective can submit to critical discourse analysis to systematically and collaboratively process individual memory accounts, probing the gaps or lapses in the account in order to recognise the known and unknown about the authors. In addition to Haug's own writings (1987, 2008), we found more detailed procedures for generating and analysing written memories (Crawford et al., 1992/2021; Hamm, 2021; Mitchell & Pithouse-Morgan, 2014; Small et al., 2011). Haug herself seemed to give permission to researchers to play with the method and adapt it; in an undated website from the 21st century, Haug (n.d.) said about her method:

> *I have, however, refrained from actually documenting research steps in written form. The current research methodology seems in need of further improvement, arbitrary in individual steps, and one-sidedly limited to the linguistic problem. It has not matured enough to be publicized as a general guide.*

Therefore, we took the liberty of coming up with a set of steps that seemed common across the memory-work literature we were consulting and that fitted our purpose: learning from each other what we were taking away from a life in the academy as we stood on the threshold of "de-institutionalized" lives.

According to Crawford et al. (1992/2021):

> *Memory-work involves at least three phases. First, the collection of written memories according to certain rules. Second, the collective analysis of those written memories. There is also a third phase in which there is further reappraisal; a reappraisal of the memories and their analysis in the context of a range of theories and academic disciplines. (p. 169)*

They also connect the first two phases to self in a way now familiar to self-study researchers who work either collaboratively, or at least with a critical friend:

> *The self talking with itself, is phase 1, and responding to itself as others respond to it is phase 2. The meanings reached or arrived at by the group are a function of the meanings as negotiated then at the time of the remembered event and those now collectively theorized. Meanings are negotiated until a 'common' sense is achieved. (p.166)*

We departed from the more structured methods of analysis to be found in some accounts of collective memory-work. We did not fill out a table following the "Format for Record of Collective Editing Process" (Haug, n.d., p. 13) nor its adaptation by Hamm (2021), systematically listing the words used by each writer, sorted into such categories as subjects, activities, emotions, motivations and so on. Instead, we used methods of dialogic inquiry, as a means to build mutual understanding, encouraging the construction of personal meaning and ensuring engagement (Bound, 2010), which most of us had used in previous self-studies in other collaborations (for example Davey & Ham, 2009; East et al., 2009; Tolosa et al., 2016).

We engaged in dialogue, one of five tools "where narrative and text are the data focus" (Tidwell & Jonsdottir, 2020, p. 6). We used dialogue both to produce data—in sharing and interrogating our memory narratives, and to analyse data—as we went beyond story, across stories, and across sessions to identify new understandings to connect with the literature and to share beyond ourselves (East et al., 2009). Our Zoom meetings were a platform for developing dialogic understanding where new "meaning … arises when different perspectives are brought together" (Wegerif, 2006, p. 146, cited in Pithouse-Morgan & van Laren, 2015, p. 83).

The Method of Working With Memories

Memory-work, for our collaboration, was a recursive process carried out entirely across the internet. To date, we have explored six prompts. The protocols we agreed on for each prompt were as follows.

Phase 1. Written Memories

1. Meeting electronically via Zoom, we developed a research question that was motivated by our desire to explore a common issue in our professional lives. In our start-up session, we brainstormed a list of potential prompts from our lives as academics. The prompts were such that they stimulated memories of situations in which we felt strong emotions. As Onyx and Small (2001) stated, "[t]he trick is to produce the more jagged stuff of personal lived experience" (p. 776). Akin to the work of Pithouse-Morgan and van Laren (2015), we used dialogic memory-work to push ourselves "to confront challenging, reflexive questions about our past with the aim of making future change possible" (p. 83).
2. We settled on the first prompt, an experience of being mentored in our academic careers. In the meantime, we also submitted the plan for our work for ethics review at the university where one of the not-yet-retired members was still in residence.
3. Each of us then found an individual memory of an experience, event or scene prompted by the agreed-upon statement and related to the common issue.
4. Spending no more than 30 minutes, we wrote that memory in as much detail as possible, no detail considered too trivial, but limited to a half hour of writing.
5. We each gave ourselves a pseudonym and wrote in the third person, thereby reducing the temptation to produce autobiography, instead of focusing on a rich experience. We tried hard to stick to description, without interpretation or explanation or backstory.
6. Given our geographic distance and pandemic distancing, rather than meeting in person we each sent our 30-minutes of writing as an attachment to the group before the next Zoom meeting.

Phase 2. Collective Analysis of the Written Memories

1. In the Zoom meeting, using Share Screen, each read aloud her memory to the others, without interruption, as the others followed along.
2. After each had read her memory and answered questions, we used dialogic inquiry to generate more meaning, intentionally probing our collective understanding of the memory until we were collectively satisfied with our understanding.
3. Then we moved to the next person.

Phase 3. Reappraisal and Analysis in a Larger Context

1. At the end of each Zoom session, we used dialogic inquiry to recognise what we had learned from each other, especially in terms of what commonalities had emerged, and what direction our collective learning seemed to be taking.
2. From this discussion, we agreed on a prompt statement that emerged for the next session's memory writing.
3. In later cycles, we repositioned, reframed, and reimagined previous discussions as we integrated new learnings with themes from past cycles.
4. Preparing proposals together for several international presentations presented yet another form of reappraisal and analysis. The literature review for each proposal guaranteed that we were "moving beyond story" (Loughran, 2010) and making disciplinary and theoretical connections.

Every session was recorded on Zoom. The convener of the group emailed a meeting summary and recording link. All data were stored in Dropbox, facilitating access for further analysis, especially for anyone who may have missed part or all of a meeting. We met via Zoom as often as was necessary to move the research agenda forward and were always mindful of one another's competing demands. Regular email exchanges contributed to the development of deeper collaboration and collegial relationships. We supported one another to maintain a balance between our personal and professional lives and cared for one another as humans because collective memory-work can be challenging and difficult as well as affirming and empowering.

Our Method in Action

Using memory-work allowed both positive and negative memories to surface, which in turn created a rich data source. Through interrogation (e.g., seeking hidden agendas, probing dismissed hurts) we have surfaced emotions, considered

memories anew, and understood them differently.

We found that writing our memory response to each prompt in the third person, with pseudonyms, provided a useful separation between us and our memories. It depersonalised and de-identified individuals in the accounts. It also served to enable a deeper analysis because we each held our "personal" memories at arm's length. In conversation, even when we agreed with others about an idea, each person had a slightly different or even unique understanding of the shared idea. When the conversation moved to dialogue, critique, and inquiry coupled with evidence, new reflections and responses emerged. The dialogue moved through cycles of consideration of the idea, linking it with research, other ideas, and evidence. Knowledge emerged in the spaces between thought, talk, and participants (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). In the following discussion, italics are used to indicate anonymised excerpts from our writings.

Phase One: Writing Our Memories

Our collaboration was an opportunity to address our research focus, which was to reflect on our academic lives in order to gain a richer perspective, informed by our colleagues' provocation and support. As part of our initial brainstorm, we discussed who our intended audience was, given our privileged position of being able to write for no other reason than we wanted to contribute something of value to our peers.

The prompts we brainstormed fell into two groups—soul-destroying or deeply satisfying. For example, prompts of soul-destroying memories included imposter syndrome, promotions, merging institutions, and not having your voice heard. Those which were deeply satisfying included celebrations, opportunities, and freedoms. Many that we brainstormed in our initial meeting were not picked up. We needed prompts that would elicit a distinct memory and evoke strong emotions, and settled on "Being Mentored" for our first prompt. The memories and discussion that followed led us to Prompt 2 "Being a Mentor." These formed the basis of a paper that we presented at the Canadian Association for Research. Prompts 3-6 also followed on from the conclusion of the preceding discussion as we let the process itself move us forward rather than being goal focused–a process referred to as wanderfahring (East et al., 2009).

As per our protocols, we each wrote for no more than 30 minutes and always in the third person. For example, when writing to Prompt 3, "A memory of receiving an unanticipated kindness in academia," one author began,

> *She searched her memory but it wasn't as easy. Unexpected and random acts of kindness in the workplace? One thing was for sure, little sprang to mind when it came to the institution or colleagues. Her close work friends, sure. They were thoughtful, a muffin or some sushi left on her desk to come back to after 4 hours of teaching, a flat white from the caf, a book they thought she might like to read... they were the acts of thoughtful friendship...and an ethic of mutual care.*

Even though we were all writing in the third person, we entertained multiple different styles and text types. These ranged from lists, single event narratives, rich reflective notes, and poetry, to wide-ranging descriptions. Quotes from other sources were used sometimes, for example when writing on Prompt 4: "If she could take a small bag on her adventures through life, she wondered what self-care strategies she would take," one author included in her memory writing, "In a society that says, 'Put yourself last,' self-love and self-acceptance are almost revolutionary" (Brown, 2010).

Sometimes, the style was very pragmatic. One author listed actual items that she would pack in response to Prompt 4, including,

> 1. *A little stash of teas and one stainless water bottle for making and for carrying tea and other liquids*
> 2. *An iPad for connecting with internet to get eBooks, eMusic, email, and to write journal entries, etc.*
> 3. *A 5.5x8.5 inch notebook, paper, pen, and pencil for off-the-grid, and stamps for postcards*

Another of us was refreshingly candid,

> *Her bag is nearly full. She hopes that it is watertight, not too heavy, not too light. She hopes there is enough in there to sustain her and protect her from whatever is coming her way. Confidence, self-*

> *assurance, positivity, love, affection, vulnerability.... She laughs as she shuts her little suitcase. Realistically, who gives a royal rat's arse about any of these self-doubts. She is who she is, nothing more, nothing less.*

Other times, the writing was poetic and evocative,

> *Walking through and round the park and botanical gardens in all seasons; sauntering along empty stretches of beach with gulls wheeling and squawking overhead; mooching around a garden nursery sussing out bee-friendly annuals… Driving in the countryside, audiobook blue-toothed. Leaving the world behind. And large flat whites in noisy cafes with friends…*

Other than the time limit, we put no constraints on what we wrote. The time limit was imposed to guarantee that writing was a task we could all manage within our busy lives. It also gave added impetus to free-write without too much concern for editing or crafting. Writing in the third person gave us a degree of anonymity and a different perspective on our memory.

Phase 2: Collectively Analysing Our Written Memories

Our Zoom meeting always began with a quick welcome and informal catch-up off-record, before we each began reading aloud our memories for the others. Even though we were writing in the third person, reading our memories often foregrounded heartfelt sentiments.

Questions for understanding came easily after each reading. For example: "Can you talk with us about making cups of tea? What is it about making tea that is self-care?"

Comments back and forth, developed a collective meaning, "What I liked was what some of the things that you packed really meant. So 'stamps for postcards' meant connecting with people was important to you. Notebooks and journals–reflecting are important for self-care."

Within the dialogic inquiry, we often challenged one another's intent, interpretation, or assumptions. For example, one of us had written about a kindness a junior colleague (who was already making a mark nationally and with whom she had an invested relationship) had surprisingly given her by including her on a grant application. What to her was "one of the kindest, most selfless acts anyone in the academy had ever done" for her in her 20-year career prompted a rather different, seemingly more cynical response from others.

> *When we make grant applications, the co-investigators, …people are very strategic, they have to detail what contribution each colleague will be making. There's a reason behind it–it isn't kindness, it is to build a team on paper that will get the grant. Having your name on it would be helpful in some way.*

Hearing and understanding through dialogue the often contradictory but individual positions people held was crucial to this part of the process.

Phase 3: Reappraisal and Analysis in a Larger Context

At the end of each Zoom session, we discussed what had surfaced in terms of emergent key understandings and commonalities that had emerged. For example, as part of the self-care discussion arising from Prompt 4, we revisited the importance of kindness, but in this discussion, it was as a form of self-care.

This led to a discussion about the gendered nature of kindness, potential exploitation, and, as one of us commented, whether "the bosses then say here we've got a bunch of these people who are going to do this kind of work, let's take advantage of this. Then it becomes required rather than giving from the heart…"

We saw that kindness was a deeply held value for each of us but one that was undervalued and usually unrecognised by our institutions. We concluded that "we don't value kindness the way we value accomplishments or the ability to make money in academic circles, to be awarded research grants and publish…It is something that is crucial to human relations, but isn't highly valued."

Conclusion

As we indicated earlier, using memory-work allowed both positive and negative memories to surface, which in turn created a rich data source of memory narratives that could be shared and interrogated, and connected with the literature. During our meetings, through dialogue, we were able to come to new understandings, surfacing, (re)considering, and reinterpreting our memories anew.

Collaborative memory-work has enabled us to turn often deeply personal memories into research for a broader audience. As we articulated earlier in this account, aided by the use of writing in the third person, this separation allowed a deeper level of analysis. This chapter evidences the rigor and trustworthiness of the methods used to generate our findings over this three-year project. These findings are shared in the companion chapter (Garbett et al., 2023).

We also acknowledge our dear colleague, Lynn Thomas, who began this memory-work journey with us but died in June 2022. We finish with Lynn's words acknowledging the value to her of the memory-work process: "These meetings are really important for me. I do look forward to them in the sense that I can still think. I can still articulate. It's wonderful." Her insights underline the continuing value of memory work for us all.

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“An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect”

Pausing for Creative Co-Reflection on Our Arts-Inspired Collaborative Self-Study Research Initiatives in Teacher Education

Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan, Linda van Laren, & Lungile Masinga

Collaborative Self-study | Dialogue | Arts-inspired Self-study | Poetry | Rich Pictures | Tweets

We, three South African teacher educators from research-intensive institutions, have been active in collaborative arts-inspired self-study research for over a decade. We share a commitment to tackling pressing social issues, like HIV and AIDS, within and beyond our local context. This study asked, “What can we learn by mindfully pausing and purposefully co-reflecting on our arts-inspired collaborative self-study contributions?” Our data sources included: a) three selected published articles using arts-inspired methods as a collaborative self-study team; b) rich pictures we individually created in response to our research question; and c) voice notes explaining our drawings. Data analysis started with individually composing tweets, which provided material for poetic interpretation and dialogue. Using a new combination of creative data representation and analysis methods (rich pictures, voice notes, tweets, poetry, and dialogue) enabled us to retrace and re-envision our art-inspired collaborative self-study path. This organic, multilayered process taught us more about ourselves and our intentions as teacher educators and self-study researchers. Overall, this self-study shows how teacher educators can combine various modes to represent and re-envision our professional aspirations in creative material forms. “An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect” reminds us that we can all be resourceful, adaptable vessels for change.

Context

For more than a decade, we, three South African teacher educators from research-intensive institutions, have been involved in collaborative arts-inspired self-study research (Samaras, 2010). We have worked with other colleagues and as a trio. Our locations in different disciplines within teacher education (Kathleen in teacher development, Linda in mathematics education, and Lungile in gender and curriculum studies) have enabled us to learn from each other’s expertise.

We have experienced diverse creative ways of learning about ourselves, our practice, and others during our self-study research explorations, raising new possibilities and perspectives (Cole & Knowles, 2008). As literary and visual arts-inspired self-study methods, we have used:

- Collage (Masinga et al., 2016)
- Dialogue (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2015)
- Drawing (Van Laren et al., 2014)
- Letter writing (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2012)
- Poetry (Van Laren et al., 2020)
- Readers' theatre (Van Laren et al., 2019)
- Scrapbooking (Van Laren et al., 2016)
- Storyboarding (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015b)
- Storytelling (Masinga, 2014)
- Visual exegesis of a painting (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2018)

Our arts-inspired self-study projects are based on the theoretical foundations laid by luminaries in arts-based educational research, such as Barone and Eisner (2006), Cole and Knowles (2008), and Mitchell and Weber (1999). These scholars explain how and why integrating the arts with academic inquiry provides new avenues to understand concepts and allows for expressing ideas in ways traditional written texts might overlook. They emphasise the transformative potential of the arts for educational and social change. As Eisner (2002) clarified, "The arts provide a platform for seeing things in ways other than they are normally seen. In so doing, they help us wonder, 'Why not?'" (p. 83).

With Eisner's "Why not?" question in mind, our joint self-study research expeditions have taken us through various creative learning modalities outside of customary academic frameworks in our efforts to address pressing educational and social issues (Mitchell et al., 2020). We have experienced how presenting and publishing our arts-inspired work can create a "ripple effect" (Weber, 2014, p. 12) that involves and encourages others, serving as platforms for change (Mitchell et al., 2020).

Aims

The Castle Conference Call for 2023 (S-STEP, n.d.) encouraged self-study researchers to pause and reflect intentionally to integrate new learnings from the past, present, and future. Inspired by the call, we began this study by asking, "What can we learn by mindfully pausing and purposefully co-reflecting on our arts-inspired collaborative self-study contributions?" To respond, we selected three published articles in which arts-inspired methods served as conversation starters and approaches to data representation and analysis (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2018; Van Laren et al., 2019; Van Laren et al., 2020). We used these texts as material for pausing to co-reflect. The texts were the foundation for a multilayered arts-inspired self-study process that evolved organically through collective decision-making at each stage.

The Three Selected Articles

Our first article (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2018) explores how we revealed and confronted our emotional fears as advisors of graduate students using self-study research to make a difference in several South African higher education institutions. Together with three other colleagues, we asked, "How can we work collaboratively and creatively to learn to navigate emotional entanglements in supervising self-study research?" Against the backdrop of pervasive traumatic stress related to the history of oppression and conflict in South Africa, we focused on the effort required to understand and respond to complex emotional knowledge in supportive and resourceful ways (Collins, 2013; Jansen, 2009). While our study focused on self-study research supervision in South Africa, we were mindful that research supervision, in general, can be emotionally taxing (Strandler et al., 2014). This is especially true of self-study supervision because of the openness and vulnerability required (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015a).

In this first article, the self-study process began with the visual exegesis (critical explanation or interpretation) of a painting (Hamilton, 2005). We chose to work with an expressionist painting because expressionism offers subjective perspectives and elicits emotional responses (Gordon, 1966). We composed a poem to collectively represent our reactions to the visual exegesis (Langer & Furman, 2004). Our examination showed how, over time, arts-inspired self-study with trusted colleagues facilitated the unfolding of emotional complexities in a contained and responsive manner. Emotional containment entails creating conditions in which emotions are purposefully aired in a secure environment to increase capacity for action and change (James, 2011). Our self-study showed how collaborative learning that used

creative entry points and elicited subjective responses in a safe environment facilitated a deeper understanding of emotional perplexities. We believe that this is critical to developing self-study supervision pedagogy in a personally and socially just manner.

Our other two selected articles addressed HIV and AIDS education integration in higher education curricula. Considering that 7.8 million people in South Africa are infected with HIV, the pandemic continues to be a significant social issue, and the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS remains a major source of social injustice (Be in the KNOW, 2022). As teacher educators, we have a crucial role in supporting teachers in schools and higher education to openly and constructively address issues related to HIV and AIDS. As part of our social responsibility, we used arts-inspired methods to start discussions about HIV and AIDS education. In both articles, we drew on our shared interest in research and teaching strategies inspired by the performing, visual, and literary arts (Van Laren et al., 2019; Van Laren et al., 2020).

The first of these two articles focused on creating a readers' theatre script. Readers' theatre scriptwriting is a creative, analytical technique in which researchers create a dramatic script from edited excerpts of a research transcript (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995). We created a readers' theatre script to reflect on our use of everyday objects for opening dialogues in an HIV and AIDS curriculum integration workshop. The workshop attendees included university educators and graduate students from various disciplines and departments at a neighbouring university (Van Laren et al., 2019). In this self-study, we asked, "What can we learn about workshopping HIV and AIDS curriculum integration research in higher education by collaboratively composing and reflecting on a readers' theatre script?"

We chose responses from three workshop participants to illustrate the outcomes of the object activity when writing our script (Van Laren et al., 2019). As part of the consolidation, we discussed how we responded to the social responsibility mandate outlined in the Policy and Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS for Higher Education through this work (Higher Education HIV/AIDS Programme, 2012). We recognised that writing the readers' theatre script provided thought-provoking opportunities for us to interrogate and strengthen our professional learning. The script became a mirror in which we could see our progress in understanding the value of arts-inspired, participatory activities in higher education for containing and connecting professional learning, particularly in emotionally charged areas such as HIV and AIDS.

We wanted to build on our learning from creating a readers' theatre script (Van Laren et al., 2019) for the subsequent article (Van Laren et al., 2020). Following the script's completion, we asked five teacher-educator colleagues to read it aloud at a South African national education conference. The title of our presentation was "Containing HIV/AIDS: Composing a readers' theatre script for relevant and authentic professional learning in higher education". After the presentation, we asked, "What can we learn about imagining new ways of knowing for social change by staging a readers' theatre script?" We then discussed how other educators reacted to possibly using such a tool to promote HIV and AIDS conversations. To reflect on the learning potential of using the script, we engaged with the script readers and the audience who attended the conference session. As poetic analysis, we composed a series of blank verse poems (Literary Devices, 2019). We concluded that staging a reader's theatre script could aid educational and social change (Mitchell, 2008) by opening productive conversations about HIV and AIDS issues.

Our Creative Co-reflection Methods

Participants

As a collaborative team of self-study researchers, we were the participants in the creative co-reflection on our arts-inspired research initiatives. We were based in two South African provinces and worked from home due to COVID-19 restrictions. As a result, we did most of our work via email and a virtual group space on the WhatsApp message application.

Trustworthiness

We provided step-by-step details of the exploratory self-study research process to enhance trustworthiness (Feldman, 2003). We described our data sources and analysis and how our learning progressed. The characteristic of vigour in poetic research also influenced the design of our creative co-reflection (Faulkner, 2016). Considering vigour as a quality indicator motivated us to prioritise growth, vitality, and energy in our work.

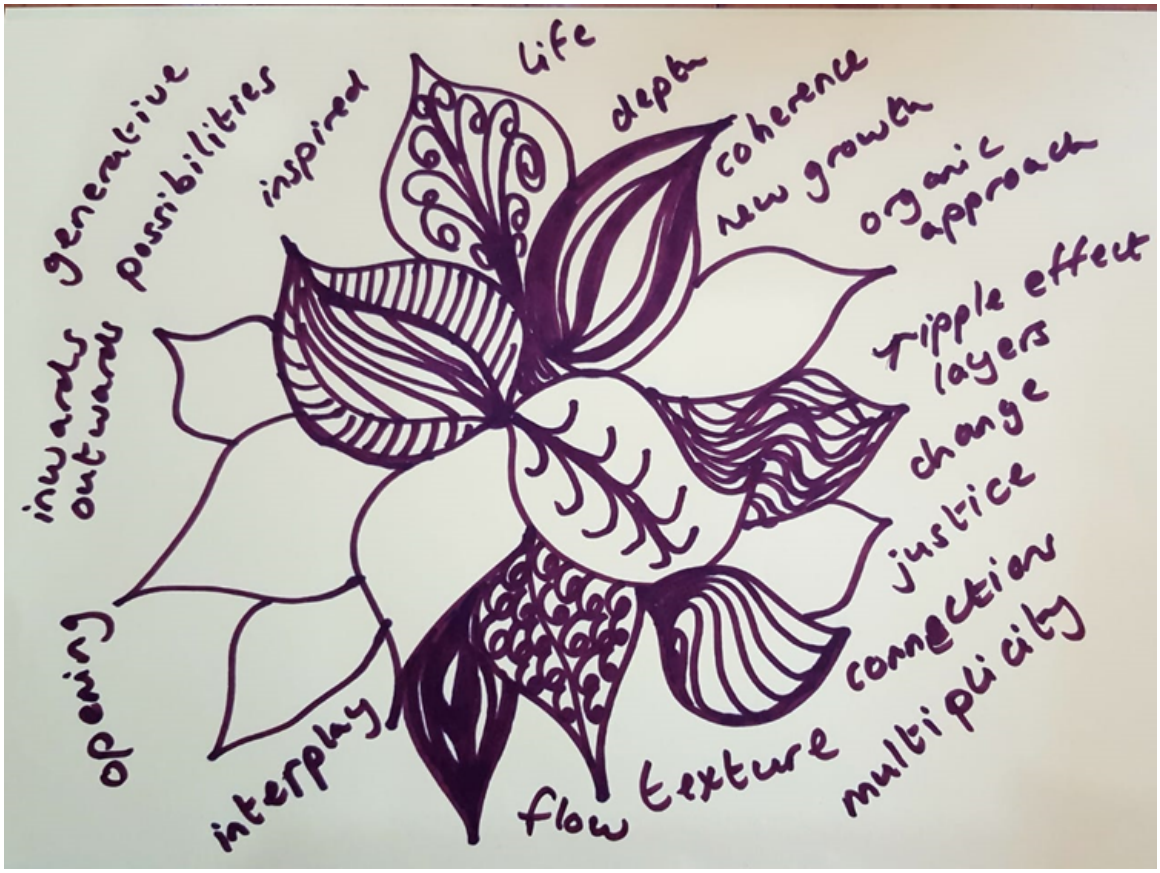
Data Sources

The three selected published articles served as our primary data sources. The second set of data sources consisted of rich pictures (Campbell Williams, 1999) that we individually drew in response to our research question (Figures 1, 2, 3). Rich pictures are a visual brainstorming mode in which detailed images generate new perspectives on an issue or question (Checkland, 2000). Rich pictures were initially used in soft systems methodology (Checkland, 2000), but they have also been successfully used in collaborative self-study research (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016a; Samaras & Pithouse-Morgan, 2021). Kathleen had previously used rich images with other self-study collaborators, but this was the first time we created rich pictures as a team of three researchers.

We each drew a black-and-white image to represent our initial, personal response to the research question. After creating the pictures and sending photos of them to each other, we each shared a voice note describing our drawing via WhatsApp. The third set of data sources consisted of the transcripts of our three WhatsApp voice notes. Our rich pictures and lightly edited excerpts from the voice note descriptions are included below.

Figure 1

Kathleen's Rich Picture: "Something Organic and Growing"



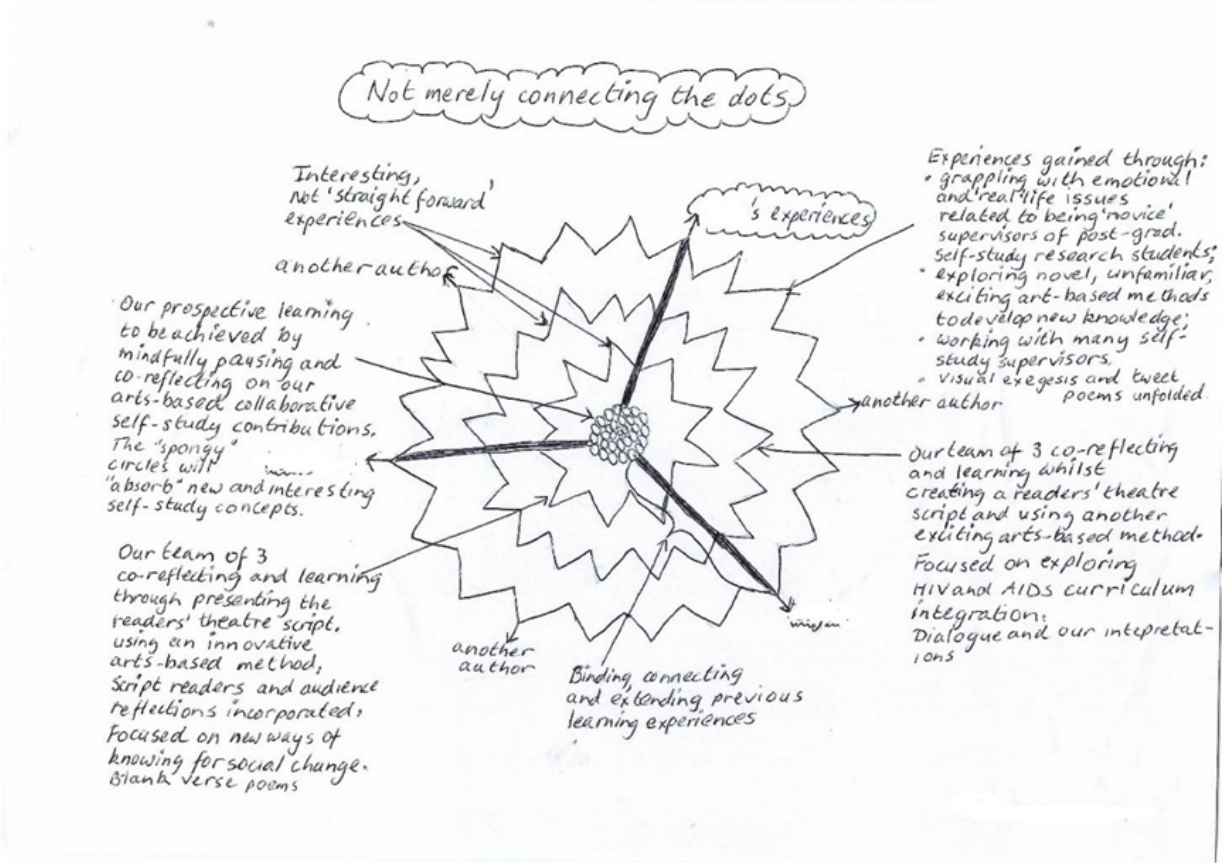
Kathleen: *My rich picture is of growing leaves or a flower, which is quite beautiful because of its uniqueness. The uniqueness comes from our collaborative work's different shapes, textures, and patterns. Those come from our life experiences and backgrounds, mixed with the various art-inspired forms we experiment with. I have filled in some of the leaves or petals. We have created those pieces together and individually, but there are still many leaves or petals waiting for our new adventures to be filled in.*

Our individual capacities and experiences combine to create something that couldn't be made alone, something living, dynamic, and organic. We do this experimenting because it's fun, and we enjoy doing it together, but we also do it because there is a need for change, growth, and justice at the centre. It's a deep

sense that we, as teachers and teacher educators, parents and grandparents, are committed to working for a better world, particularly for young people. And we've seen a ripple effect when we've shared our work, which can offer people new ways of looking at things and fresh ideas.

Figure 2

Linda's Rich Picture: "Not Merely Connecting the Dots"



Linda: *I titled my annotated diagram "Not merely connecting the dots". The jagged appearance of the diagram indicates the non-conventional arts-inspired methods we explored. I drew three concentric, irregular, concave polygons to represent our three articles.*

The outermost polygon represents my experiences working with other self-study researchers in exploring the emotional entanglements in supervising self-study research. Our experiences were emotionally charged as we grappled with being "novice" supervisors of graduate self-study research students.

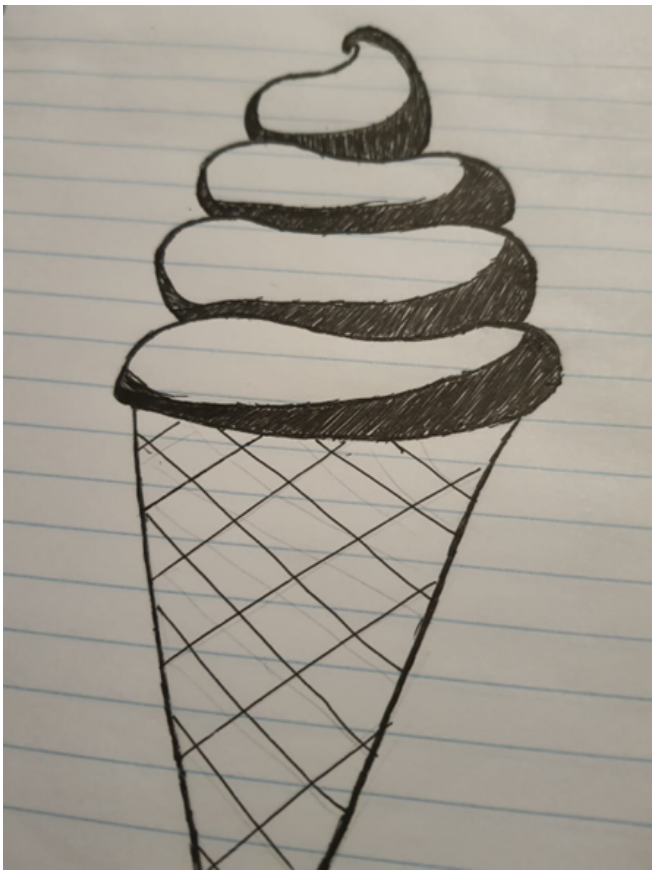
The next polygon represents my experiences in creating a readers' theatre script to make public our learning about HIV and AIDS curriculum integration at a higher education workshop.

The innermost polygon depicts my learning experiences from staging our readers' theatre script at a national conference.

The spongy central part of the diagram represents our prospective learning by co-reflecting on our experiences after publishing our three articles. As a team of researchers, we intended to bind, connect and extend our learning by pausing to facilitate and look forward to thought-provoking, shared, and novel self-study experiences.

Figure 3

Lungile's Rich Picture: "Ice-Cream Cone"



Lungile: *The ice cream cone made me think of our experiments with arts-inspired methods. These methods help us in receiving ideas and balancing our thoughts. They create a beautiful vessel to communicate various issues. We have written and spoken through them, and engaged in physical activities. The cone is the foundation where all these collaborative ideas are created. I look at the twirling of the ice cream; like it, we are going around in upward mobility, where each layer in the twirling keeps growing. Our first enjoyment is that tip, the first thing we bite into, and I think that is where our work is now.*

People find enjoyment at that peak, and the more they dig into it, the more they realise its impact on the various issues we have tried to share with our diverse audiences in different ways. But I see it intertwining, and I see us in there because for that twirl to stay firm, it has to work together, and we have found our balance through our collaboration, where we are feeding off each other. Sometimes we have more than one form of arts-inspired method we are working with. Eventually, it comes together. I see our work as intertwined and twirling to create something we enjoy making and sharing.

Kathleen and Linda drew similar, whirled, concentric two-dimensional diagrams. Kathleen focused on ongoing aspects of growth related to professional learning, whereas Linda provided summaries and connections related to the three articles. Lungile also drew a whirled shape, representing a three-dimensional object to emphasise aspects of working together collaboratively.

Data Analysis

Step One: Tweets

We opted to make sense of the data in a dynamic, emergent process (St. Pierre & Jackson, 2014). As the first step in our analysis, we created tweets (posts on the social media application Twitter with a maximum of 280 characters)

inspired by the voice notes describing our rich pictures. We frequently use tweets for data generation and analysis (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2018; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016b) because the character limit and public Twitter forum encourage concise, clear communication. Composing the tweets necessitated sifting through our voice note transcriptions to discern what each of us saw as most relevant to our guiding research question:

> ***Kathleen's Tweet.*** *As teachers and teacher educators, we are committed to working for a better world, particularly for young people. We see the ripple effect of collaborative arts-inspired self-study methods and how they offer new ways of looking at things. And that matters; it makes a difference!*
>
> ***Linda's Tweet.*** *As a team of self-study researchers, we balance, sustain and nurture organic growth of our professional learning. Arts-inspired methods facilitate our "making a difference" aims. We connect, extend and pursue purposeful yet unique, unpredictable and adventurous research journeys.*
>
> ***Lungile's Tweet.*** *Beautiful vessel for connecting messages that is organic and growing with rippling effect. Art-inspired methods help bind, connect and extend our thought-provoking contributions. Collectively we pause to co-reflect on our powerful intertwining work for change, growth and justice.*

Step Two: Found Poems

The tweets served as material for poetic analysis (Langer & Furman, 2004). For this step, we created a found poem (Butler-Kisber, 2005) by finding words and phrases in the three tweets that spoke to each other. We were inspired by the poetic format of the Renga, a Japanese form of linked-verse poetry traditionally created by two or more poets as a kind of conversation (Britannica, 2021). Kathleen proposed an adaptation of Renga in which different team members crafted certain parts of the poem using words and phrases from our set of tweets. We worked via email to create "An Organic Vessel with Rippling Effect" (Figure 4). Instead of focusing on writing a poem with literary merit, we emphasised the fun and spontaneity of thinking and communicating through poetry.

Figure 4

The Found Poem

An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect

Self-study matters
In making a difference
For a better world

Inspired collaboration
Through intertwining learning

The arts provoking
New ways of looking, growing
With rippling effect

Our organic vessel aims
To connect, bind, and extend

Outcomes

Dialoguing With Each Other

The organic arts-inspired self-study process provided us with "new insights and also a deeper understanding of the original experience[s]" (Edge & Olan, 2021, p. 13) articulated in our three chosen articles. As Eisner (2002) explained, "our capacity to envision is transformed by the effort to represent what we have experienced" (p. 22). We were able to re-envision the purpose of our collaborative self-study research initiatives by expressing and representing our learning using multiple forms in a new combination (rich pictures, voice notes, tweets, and a poem).

We saw the poem as a compressed, metaphorical representation of our learning (Eisner, 2002). So, we stepped back to consider the poem as an artifact of "poetical thinking" (Freeman, 2017, p. 72) concerning our research question. This time, we asked, "*What and how* have we learned by mindfully pausing and purposefully co-reflecting on our three selected arts-inspired collaborative self-study contributions?" We each wrote a response, which we then emailed.

After that, using each stanza of the found poem as an organising device, we clustered resonant excerpts from our individual written reflections, emailing back and forth to create a poetic dialogue (Figure 5). Dialogue, a literary and performing arts-inspired genre, exemplifies how self-study researchers learn and grow through conversation (East et al., 2009). The dialogic responses to each stanza demonstrate how discussions with trusted peers can deepen and expand individual self-study researchers' thoughts and ideas. The responses reveal various aspects of our personal yet resonant reactions to the research question.

Figure 5

The Poetic Dialogue

The Poetic Dialogue

Self-study matters
In making a difference
For a better world

> ***Kathleen:*** *Once again, we have gained new insights through arts-inspired self-study.*
>
> ***Linda:*** *As self-study researchers who seek to make a difference by starting with ourselves, we have articulated our common purpose. We aim to confront sensitive social issues using generative means to work towards social change.*
>
> ***Lungile:*** *This new arts-inspired work has allowed us to push further beyond methodological boundaries and join risk-takers who aim to communicate critical issues differently.*

Inspired collaboration
Through intertwining learning

> ***Kathleen:*** *By asking questions in a collaborative setting, we learned more than we would have independently.*
>
> ***Linda:*** *As self-study researchers from different professional disciplines, who voluntarily collaborate, we learned by connecting our ideas in exciting ways.*

The arts provoking
New ways of looking, growing
With rippling effect

> ***Linda:*** *The combination of arts-inspired forms we used provided many possible ways of expressing concepts. Furthermore, these forms can have many interpretations, allowing for rich, exciting ways of captivating attention or developing additional art forms for reflection and action.*
>
> ***Lungile:*** *This self-study has inspired us to continue making meaning by observing, wondering, forming thoughts, and expressing.*

Our organic vessel aims
To connect, bind, and extend

> ***Kathleen:*** *Connecting in an arts-inspired place with trusted others who share similar interests provided a sense of safety and encouragement for this new self-study venture.*
>
> ***Linda:*** *As collaborative, dedicated self-study researchers who have worked together for several years, we combined our unique strengths to extend our arts-inspired methods. This can enable us to consider how we might improve our teaching and research practices.*
>
> ***Lungile:*** *As collaborators, an essential new conversation has emerged in our pausing as we connect what we have done and see future explorations and possibilities.*

Dialoguing With Critical Friends

Mindful pausing is also about broadening our work by inviting others to comment on it to extend its trustworthiness (Mena & Russell, 2017; Schuck & Russell, 2005). Hence, to put the finishing touches to our self-study process, we asked

four colleagues to join us in discussing what the found poem could communicate to extend our learning. These critical friends are academics from three South African universities with whom we have a long-standing collaboration on self-study research. They have extensive experience with arts-inspired research methods. We were confident that they would provide candid, insightful responses to help us advance our thinking beyond ourselves. This hour-long in-depth conversation featured many fascinating threads. What intrigued us most was the realisation of how collaborative, multilayered arts-inspired self-study can help us see the self as a changeable assemblage. Assemblage is a multidimensional art form created by combining disparate elements – often everyday objects – found by the artist or specifically acquired (TATE Art Terms, 2022).

The assemblage metaphor helped us understand why this work is meaningful to us and why it might be significant to others. Seeing ourselves as "assemblages, bricolages, cobblings, collages, conferences, patchworks" (Badley, 2022, p. 737) that are constantly enriched and expanded by the diversity of human lives and experiences fosters an optimistic awareness that meaningful change is always possible. We can live and act more resourcefully and imaginatively when we see that we are not fixed, unitary, or inflexible.

Scholarly Significance

We could re-see, re-hear, and re-live our art-inspired collaborative self-study experiences by consciously pausing to co-reflect using a new grouping of creative methods. The organic process enabled us to learn more about our partnership and shared intentions as teacher educators and self-study researchers. In pausing to reflect on our efforts over time, we saw how we grew and learned collectively and individually. We also appreciated how our arts-inspired self-study research efforts strengthened our commitment to a more compassionate and just society. Taking time out for creative reflection helped us understand more about how and why we wish to carry out our responsibility as teacher educators to address critical pedagogical and social issues.

This self-study has demonstrated how teacher educators can combine diverse modes to represent and re-envision our professional purposes in creative material forms (Eisner, 2002). Finding and using fresh metaphors to explain the reasoning behind our everyday actions can keep us moving forward in new directions (Bullough, 1994). We hope this research will inspire others to generate multilayered creative self-studies in which they can consciously pause and re-envision their past and future contributions. "An Organic Vessel With Rippling Effect" reminds us that we can all be resourceful, adaptable vessels for personal, educational, and social change.

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Imaginary Critical Friends

Three Perspectives on Practice

Mark D. McCarthy

Self-Study | Critical Friends | Diffractive Analysis | Postqualitative Research

In this paper, I elaborate an approach to self-study undertaken on one's own. I strive to foster inner critical friendship to defamiliarize my teaching practice enough to explore what might otherwise remain unseen. In doing so, I imagine myself in dialogue with the ideas of others, following two models for the process. I bring new theories to explore existing data and the conclusions I drew, to ask new questions, and to reposition myself: posthumanism, postcolonialism, and culturally sustaining pedagogy. I offer ruminations on the tensions I experienced, and while only a glimpse, they might provide inspiration for how this practice extends what's possible for us to see in ourselves. I suggest this alternative to the critical friend approach to self-study, not in critique of the practice, but because I believe collaborators are not always easy to find. Conclusions include discussion of how the presentation of self-study as an act undertaken on one's own might help prospective practitioners to entertain the idea of taking up this research tradition; how the borders and margins may contain the most insight, and so to embrace different methodologies is to strengthen our collective knowledge; and how postmodern texts are active and polyphonic, thus challenging the notion that sole authorship is indeed research done alone. New insight is available through different theoretical and methodological approaches, and I cast authors as my imaginary friends—our critical friendship provides a means for me to critique and reconstruct my practice.

Introduction

In this paper, I elaborate on an approach to self-study undertaken on one's own. I strive to foster inner critical friendship (Ergas & Ritter, 2021) to defamiliarize my teaching practice enough to explore what might otherwise remain unseen. In doing so, I imagine myself in dialogue with the ideas of others, like Thomas' (2018) search for her voice, following two models for the process (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013; Collier et al., 2015). I offer this rigorous alternative to the critical friend approach to self-study, not in critique of the practice, but because I believe collaborators are not always easy to find.

Critical Friends and the Self

Much of the great work in the field of self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) has utilized the support of critical friends (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 819). While one might assume that self-study occurs in solitude, the reality is just the opposite. Ergas and Ritter (2021) discuss how it may be that S-STEP practitioners and educational researchers are

always striving for scientific legitimacy, a broader theme of the social sciences and their "physics envy" (they cite Philips, 2014): the distanced, objective researcher should not be written into the research.

However, subjectivity is part of being a researcher. Davidson (2012) explores a few iterations of subjectivity within research, concluding that the self is not a simple, static identity, nor is it rightfully or successfully cast aside for purposes of scientific objectivity. The self has a vitally important place in my work.

Beyond arguments for including the self in research, working alone may be construed as less rigorous. Denzin's (1978) notion of investigator triangulation suggests as much, wherein the quality of data analysis is safeguarded through inclusion of multiple researchers and their unique perspectives. However, as an early career scholar, at times I have found it difficult to establish relationships for collaboration. Working by myself has been at times more feasible, a defense mechanism, or my preference.

I'm curious about the dearth of sole authorship within the field of S-STEP and offer a distinction between collaboration (i.e. with partners in research) and contribution (e.g. the support of editors and reviewers). Recently, I have undertaken generative, fulfilling collaborations, but I don't imagine I'm the only one who has struggled to find reliable partners in research. Yet, it seems that critical friends are the rule, not the exception.

Ergas and Ritter (2021) asked, "What do self-study scholars mean when their research entails a focus on 'self'?" (p. 4). They found that while the central feature of S-STEP may be the study of "one's self, one's actions, one's ideas" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998, p. 236), self-study researchers are "not only the selves doing the research, they are the selves being studied" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 842). So, collaborators serve as a "sounding board" because of "the difficulty of assessing one's own practice and reframing it" (Schuck & Russell, 2005, p. 107). The goal may be overcoming the difficulty of self-assessment to reframe practice, which I attempt here.

Lighthall (2004) and later Diacopoulos and colleagues (2022) identified collaboration as a fundamental feature of S-STEP. In the interim, *Studying Teacher Education* devoted an issue that "affirm[s] the power of collaboration in self-study" (Kitchen et al., 2019, p. 94). I have benefited greatly in my teaching and my research from outside perspectives offered by critical collaborators, so the "power of collaboration" is not lost on me.

As a faculty member, my educator preparation program requires peer observation with written feedback. This feedback has not yet pushed me to encounter the unseen nuances of my practice, as Buchanon and Mooney (2022) experienced, so these exchanges do not constitute the deep inquiry that self-study calls for when promoting a collaborative methodology. Further, I am the only literacy teacher educator. Certainly, there are opportunities for cross-disciplinary collaboration that can be fruitful for improving practice (for example, Hohensee & Lewis, 2019; King et al., 2019), but intradisciplinary community is, for many of us in smaller programs, the realm of annual conferences of professional organizations.

I also wondered about the academic precariat: those piecing together employment as part-time faculty across multiple institutions and even state lines. Without the institutional resources to support research and funding for conference travel, are collaborations with critical friends possible? I honestly don't know. I do know, however, that between my multiple research projects (some collaborative), teaching and service responsibilities, and family life with a toddler, critical friendships can sometimes be difficult to schedule—all within a larger context, as Bullough (2021) mentions, of pandemic and the isolation and Zoom fatigue that accompany it.

All this to say, the power of collaboration is real and I genuinely appreciate it. But it isn't always practical, preferable, or even possible. Ergas and Ritter (2021) articulated my concern well:

> *The merit of collaborative efforts and critical friendship notwithstanding, we argue that these are options, not prescriptions. The more these become emphasized as standards, the more self is eroded. There are ways to cultivate a more trustworthy self in self-study that do not necessarily depend on others (p. 18).*

Their elaboration of "Inner Critical Friendship" operates mainly at an ontological level, and I have found Pinar's (1994) currere a helpful means of articulating the epistemological features of self. Here, I hope to cultivate a "trustworthy self"

in a practical sense—from a methodological point of view. How can I develop an inner critical friendship that allows defamiliarization so I might explore the unseen nuances to assess my practice?

Process and Subject of Inquiry

I used two models to structure my inquiry, which takes the form of a diffractive analysis—a breaking-apart to learn more about constitutive parts. First, Jackson and Mazzei (2013), "plug in" by imagining three theorists "reading over our shoulder and asking a series of questions" (p. 265), allowing them to go beyond "interpretive imperatives that limit so-called 'analysis' and inhibits the inclusion of previously unthought 'data'" (p. 262). In other words, I imagine questions from theorists to help me probe deeper into my practice, beyond where my personal blinders might create a false horizon.

Similarly, Collier and friends (2014) applied three methodologies to a data excerpt. They note that "reflexivity is not straightforward, and carrying out reflexivity in isolation can create additional challenges" (Collier et al., 2014, p. 390). I face those challenges as I explore a data excerpt in isolation by plugging in three theories. I began this project "unsure of where it would take" me, and understood it as "a process that has no clear conclusion" (Collier et al., 2014, p. 392). I am exploring data, evoking questions, and experimenting with an analytic process with the hope that it might inspire curiosity among prospective self-study researchers to not be dismayed by limited access to critical friends.

Context of the Study

Not long ago, I examined my practice as a teacher educator implementing a service-learning project in which prospective teachers engaged with the cultural and linguistic diversity of our local community through a language tutoring program (McCarthy, 2021). Now in a new but similar context—a teacher education program at a predominately White institution—I have begun to revisit some of my past thinking, informed by current scholarship in S-STEP and new theoretical frameworks.

Vital to this revisiting is a fluid notion of self across time and vantage points. By looking back at the self that was, I identify new possibilities for the becoming (Berry, 2020) self while troubling the notion of the self. As Bullough (2021) testifies, "Rich and diverse resources make comparison possible and fruitful as means for exposing the 'Me' and its voices and for revealing and perhaps correcting distortions of the 'I'" (p. 10). Comparison through a new view of an old self-study allows me to fruitfully interrogate my practice. This re-imagining of my work in the past informs my work in the future, re-casting that work through diffractive introspection.

Originally, I had collaborated with a community tutoring program to provide an opportunity for prospective teachers to gain experience with multilingual learners. Self-studies into teacher educators' critical practices around preparing prospective teachers to engage with students from marginalized populations have recently contributed to self-study (e.g. Maestranzi et al., 2021; McCarthy, 2018; Morettini et al., 2019). The original pedagogical project took place at a large state university in the American Midwest.

Now, as I pause at the threshold of a new semester in a new context that feels familiar, I bring new theories to contemplate my takeaways from that initial study, "inviting…writers to walk alongside me as critical partners" (Thomas, 2018, p. 329). I center the concept of diffraction. Mazzei's (2014) diffractive analysis "emphasizes difference by breaking open the data…by decentering and destabilizing…the subject, interpretation, categorical similarity" and results in "multiplicity, ambiguity, and incoherent subjectivity" (p. 743). Diffraction therefore offers another perspective, and in addition to reflection, it may provide new ways of understanding self and others, and data. Where reflection imagines a unified, unitary self, diffraction asks us to see difference (i.e. the other) within.

I had intended for the service-learning experience to allow prospective teachers to experience—in an authentic way—the diversity of the world, literature, and their future classrooms. My initial argument was that authenticity is paradoxical in teaching: striving for authenticity often precludes the possibility of achieving it; the organic emergence of authenticity is excluded by an intention to create it (McCarthy, 2021). Now, at the threshold of a re-viewing and diffractive analysis, I come with new questions.

Like Maestranzi and colleagues (2021), who suggest we have a "responsibility to prepare ourselves via self-work before we attempt to engage teachers in critical discussions and reflections" (p. 19), I feel the urge to trouble my subjectivity and to find the interference patterns within my past reflections in preparation for new teaching. Like Morettini and colleagues (2019), who found that researchers' prior expectations and modeling shaped outcomes and responses to critical conversations, I strive to untether my expectations of what was from what will come.

Data Generation

Self-study practices (e.g. Loughran, 2005) guide this theoretical exercise in re-viewing, however, the project in its original form has concluded. This research follows the concept of diffractive analysis (Barad, 2014; Mazzei, 2014) to re-view that work and the self that engaged in self-study.

The original project was determined exempt by an Institutional Review Board. Participants were prospective teachers who were mostly White, monolingual, middle-class women, 19-20 years old—a common demographic description for students in university-based teacher education programs. The service learning project paired students in my class with members of the university community who were not native speakers of English. The sample I am re-viewing is what I described as an exemplar case. This student achieved what I had intended and more, but I also used the counterpoint of this example as the exception that proves the rule: my conclusions were reinforced, not rethought—until now.

Data Sample

> *Paige [was paired] with a Spanish-speaking partner from Colombia. Following Paige's initial meeting with Sofi (a pseudonym), she was "very excited to be meeting with her once a week" and referred to Sofi as "a very sweet, genuine person who I know I will enjoy spending time with." Paige was clearly ready to have a relationship that exceeded the course requirements.*
>
> *Like most students in the course, Paige learned about where Sofi is from (Colombia) and how she came to the US. [As a result,] Paige's investment in Spanish had tangible benefit, and Sofi had a valued/able fund of knowledge. While Paige was involved initially as a teacher—positioned as such through the program—her first meeting with Sofi established fluid power dynamics and reciprocity. As Paige recalled in her reflection [they engaged in translanguaging and an exchange of language]. Their relationship became one of reciprocity and interdependence, and allowed them both to have experiences that challenged the self/other binary, and was therefore quite authentic.*
>
> *On the last day of class, Paige wrote that of all the course assignments and projects, the "most meaningful for me was meeting with my conversation partner." I argue that it was meaningful because she developed an authentic relationship. Despite my role in providing the opportunity for that to happen, I cannot attribute her success to any guidance I provided. Otherwise, more students would have had similar experiences, and unfortunately, only a handful of the twenty-odd students came anywhere near to authentic relationships (adapted from McCarthy, 2021).*

Three Perspectives

To engage in diffractive analysis of qualitative data is to "read…texts through, with, and in relation to each other" in order to "to pose a set of diffractive questions" (Mazzei, 2014, p. 744). Beyond the sociocultural theories that I applied in my initial analysis, I bring new theories to explore this data and the conclusions I drew, to ask new questions, and to reposition myself:

- Posthumanism (Braidotti, 2019) to re-engage with the self of self-study;
- Postcolonialism (Spivak, 1994) to hold myself accountable for/to the silenced voices of the community partners;
- and Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy (Paris, 2012) to explore this work from a perspective I supported then and now.

Like Thomas (2018), I found that "these works can provide comfort across the borderlands of discursive discomfort… while also 'schooling' us in the vocabulary we need to speak for ourselves" (p. 329). I offer ruminations on the tensions

(Berry, 2007) I experienced, and while only a glimpse, they might provide inspiration for how this practice extends what's possible for us to see in ourselves.

Posthumanism

In short, posthumanism is a rethinking of the centrality of human experience. We are connected to the biosphere and to material assemblages, communities, and people. I read Braidotti (2019) as part of an academic course, highlighted her words on the page, synthesized meaning across my teaching and personal worlds. The process was nonlinear, multivalent, and amorphous, but also one in which many readers similarly engage; at once common and idiosyncratic.

As I imagine Braidotti (2019) reading over my shoulder, she thinks of posthuman subjectivity. Subjectivity is an ensemble, so she asks me, *What makes you think that Paige and Sofi existed separate from one another?* Life is "co-constructed and jointly articulated in a common world" (p. 175). I wonder, are authentic relationships simply a way of understanding when humans have come to be together? Braidotti (2019) names the subject: "'We'-who-are-not-one-and-the-same-but-are-in- this-convergence-together" (p. 182). I believe I started to understand this notion through the erasure of the self/other binary, but at the time I was unable to articulate a shift in subjectivity to thinking beyond the individual human as sole position.

In my practice, I never invited the partners, like Sofi, to attend our class. I never had everyone meet as a group. I never met any of the partners. I created the opportunity for the experience, but I never became part of We. I was never in it together with them. I concluded that there exists a paradox: if I assign students to experience something, they will not authentically and fully participate as if it were their idea; but if I don't assign it, they wouldn't experience it at all. Maybe there's more to it than me sending them into an experience, hoping for the best. Perhaps I could become part of the ensemble, or better yet, perhaps the class and their partners could come together in ways that made visible the richness of relationships like Paige and Sofi had developed.

Braidotti (2019) writes of affirmative ethics: "Subjects are animated by the positivity of an ontological desire that orients them towards the freedom to express all they are capable of becoming" (p. 155). Writing off my assignment as paradoxical and out of my control seems rather cynical in retrospect. Perhaps there is a way to engage students, to produce authentic relationships in service learning. I just might need to keep trying, and in the process, to better position myself as part of We.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism emerged as a critical response to colonial thinking and organization of the world. Colonialism thrived on a unitary voice in the room, that of the colonizing European powers, capitalistic and patriarchal. Postcolonialism is the voice of the Othered, entering the conversation, critiquing theories and logics. Again, I read and tried to internalize the often dense concepts, concurrent with my own growth in critique of the axes of privilege from which I benefit. This process is unique to my identity work, but not exclusionary.

Spivak (1994) enters into conversation with Foucault, Deleuze, Marx, Said, and others in her articulation of ideological and material marginalization. Building upon my critique of my practice (that I never met the partners), the question I imagine her asking me is obvious: *Why were the voices of the partners silenced? Are you not participating in the "continuing construction of the subaltern" (p. 90)?* Many of the partners were, to use her phrase, "third world women" and my silencing of them is an example of epistemic violence. As a researcher, it wouldn't be possible for me to understand the degree of authenticity of a relationship when I heard only from students in my class. As a teacher, I never processed the desires of the partners except through my discussions with the director of the program.

Revisiting my decisions at the time, in my defense I had a dissertation to write and any data outside of a researcher's control (perhaps an imperialist tendency) were not guaranteed. After failed studies, I centered my research on my own teaching, my courses, and students involved in them. I didn't want to pursue participants who may not respond. As a result, I designed their silence into my work. How often does this situation arise in self-study? When we intend to explore our own practices, do we silence the voices of students or other stakeholders? These are the contributors we

cannot escape, even when collaborators may be difficult to find. Sadly, even if we cannot escape them, we do erase them.

Spivak (1994) concludes that "The subaltern cannot speak" (p. 104), but it goes against my purported philosophy to ensure that they cannot. While I don't have the opportunity to rectify my silencing of the partners, I can strive to do better as a researcher in that regard. As a teacher educator, I can aim to include more voices and perspectives in my courses. While I consciously assign academic readings that represent the plurality of scholars, there are other stakeholders for whom I can share the podium: children, administrators, and teachers, for instance. I can also ask my students to seek out those voices as part of the assignments they undertake in my courses—in fact, I'm trying now.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

The evolution of asset-based pedagogies has seen cultural relevance and responsiveness and then began to focus on sustaining culture through our teaching. As Paris (2012) is the only theorist here whose work I had read at the time of the original study, I have engaged in these concepts with students and colleagues for a number of years, including: "What is the purpose of schooling in a pluralistic society?" (Paris, 2012, p. 95). This question brings me to an oft-encountered fork in the road: K-12, where my students will end up teaching; or college, the context of my course. As this has remained a tension throughout my work as a teacher educator, I consider it in relation to this tangible moment in my teaching.

As for K-12, Paris (2012) is pretty clear: our pedagogies should "support young people in sustaining the cultural and linguistic competence of their communities while simultaneously offering access to dominant cultural competence" (p. 95). In re-viewing my analysis of Paige's case, she exemplified a quality that is often missing among pre-service teachers: an inclination toward multilingual thinking, or valuing the ways of knowing and being that accompany being a speaker of multiple languages or languages other than English. Paige was ready to learn and improve her Spanish, and that open-mindedness may apply to future students. Recreating Paige's experience for other pre-service teachers would help develop that mindset and the resulting interest "in sustaining and extending the richness of our pluralist society" (Paris, 2012, p. 96). I want to continue working toward this goal with students, even though I have no institutional power to, for example, require a foreign language minor.

When I consider Paris' question in the context of a predominantly White institution without foreign language requirements for education majors, I wonder about the missed opportunities. Our pluralistic society is not represented in many university-based educator preparation programs. I feel helpless in the face of recruitment and retention of teachers of color, and in the overarching national emergency of deprofessionalized, ridiculed, and under-resourced teachers. My own teaching practice does little to bring new students into the field, and I have no way to know if what I've done helps keep anyone in the classroom after they've become teachers. Those questions are beyond self-study, collaborative or not. I can choose to be affirmative and continually strive to be better.

Conclusion

There's quite a bit I'm trying to express here, and I evoke more questions than I provide answers. I began with a discussion of how collaboration appears to be the norm in the field of self-study. To me, the presentation of self-study as an act undertaken on one's own might help prospective practitioners take up this research tradition. I think it's vital to the field that we continue to consider, using Ergas and Ritter's (2021) terms, a range of options and that we not prescribe the means by which scholars contribute to the field. That argument is not new (see Hamilton, 2005; Thomas, 2018), but my hope is that I have added some practical methodological pieces to consider.

The approach I have undertaken to defamiliarize myself with my practice is also not new, as models for recasting experience through different theoretical (Jackson & Mazzei, 2013) or methodological (Collier et al., 2014) lenses have been effective elsewhere. I believe these models exist outside the mainstream in terms of influencing research design. I have hoped to bring these studies into focus for self-study practitioners. Further, one might work with colleagues to make diffractive analysis collaborative through shared readings to revisit reflections on teaching.

I also have the feeling that the continued efforts to raise the bar in terms of rigor, across studies arguing for critical friendship and elsewhere, come in reaction to the marginalization of self-study within the broader field of educational research. My experience suggests that the borders and margins contain the most insight, and so to embrace different methodologies is to strengthen our collective knowledge. It also creates new entry points to consider student learning: asking students to synthesize across readings and to view experiences through theoretical lenses outside of their usual could improve the rather banal reflections I tend to receive.

Finally, I have revisited an already completed, published study. My story of Paige becomes a twice-told tale, and it's uncommon for qualitative data to undergo secondary analysis. "Under normal circumstances," writes Nilges (2001), "publication represents at least a partial closing of the door on a given study" (p. 232). She goes on to discuss the widespread position that qualitative research

> *simultaneously constructs and mediates reality as information is filtered from field site, to paper, to text, to reader. It is methodologically unsound…to ignore what it means to "write-up" qualitative research at a point in time when a direct link between experience and textualization can no longer be assumed… (Nilges, 2001, p. 232)*

Ultimately, postmodern texts are active, polyphonic, and bring the author and reader together through the text (Nilges, 2001). This polyphony is exactly the reason why I believe sole authorship is not equivalent to working completely alone: we stand on the shoulders of giants, and we gain insight from the passing conversations with colleagues as we settle into a professional development session. There are many voices represented here, despite my name sitting alone upon this paper.

New insight is available through different theoretical and methodological approaches. I am simply casting those authors as my imaginary friends, and our critical friendship provides a means for me to critique and reconstruct my practice.

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Me Versus We

A Self-Study on the Power of Collaboration in Analyzing Data

Amy Staples & Deborah Tidwell

Collaboration | Data Analysis | Critical Colleague

In this self-study, we are examining our shared analysis process with data we gathered from preschool classrooms where young children were participating in Big Paper activities. Our self-study focuses on our collaborative approach (Louie et al., 2016) to making meaning through data analysis. Our use of collaboration mirrored the critical friend aspect commonly found in self-study research (Schuck & Russell, 2005), but within this analysis collaboration, we framed the critical nature of the engagement more as a critical collaboration. Examining our process revealed a recursive nature ofour thinking and doing. Part of this process involved conflicts that arose - tensions (Berry, 2007; Martin, 2019) that reflected our different understandings and meaning making. This collaborative colleague stance we used guided us in our thinking about data, putting a brake on one another, enabling us to challenge each other's premises. It evoked a shared understanding that deepened our appreciation of meaning that emerged from our data.

Introduction

Writing as a social-interactive process in which writers learn from one another what is worth writing and what is needed to convey an intended message (Nystrand, 1989), improves the quality of text/drawings over time. In fact, children often use oral communication, drawing, and writing interconnectedly when writing together, creating more developed works than what students are able to write on their own (Staples & Edmister, 2012; Boyle, 2011; Jacobs, 2010; Larkin, 2009;). Wiseman (2003) describes the environment most conducive to the writing process for young children as "creative, messy, collaborative, and talkative; the room buzzes with voices and movement." (p. 804). Nolen (2007) describes these classrooms as being a "literate community… in which literacy activities establish and maintain relatedness of individuals" (p. 242).

Our interest in young children's composing behaviors during a shared writing activity led us to undertake a semester-long qualitative study of Big Paper, a specific approach for facilitating writing development and story construction in young learners of varied abilities (Staples & Edmister., 2014; Edmister et al, 2013; Staples & Edmister, 2012). During Big Paper, 5-8 children gather around a large piece of newsprint at a table or on the floor to compose, working independently or in concert with others for 20-40 minutes in this shared writing space to create drawings and text.

As researchers and teacher educators, much of our practice is engaging with classrooms in the field. In this self-study, we are examining our shared analysis process with data we had gathered from preschool classrooms where young

children were participating in Big Paper activities. Our self-study focuses on our collaborative approach (Louie et al., 2016) to make meaning through data analysis. We argue that the *practice* of the analysis process within our research roles in teacher education is an important focus for our self-study as it explicates the meaning-making process emerging from our data analysis and provides a window into the power of collaboration (Hauge, 2021). The purpose of this self-study was driven by the question, "How has our analysis process framed our thinking and knowing?"

Methods

The initial analysis of the Big Paper data sources (video, transcripts, Big Paper compositions, session notes) involved three steps:

- Viewing 28 hours of video, reading corresponding transcripts (400 single-spaced typed pages of the 56 sessions), examining Big Paper compositions (63 community samples and 63 case study samples), and reading typed session notes (46 single-spaced typed pages) across the five case studies of preschool children engaged in Big Paper activities.
- Developing a summary case study for each of the five children from a review of the videos, transcripts, and compositions.
- Creating a table highlighting the four key dynamics within Big Paper that emerged from the analysis.

It was after this third step in our work that we engaged in a deep examination of the four dynamics/themes in Big Paper. This is where our self-study began. Data sources for this self-study included our journals recording our personal notes taken during and after data analysis events, as well as the original data sources for the Big Paper composition study. The self-study involved both:

- retrospective data analysis (examining our process and individual notes), as well as using
- ongoing dialogue of the data analysis as a tool for our study (East et al., 2009; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020).

Retrospective analysis in self-study is described by Shaw et al. (2021) as "observing the work from the outside" where they stepped "out and away, looking back on the action from beginning to end as informed and critical observers" (p. 3095). Our retrospective analysis process was similar in that we "examined our experiences… We noted points of interpretive tensions in the process and considered how they were resolved." (Shaw et al., 2021, p. 3095). We retrospectively examined how we went about analyzing children's composition, focusing on both the content we used and the way in which we examined that content. Dialogue has been used in self-study research as a method to analyze data (Cardetti & Orgnero 2013; East et al. 2009; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras 2014). East et al. (2009) describe using dialogue as "a method through which we examine our practice in our self-study work" where "dialogue takes us to a point at which we recalibrate our understanding of a topic or of our practices." In addition, they argue that dialogue "is the way we carry out collaborative self-study with attention to content and to process" (p.57).

Through our dialogue about the data analysis process, we used journals to document how we retrospectively examined the process of analysis, as well as key ideas and connections that emerged from our discussions. We took these notes independently, sometimes during our analysis sessions, and other times post-session. These notes both addressed our individual thoughts as well as were a compilation of discussion between the two of us. We used these notes as a collective source rather than as individual sources. To cite our journal notes in this paper, we used the collective term *Discussion Notes* along with the date the notes were taken.

Results

Our attempt to explain how we engaged in the analysis process included both the idea of critical, meaning an ongoing give-and-take critique of ideas presented, and collaboration, working together within and across the process. To help define our collaboration, we asked ourselves, How is this different from one working solo and using constant comparative to confirm understanding of data? This overarching question was helpful in guiding our thinking about how we engaged. There were many nuances within the analysis process, but in this paper, we will discuss the following three themes that emerged from our self-study: the recursive nature of analysis, tensions, and respect.

Recursive Nature of Analysis

> *Bang bang bang on the door, baby*
> *Knock a little louder, baby*
> *Bang bang bang on the door, baby*
> *I can't hear you*
> *Bang bang bang on the door, baby!*
> *KNOCK A LITTLE LOUDER, SUGAR!*
> *Bang bang bang on the door, baby!*
> *I CAN'T HEAR YOU! (Pierson et al., 1989)*

Scholars referring to writing as a recursive process describe the writer's actions as being back and forth with an eye to meaning-making rather than proceeding through a composition in a linear fashion (Flower & Hayes, 1981). For example, one does not simply plan a piece of writing and then put pen to paper, beginning with an introduction, proceeding to a body, then ending with a conclusion. Instead, it is more likely a person might realize an introduction needs to be written differently as a result of working on another section of the body, so the writer leaves the body and goes to the introduction then back to the body, and so on. This same process was true in both our work with the data and the sense-making process of working collaboratively. It was not linear, but rather recursive.

The professional relationship in which we engaged was collaborative with a focus on sense-making; it was our own recursive form of constant comparative, with each one looking for alternatives. As colleagues and friends, we use the term 'professional relationship' intentionally to distinguish our engagement with data as part of our research, and with a different intent and context than our engagement outside this realm. During our collaborative engagement, if one of us said something that resonated there was agreement, but when it did not resonate there was an active discussion of possible alternatives to meaning, where tensions within the data emerged. Even when we agreed, it led to constant comparative work where we closely examined our own thinking, asking the following kinds of questions: Is there a different way that gets more at what we are doing? Is there any value in talking about it in that way?

We took copious notes in our journals during our discussions regarding the data, which included post-discussion notes. The following excerpts from our discussion notes demonstrate the recursive nature of our data analysis process, and how we returned to the data often to confirm, clarify, or dismiss our sense-making.

> *Nothing on this day - we made the table for Oscar first, so I wonder if we short-changed this category for him. We went back to transcripts to check on things quite a bit and saw there was rich conversation and that our notes might not represent what's there. Might need to rescan his transcripts for prosocial/engagement. (Discussion Notes, 2/12/22)*

> *I spent too much time looking through Big Paper files. We've looked at this data and thought about this data so many different ways. (Discussion Notes, 2/25/22).*

In these next two excerpts, our discussion notes illustrate recursive efforts related to defining what constituted collaboration among students. The first excerpt summarizes initial thoughts based on our discussion and examination of the data while the second reveals refinement after more discussion and a return to data.

> *Collaboration does not equal complete acquiescence. It's an agreement between two people. Could be discussion about what's happening or the actual drawing or both. (Discussion Notes, 10/14/2021)*

> *General thoughts now about collaboration now that we've looked through all the students. Collaboration is WITH someone. Content-connected. Often is sharing expertise. Can be momentary or ongoing consultation. One person dropping in on someone's drawing or ongoing construction. (Discussion Notes, 10/28/2021)*

The following excerpt from our discussion notes shows a further development in our understanding of the concept of collaboration by children within the Big Paper data. This excerpt reveals the results of our recursive process in trying to

explicate meaning from the data to support our understanding of children's actions. It reveals more specifics about how children collaborate and also clarifies what we mean by collaboration by describing what is not collaboration.

> *We're inclined to say children are collaborating because they're sharing space. Sometimes it happens when they work together but borrowing ideas from others isn't collaboration. It's something else because there's no partnership. It's an indication that someone's work or idea is valued, though. That on its own is important as children develop their interests, identity as authors, personhood, value. (Discussion Notes, 11/17/21)*

We connected this section on the recursive nature of our data analyses to the lyrics from the B-52's "Love Shack," where to be able to hear what is really there requires a repeated effort again and again.

Tensions

> *Nothing from nothing leaves nothing*
> *You gotta have something… (Fisher & Preston, 1974)*

As experienced academicians and researchers, both Amy and Deb came to this study with lived experiences and orientations to writing, data analysis, tasks, and being in the world that at times created tensions. Our self-study revealed several tensions that impacted our data work. In this paper, we highlight two: the lenses of our interests and theoretical orientations; and, the intrapersonal and interpersonal macro-micro fluctuations.

Lenses

Part of what influenced our discussions during data analysis were the lenses through which we each viewed the children's efforts during Big Paper. Amy's thinking about writing was heavily influenced by cognitive process research (Flower and Hayes, 1981; Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987). Through this lens, the researcher would consider the composer's thoughts and intentions while writing. She also had an appreciation of the contributions of social-interactive research (Nystand, 1989), which noted the importance of interactions between text, author, and audience. Initially, Amy was interested in whether or how this collaborative environment in Big Paper contributed to each child's understanding of writing, as well as their authorship. Her focus on the writing encouraged an examination of both the form and function of the children's compositions. For Amy, it was about composition, so the artifacts were representing composition.

Deb, on the other hand, was heavily influenced by the social construction of meaning (Cook Gumperz, 2012; Halliday, 1975). Like Amy, she was interested in the process by which children created/constructed a piece (drawing/writing). However, her primary focus was on the social engagement within the Big Paper experience. She was also interested in the focus of each child's writing, and how these children collaboratively borrowed or shared from one another as they composed. For Deb, the artifacts were a tool for the students to socially construct. These differences in our primary, secondary, and tertiary interests helped inform the discussion of data, at times leading to tensions regarding meaning of the data. This first excerpt in this section comes from the discussion notes of Deb, and reveals a stronger focus on social aspects of writing.

> *Amy states the BP becomes a way to see the outcome - allows you to see what a child has internalized. What are we learning about their knowledge, interests, personhood through BP? My comments are more summarized: Though children are embedded in a culture and classroom that are both literacy focused, the BP experience does not have a convention template nor an assigned task related to improving use of writing conventions. It's an opportunity for self expression that may reflect their embedded stance in a literature environment - but BP reflects social engagement that reflects how they reflect what they know in their choices. Is BP a way to glean lots of info about students? a way to evidence pro social skills? to pursue own expertise? to build confidence in their own interests? (Discussion Notes, 6/16/21)*

This second excerpt from our discussion notes reveals a tension in how we used our lenses to discuss what the data meant.

> *How do we balance these approaches in studying early composing? Both contribute to our understanding but an overemphasis on appearance or conventionality risks deemphasizing the reason we write to begin with. (Discussion Notes, 3/31/22)*

The following excerpt addressed dynamics later in the analysis process as Amy determined her theoretical focus was too narrow a fit in discussing the children's compositions.

> *Outcomes - very structured cog process model was too narrow a scope (Discussion Notes, 5/4/22)*

Working together over time, our discussions about the data influenced both of our thinking about the meaning within the data. We found the theoretical debates that emerged (as we teased out what we saw in the data) were powerful in supporting our understanding of young children's composition.

Macro/Micro

The idea of a macro or a micro focus on the data came from our discussions of what we were seeing in the composition data. We termed micro as being specific about aspects of the composition (such as letter formation or word development), and of the children's engagement (such as sharing a crayon or asking for help to write a letter or word). We termed macro as being broad in focus and pertaining to the larger picture of what was happening as children composed. Across the analyses, we were both macro and micro in our discussions, just not at the same time and not within the same contexts being addressed. And we saw this micro-macro tension connecting with the lenses through which we viewed the work. Early in our data analyses, Amy was interested in honing in on the product to determine aspects of literacy emerging in the children's writing. Deb was less interested in the product and more focused on the processes children used to make meaning and communicate. In this context of product and process, Amy was more micro in her approach to the data while Deb represented a macro view. The following excerpt from the retrospective discussion of our analyses focus shows this micro/macro tension.

> *Process and product – Deb wasn't interested in product and initially I [Amy] couldn't see the value of disregarding that. I was interested in it primarily from a cog process or social interactive view and Deb was more broad in social construction and role of teacher (Discussion Notes, 5/4/22)*

Another way we saw the micro/macro tension was in how we focused on the data, what we saw as the tension *within* the data processing. When patterns were noted in the data, for example, Amy wanted to go deeper into the data (micro) to confirm (or disconfirm) the patterns across the data while Deb felt sufficiently confident in the patterns to move ahead to making broader statements (macro).

> *Amy comments that we need to be cautious in making statements about what the students' work means - not to impose representation, it's to find out what the child is doing. (Discussion Notes, June 16, 2021)*

None of these tensions were absolute nor created professional conflicts, but this examination of tensions within the analysis process was interesting and informative. Our personality differences may have played a part as well in these larger tensions of lenses and micro/macro views of the data. Our understanding of the data through this analysis process evolved over time for both of us. We appreciate more clearly the role tensions played in making meaning about what young writers' big paper compositions reveal.

The lyrics of Billy Preston's song, "Nothing From Nothing," reflect the importance and power that tensions (something) play in making sense of it all. "You've got to have something."

Respect

> *I ain't gon' do you wrong 'cause I don't wanna*
> *All I'm askin' is for a little respect (Redding, 1965)*

Working collaboratively with others can be exhilarating and exhausting. The idea of collaboration is based on a core belief that better understanding and work are accomplished by a team than by oneself. Research, or any long-term, complex project, requires extensive decision-making and grinding through the day-to-day of it. This work is tedious yet

involves deep thinking. Ideally, each team member brings a valued set of skills and attributes to the work. Sometimes, though, despite valued team membership, things go awry. During our self-study, we came to recognize the importance of our mutual respect for one another to the success of the overall work. According to Cambridge Online Dictionary, respect is "admiration felt or shown for someone or something that you believe has good ideas or qualities." That premise served as an anchor for understanding how our professional relationship worked. Our working relationship developed slowly, over an extended period. We worked in the same college and had offices at the same end of the building. We were in different departments but shared a common love of literacy. It was only after seven or eight years that we created opportunities to work together, first on committees, then with Deb assisting Amy on grants, and developing curriculum together. Working together, writing together, and presenting at conferences solidified a foundation of mutual appreciation and respect. It was at the tail end of the curriculum development work that the Big Paper study was undertaken. We knew enough about one another to pursue a new project together. At the core of this was a love of literacy and respect for one another.

Our belief in one another allowed us to approach our work with unfettered critique. We saw ourselves as peers working on the same study rather than being invited into someone else's meaning-making of their work. Respect for one another in concert with tensions allowed for forward movement in our analysis and discussion of the data. The following is an example.

> *Amy's synthesis of our ideas really helped me connect skills development with children's engagement. "BP provides students with self-initiated practice of letters/letter formation and words. Allows children to take the role as expert rather than the teacher." (Discussion Notes, 8/13/2021)*

We were able to negotiate tensions because neither of us was overly ego involved; we were personally invested in the study, not ourselves. Respect for the data, for the students, as well as for ourselves mediated every second of our work. Though we both experienced impatience at different times, this dynamic of respect encouraged patience for the process and one another, allowing us to wait for the revelation of meaning to emerge.

> *Watching Indigo Girls livestream while I grade. Amy (of Indigo Girls) is talking about a song she wrote called "Moment of Forgiveness." She originally wrote it in a dressing room in New England. It was just sitting there until one time she was back in Atlanta and a keyboardist offered a front end to it. Amy said the song was just waiting for Claire to be finished but they didn't know it. I think our understanding of what we're seeing is waiting for the revelation of the other. As with musicians, the song comes by trying out different ideas and hearing ideas from others. For us, it's that constant trying out of sense making, trusting the other one to either affirm, disconfirm, or fine tune to just the right result that truly reflects the data we have. It's not a simple process. It's one that requires patience. It's not about either of us. It's about the data in the end and our desire to be true to it. We support each other through times of impatience, though. (Discussion Notes, 5/4/22)*

As stated in the lyrics from Aretha Franklin's classic song, "Respect," "I ain't gon' do you wrong 'cause I don't wanna." Our work together was grounded in respect – ego on the shelf and open to hearing, we were able to push for meaning. This gave us real time to analyze and allow the path to go forward.

Conclusions

Our attempt to explain how we engaged in the analysis process included both the idea of *critical*, meaning an ongoing give-and-take critique of ideas presented, and *collaboration*, working together within and across the process. In self-study research, the term "critical friend" (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Edge & Olan, 2021; Schuck & Russell, 2005) is often used to represent the relationship between the researcher and another who provides feedback to, insights into, and trustworthiness of the analysis of data. The term critical friend did not match our dynamic - as a critical friend refers to someone more on the outside looking in, providing feedback as a critic. Instead, we referred to ourselves initially as "critical colleagues," as we examined the process of analysis and provided critique to one another regarding the dynamics of our engagement. This idea of critical colleague reflects to some degree the work of Sherin and Han (2004) in examining a "university discourse of competitive argumentation or 'critical colleagueship.'" (as cited in Males et al.,

2010, p. 460). The use of the term critical colleague is often found in studies examining educators' discourse through professional development contexts (e.g., Lord, 1994; Sherin & Han, 2004; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Our notion of referring to ourselves as critical colleagues referred to a context of colleagues within a university setting, examining our process for the analysis of data. Yet, the competitive argumentation described by Sherin and Han (2004) did not reflect adequately the ways we discussed our analyses. We were not doing something *for* one or the other, but rather we were doing something *with* one another. Our dynamic more closely represented the use of collaboration embedded with critical discussions of understandings and meanings revealed through the data. We termed our role in the analysis as "critical collaborators," working together through dialogue and retrospective analysis in service of the Big Paper study data.

Examining our process revealed a recursive nature of our thinking and doing. The recursivity of our discussions during the analysis of the data sources resulted in a deepened understanding of what *makes sense*. Part of this process involved conflicts that arose - tensions (Berry, 2007; Martin, 2019) that reflected our different understandings and meaning-making. Through our self-study examining the collaborative process we used in analysis, we found that we provided a check for one another to ensure we engaged in due diligence of the data analysis. This collaborative colleague stance enabled us, through in-depth discussion, to challenge each other's premises. It evoked a shared understanding that deepened our appreciation of the meaning that emerged from our data. This was all possible because of our ethical commitment to the data and our respect for one another, both of which mediated the lenses and tensions.

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Responding to Pandemic-Centered Nihilism With Democratic Renewal and Restoration in Teacher Education

Mary F. Rice & Mark Diacopoulos

Nihilism in Teacher Education | Democratic Renewal in Education | Pandemic Pesponse in Teacher Education | John Dewey | Pandemic Grief and Loss

We are two tenure-track, but untenured teacher educators in the United States. We teach in the Midwest and Southwest. We have both taught in universities for more than 5 years. During the COVID-19 outbreak in the spring of 2020, school buildings and college campuses all over the county closed to prevent the spread of illness. As we worked through planning, redesigning, and revising courses we considered our teacher educator knowledge and expertise. During the movements between instructional modalities, we read and re-read John Dewey's (1938) monograph "Experience and Education" (EE) together to organize our thinking. As we moved through shifting phases of our work, our purposes in reading have evolved with our changing contexts. We realized that going back to go forward again, which was Dewey's (1938) view of history, does not always mean going very far back after all. We can use what teacher candidates have learned so far about teaching in troubled times to draw them through the rest of their preparation.

Introduction

"Thanks again for the wonderful class yesterday," the note from the classroom teacher read. "The students loved the lesson and felt that it helped them reflect on where their writing comes from." For this creative writing class of high school juniors, Mary built a shared cloud slideshow and showed students several places to find images on the internet and paste them into collages. The class Mary was visiting was a high school creative writing class in the community where Mary is a teacher educator. The goal of the task was for students to share their sources of inspiration for the stories that they were writing. Some students found images of other books they had read in the same genre. Other students used photos they had taken of their neighborhoods and from experiences they had. Many students also used images and colors that symbolized the mood they were trying to evoke.

After students finished their collages, they used the comment feature to give feedback to one another that displayed the name of the peer. Other students left anonymous comments by using the notes section of the presentation program. Students had time to share and ask questions verbally. When the activity was over, Mary asked students for feedback about their learning. One student said, "I really liked how, even though some of us are at school and some of us are in our houses, we all could interact." Another student sent Mary a private message through the video conference saying,

"This is the first time that I felt I had friends in the class." The students, it seemed, valued the interaction as much as the insight into their writing processes.

Mary visited the class often during the semester to participate in co-developed activities that promote writing development and promoted discourse about writing as a craft. Mary had visited this school and worked in this classroom during in-person learning before the pandemic of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in the spring of 2020. While Mary had always valued her work with the students in this class and in classes of other students at other schools, the onset of remote learning inspired Mary and Mark to revisit the work of John Dewey, particularly *Experience in Education* (1938). Mark is a teacher educator for social studies at another institution who Mary met at a virtual conference in the summer of 2020. During their regular meetings, Mary and Mark shared stories of hope like the one above and stories that were less hopeful, even nihilistic. These less-hopeful stories often centered on frustrations that the pandemic was disrupting teacher education practice but prompting changes that might be hopeful. The purpose of this paper is to share what we have learned about using Dewey's (1938) work to reach forward rather than sink into despair.

Research Question

We are asking: How have we come to understand our responses to shifting conditions in teacher education to sustain our work during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic?

Practical Context for the Study

We are two tenure-track, but untenured teacher educators in the United States. We teach in the Midwest and Southwest. We have both taught in universities for more than 5 years. During the COVID-19 outbreak in the spring of 2020, school buildings and college campuses all over the county closed to prevent the spread of illness (Education Week, 2020). Education and teacher preparation were still expected to move forward during this catastrophic social and political crisis. We finished the classes we were teaching using remote learning procedures and processes guided by our respective institutions. We taught classes in the fall of 2020, the spring of 2021, and the fall of 2021. As we worked through planning, redesigning, and revising courses we also considered our teacher educator knowledge and expertise (Pinnegar, 2009). In the fall of 2020, Mary continued to teach online, and Mark returned to some in-person work. Mary taught online in the spring of 2021 and did not return to in-person teaching until the fall of 2022. During these movements, we read and re-read John Dewey's (1938) monograph *Experience and Education* (EE) to organize our thinking. As we have moved through shifting phases of our work, our purposes in reading have evolved with our changing contexts.

Theoretical Context for the Study

Honestly facing the most difficult moments of our lives will inevitably upset our deepest commitments (Wagner, 2020). For us, we believed that we had a deep commitment to the democratic mission of schools (Goodlad, 1994, 2000; Goodlad et al., 2015). To understand our commitments in tandem with our experiences, this study operated using a particular definition of the word *democracy*. In the tradition of John Dewey (1938), we understood democracy not as a political party or a political system where everyone voting on all, or most issues is considered the gold standard. Instead, we understand democracy as a transformative way to operate in communities. Democratic communities encourage participation, plan for the vulnerable, and are aspirational in their interest to admit when something is not working and make consistent efforts to improve (Coulter et al., 2009).

As a public good, schools can be the center of democratic exchanges (Goodlad, 1994, 2000; Goodlad et al., 2015). In school communities centered on renewal, there is an interest in acknowledging the vulnerability of the young and the historically underserved while acknowledging the necessity of preparing them for meaningful adult life (Erikson, 1968). In this frame, schools can be places to help young people have experiences with democratic dialogue. As former classroom teachers and current teacher educators, we are aware of how difficult it is to center democracy in an institution that has consistently shown to reproduce hegemony, rather than allay it (Apple, 1980). We understand this was true before the COVID-19 pandemic, but having the temporary shift away from the school buildings as a potential locus of control offered a unique opportunity for educators and teacher educators to see exactly how potent traditional

hegemonic forms of schools really are and how resistant people at universities and schools can be in trying to maintain structures of schooling that have failed *by their own measures* (Kozleski, 2020). It is with these understandings that we read Dewey (1938) and considered previous self-studies of teacher education practices (S-STEP) that centered on Dewey and democratic renewal.

Perspectives From Previous Self-Studies

For us, a globally disruptive pandemic heightened the need for teacher educators to understand the past while moving forward. S-STEP supports teacher educators in understanding the complexities of learning to teach (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). In fact, our efforts were built on the premise that S-STEP research makes a difference in teacher education (Kosnik et. al., 2006). Previous S-STEP research has helped teacher educators address a variety of special challenges from navigating early career workload (e.g., Arizona Group, 1994) to moving through career transitions (e.g., Clift, 2010). There is S-STEP work documenting the difficulties with providing educational experiences to students (e.g., Kim et al., 2021).

Reading and re-reading works of educational philosophy during times of trouble can bring opportunities for reflection and renewal for faculty members (Wagner, 2020). There is specific precedent for using Dewey's (1938) ideas and conducting systematic readings of Dewey to learn about one's practice. For example, Ritter et al. (2008) used a Deweyan vision of teaching social studies in collaborating with teachers and experienced tension in the idea that counterproductive practices and ideas that emerge during practicum experiences can be useful for improving teachers' practice and in advancing democratic ideals where one has the right to make a mistake in learning and in teaching. Erickson and Young (2008) employed a similar framing where they tried to involve preservice teachers in policy decisions but found tension in what they perceived were professional obligations to use certain strategies and engage in specific routines. Their tension echoed Dewey-inspired (1938) understandings of democracy as a complicated task of embracing pluralism but tempered with some need for assimilation or standardization.

In another study, Cameron-Standerford et al. (2016) focused on learning from experience using Dewey (1938) as a framework. Pinnegar et al. (2012) read *Experience and Education* as a focal text to learn how Dewey's work built storied knowledge. We read Dewey to understand our initial response to the pandemic as teacher educators. Each of these groups has used *Experience and Education* as an anchor to both elicit stories for learning as well as question the stories that they had about teacher education practices.

Methods and Strategies

Our work demonstrated characteristics of self-study of teacher education practice (LaBoskey, 2004). It was self-initiated since we worked to connect Dewey's (1938) to our present circumstances; improvement-aimed as it sustained us in teaching as well as university service work for teacher preparation; interactive in the sense that we communicated regularly with each other to discuss the reading, tell stories, problem pose, and derive implications; primarily qualitative in its generation of data through dialogue and artifacts; and relied on exemplar-based validation where others can decide whether what we share resonates with their own experiences.

We discovered our mutual interest in understanding our current experience and using it to see forward in our practice at the S-STEP meet-up in May 2020. At that time, we invited a critical friend to help us think through the reading. Our critical friend suggested Dewey (1938) as a frame to support our reflection. Since we were both familiar with *Experience and Education* and we both thought it was important work, we accepted our colleagues' advice. We set a reading schedule and established initial questions. We met every two weeks over the next several months. During reading, we searched for quotations from the reading that we thought spoke directly to our concerns in the pandemic. For example, we were both struck by the word connectivity in Chapter Two. Dewey referenced connectivity in his theory of experience to say that learning must have a contextualized flow to it and that miseducative experience can be interesting but is often un-connected:

> *…[E]xperiences may be so disconnected to one another; Energy is then dissipated, and a person becomes scatterbrained. Each experience may be lively, vivid, and 'interesting' and yet their disconnectedness may artificially generate dispersive, disintegrated, centrifugal habits. (Dewey, 1938, p.26)*

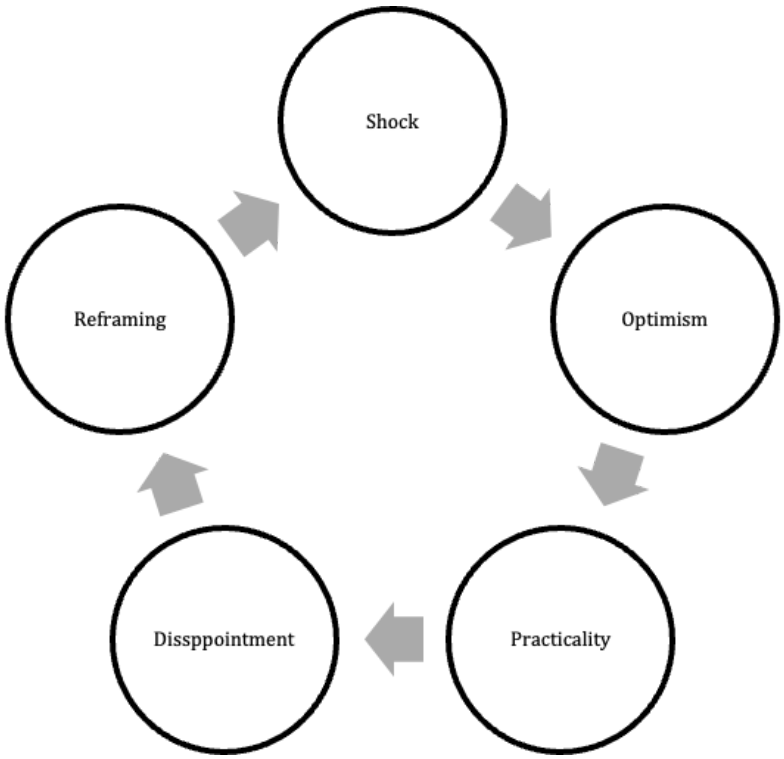
We cued the word connection as having multiple meanings. We understood it as conceptual linkages (resembling Dewey's original meaning) as well as digital access. We discussed what connected learning might mean in terms of establishing relationships online and providing threads in our instruction to acknowledge the current situation. We felt that all, if not most, of our curriculum would have to be recontextualized considering the present circumstances. Further, this dissipation and seeming scatterbrain-ness emerged for us as prescience for the current conversations about "learning loss"—whether there was such a thing, how learning across modalities offered different experiences of learning at home and school, what judgments are put on the outcomes of those experiences, and more. We thought about the inability to separate scatterbrained-ness from changing school experiences versus the pandemic and its economic and social upheaval. The pandemic—and all that came with it—was the "occasion."

We presented our work at an academic conference in the spring of 2021, which gave us the opportunity to reflect anew. During the summer, we met three additional times to compare our current experiences to the pattern we had established initially. Then, in the fall of 2021, we met twice to evaluate our experiences and understand what we could learn about the ongoing shifts in our teacher education practice through the pandemic.

We recorded the meetings we had using the features available in the video conferencing software that we used to meet. We maintained a running shared document of quotations we saved, our commentaries on it, and stories we told in relation to the reading. During data analysis, we highlighted and made comments on the document, re-watched our conversations, and made lists of major themes that were emerging and the evidence we gathered that supported that theme as such (Ní Chróinín et. al., 2015). We established the final themes by looking back at our research question and deciding which items from our lists were most useful in attending to our question. We shared these with our critical friend who provided additional feedback--not about whether our themes were "right," but about how to shape the language as we conveyed the theme. For example, we were using the word *recommendation* in much of our notes and the critical friend brought to our attention that Dewey used the word *suggestion*, and so we might want to be consistent with the term. Our findings revealed a cycle of initial shock, followed by optimism, practicality, and disappointment, and then we ended with reframing (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Initial Model of Our Responses

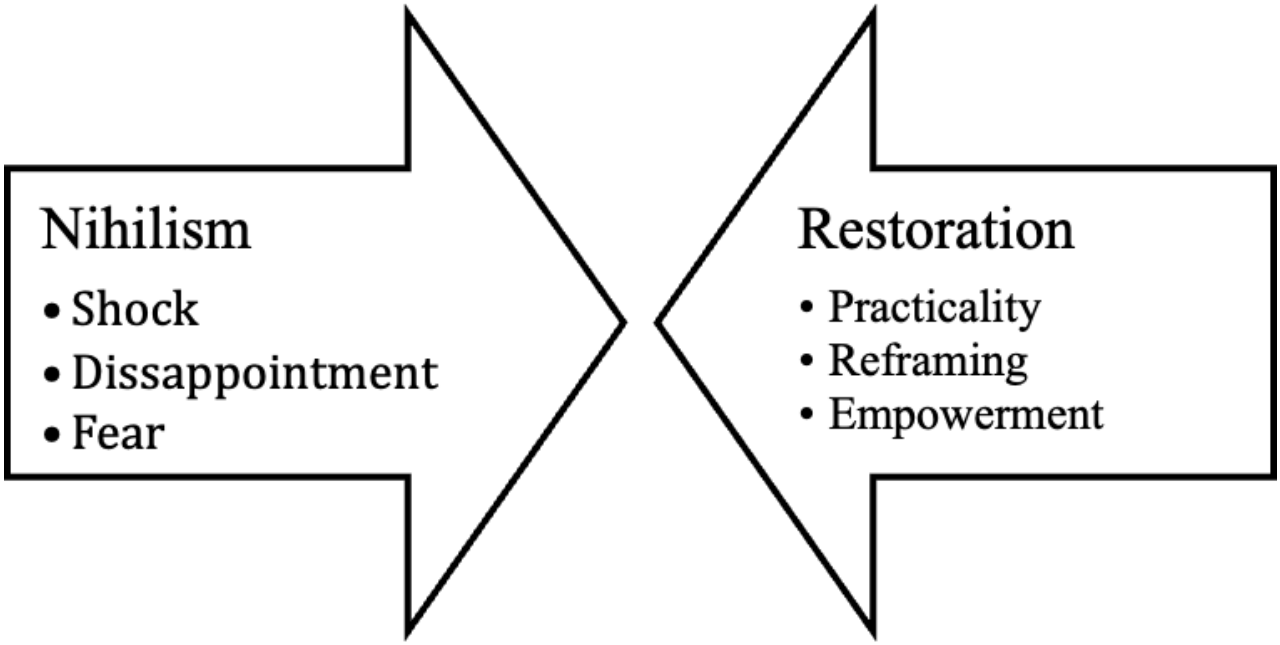


However, as the pandemic progressed, we saw that we had tried to map linearity using this model when we noticed that we were having experiences that were in fact, nonlinear in nature. Specifically, we thought about how shifting conditions at our institutions could 'snap' us out of our optimism and we would return to shock. We found that we might experience all these during a single faculty meeting or in a single interaction with practicing teachers. Such experiences are represented in previous self-study literature, where Strom et al. (2018) described the non-linear work of teacher education before the pandemic.

Our realizations about this brought additional thinking and analysis using the recordings of our meetings and artifacts we began to gather such as faculty schedules, notices from the universities, revised policies, and so forth. As we worked to re-read these documents, re-watch the recordings, and re-engage with Dewey (1938) we determined that our experiences were better represented as a non-linear model where we engage in restorative actions while at other times, we are simply coping better. We recognized this alongside a non-model for understanding grief (Schut, 1999). In this non-linear model of grief, the purpose was not to 'fix everything' but to move forward—the same admonition that Dewey (1938) touts; "A primary responsibility of educators is that they not only be aware of the general principle of the shaping of actual experience by environing conditions, but they also recognize in the concrete what surroundings are conducive to having experiences that lead to growth" (Dewey, 1938, p. 40). Figure 2 represents our non-linear model.

Figure 2

Non-Linear Model of Our Responses



Ultimately, we found the second model where we travel back and forth between restoration and nihilism in response to current pressures, was much more representative of what we did and then we were better able to generate findings that were centered in the democratic aspirations of Dewey (1938).

Findings

Throughout this work, we continued to consider the phrase from (1938) where Dewey noted that "Situation and interaction are inseparable from one another" (p. 43). In Dewey's thinking, experiences are constituted as a transaction that takes place between an individual and what, at the time, comprises their environment. We realized that the individual view of the transaction gave us pause because we found ourselves living collective and individual trauma that required collective and individual grief. We realized that *transaction* within an environment that seemed to be constantly

shifting might account for what was becoming an on-going, increasing discontentment with the inertia of teacher preparation at our institutions.

One example of this inertia was represented in re-applications for students who dropped out during the pandemic and wanted to return. Among our colleagues, there was a sense of trying to decide who "deserves" to return and who does not. We could see that these conversations were oriented toward trying to make decisions based solely on past circumstances using strategies for decision-making that reflected past priorities for admission. Mary asked Mark:

> *More than a dozen of my friends have died since 2020, and my father is ill and dying [he eventually did die in September 2021]. I was a remote worker and a remote teaching parent for most of 2020. I supported students and family members with COVID-19 and through disaster like when my oldest brother lost his business in a wildfire. At what point could I have said that I have been sufficiently impacted by the pandemic to 'deserve' to drop a ball or take some time away from work? I don't really want to make those judgments for students. Wouldn't the more democratic way be to think about what is needed to move forward? What I mean by that is: What do students and the program need to put in place to go on? Can those needs be met?*

Mark responded:

> *If our colleagues and institutions are unable to meet students, and our needs, what can we do ourselves? (Conversation, August 2021).*

In asking these questions, we see the possibilities for both coping and restoration. In a coping frame, Mary would support the work of qualifying the students without raising any issues. She might even build a heuristic of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" loss from the pandemic. Instead, she shared her thoughts with colleagues about what she felt were more democratic ways to address the influx of re-applications; but more, Mary was able to use her experience to come to the important conclusion that she did not have to justify her loss to the academy to feel that it was legitimate. When she realized this, she found she was able to be more responsive to students and sit in tension with them about her losses versus theirs. In another example, while we initially hoped for a radical rethinking of how teacher education could leverage online, in-person, and various structures of hybrid work, we realized our institutions were making it harder for instructors to make decisions without higher-level approvals and additional work on our part. To us, these decisions were made without attention to strong reasons to meet remotely (e.g., a guest speaker that needed to use video conferencing anyway).

In a coping framework based on nihilism, we might have just said “Well, I guess we will go back to all in person again”—and some days we did talk like that is what we were going to do. In a democratic frame based on restoration, we decided to participate in professional learning required by our institutions to teach online courses, ask questions, and find out how we could provide more practice. Mary did this because she had such good experiences working with adolescents visiting classes virtually during the pandemic, but also because she taught one of her classes in person and her preservice teachers asked questions about how to teach online and she found that what might be considered basic skills of using the chat function for participation—not the technical aspect of finding the chat box and typing, but the determining how and when to use chatting to instruct and/or foster engagement—and other pedagogical moves like connecting the class through cloud documents were unsteady in the preservice teachers' minds. While we realized there are more conversations to have about how to ensure digital learning opportunities are educative and meet students' goals, we found that continuing to believe in the possibilities while being honest about the potential for limitations was a restorative act that helped us want to keep doing teacher education.

Significance

Our research question was: How can we understand our responses to shifting conditions in teacher education so we can be sustained in our work during the COVID-19 pandemic? The answer is that while we tried to find a linear way to make sense of our responses to our experiences, we understand now that there is no reliable rhythm during an extended, on-going emergency and our institutions were ill-equipped and interested in innovation only on certain terms.

We realized how much we constantly engage in nihilistic coping in the face of dire teacher shortages in some communities and the on-going assaults on public education. Yet, we still have work to do as teacher educators.

We realized that going back to go forward again, which was Dewey's (1938) view of history, does not always mean going very far back after all. We can use what teacher candidates have learned so far about teaching in troubled times to draw them through the rest of their preparation. For ourselves, we realized part of the reason we could not get a strong footing in being positive was because Dewey's (1938) fears that materialist values are a threat to education in a transformational democracy really resonate with us and so unless there is a strong movement toward reckoning within our social institutions, we will likely persist with some skepticism of whether real change can occur. However, we can enjoy renewal as Mary did when she had such a good experience going and working with a class of young people who were delightfully surprised that they could learn something about writing from each other while they were not all in the same room and working to use digital tools. Further, some of that renewal can be vicarious as Mark enjoys Mary's report and in turn, relays restorative stories to her about successes he has had while supervising prospective teachers at his institution.

Making our framework and then un-making to reflect a non-linear outlook taught us about loss and how it is constructed within our communities, institutions, and ourselves. First, we co-constructed an understanding of the pandemic as a change in circumstances and diversion of experience, rather than merely a subtraction of one thing from another. We learned about the contextual nature of loss as schools moved back to in-person learning; instead of enthusiasm and deep participation from our students who—according to some colleagues—would be overjoyed to be in our physical midst, many students were upset by what was now a new set of perceived losses: choices of when to do classwork, money used to pay for parking, and lost time with children and loved ones while they were now in a physical classroom. In materialist framing this makes sense. Losses and non-gains are more easily perceived than non-losses and gains in economics (Idson et al., 2000). Now that students and instructors have had the experience of learning online, it will not matter in what modality learning is done. As teacher educators, we will nihilistically notice the losses or non-gains more easily, and it is up to all of us to restoratively locate the gains and the non-losses.

Further, since doing this work, the country of Ukraine was invaded, inflation worldwide soared for a period, and there were unpreceded assaults on civil rights in the United States and beyond. Democracy in teacher education and education is not a passive state of being. To be democratic in our context requires us to seek nuance in making decisions that are both restorative and nihilistic. We do not think it is useful to think of ourselves as vessels of Grace to students and colleagues. A vessel of Grace will eventually be drained. Instead, we take encouragement from Dewey, who stated, "…attentive care must be devoted to the conditions which give each present experience a worthwhile meaning" (p.49). Rather than short-term nihilistic coping decisions, we desire to prioritize strategies for restorative practices with the understanding that we will likely have to use these strategies over and over.

Finally, we emphasize the value of S-STEP methodology learning from our experiences as we navigate difficult times. In moving this work through various stages with feedback from audiences and reviewers in the community we were able to break free of the linear approach we had initially conceptualized because our community thoughtfully engaged in our work. In the future, we look to position ourselves as members of a community and contribute to peace. Instead of pouring out our energy, we point ourselves forward.

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Testimonio Pedagogy on the Borderlands in Teacher Education

Breaking Open Spaces to Let the Light In

Mia Sosa-Provencio, Helena Omaña Zapata, Jackie Cusimano, & Ybeth Iglesias

Self-Study | Testimonio Student-centered Inquiry | Co-designed Curriculum | Youth Multiliteracies | Educational Justice

New Mexico bears a unique history wherein Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache Peoples have, since time immemorial, been stewards of the land and are its intergenerational inheritors. Since 16th century European conquest, histories of Indigenous and Mexican/Mexican American groups have intersected, merged, diverged, and clashed. But while Indigenous and Nuevomexicana/o communities date back millennia and five centuries respectively here, their land, languages, lifeways, histories, and spiritualities have been silenced, invalidated, and targeted for erasure and their children mentally, spiritually, and physically harmed within public schooling. Building a more hopeful, humane pedagogy in the borderlands means recognizing that higher education pedagogy must not only heal the wounds of U.S. schooling; it also must bring us together across difference and distance to foster shared humanity and create learning spaces that are rich, challenging, and lifegiving. Nationally, over 80% of U.S. pre-service/in-service educators are White and monolingual. While the makeup of our teacher education students is much more diverse, the dominant model of teacher preparation is still steeped in Eurocentric epistemologies. We utilize the arts-based self-study methodology of tapestry poetry to more deeply understand the ways in which one student-centered inquiry centering the Latin American narrative genre Testimonio in teacher preparation unearthed our own difficult narratives of schooling at intersections of race, class, gender, language/dialect, and citizenship and ultimately transformed us. Through Testimonios inquiry, we cultivated space wherein future educators were supported to foster their multiple literacies of resilience, resistance, self-love and their creativity to design curriculum around youth literacies, lives, and community wealth.

Introduction

Pedagogy on the borderlands means sharing classrooms with hungry ghosts…In my graduate studies [classrooms]…I find myself pointing to the ground. "You're living in the colonies…This land has been covered in blood for hundreds of years…This is where our classrooms rest["]…I hope for a pedagogy on the borderlands that can house the irrational, the angry, the tears, alongside the philosophical and analytical… dealing with hungry ghosts requires nothing short of every source of knowledge we possess. [It]… is a place of possibility…where our diverse, hybrid bodies, and the generations of "warring ancestors" inside them, sit in rooms together and might just deal with the dead... (Pendleton Jiménez, 2006, pp. 225-226).

New Mexico bears a unique history wherein Pueblo, Navajo, and Apache Peoples have, since time immemorial, been stewards of the land and are its intergenerational inheritors. Since 16th century European conquest, the histories of Indigenous[1] and Mexican/Mexican American groups have intersected, merged, diverged, and clashed with Spanish conquistadores and colonists and their subsequent descendants, *Nuevomexicana/os* and *Mexicana/os*[2]. But while Indigenous and Nuevomexicana/o communities date back millennia and nearly five centuries respectively, their land, languages, lifeways, histories, and spiritualities have been stolen/co-opted, silenced, invalidated, and targeted for erasure, and their children mentally, spiritually, and physically harmed by public schooling (Blum Martínez & López, 2020; Gonzales-Berry & Maciel, 2003; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006; Martinez, 2010; Suina, 1985). Today, people of color comprise the numerical majority (U.S. Census, 2019); in K-12 district schools, 76% of students are people of color including 61% Hispanic, 10% Indigenous, 2% Black, and 1% Asian (New Mexico Voices for Children, 2020). Despite their numerical majority status, people of color in New Mexico struggle to find economic, social, and educational justice. Today, New Mexico ranks 50th overall in child wellness (New Mexico Voices for Children, 2020), a statistic disproportionately impacting low-income communities of color. The courts have also documented sociopolitical inequities. In 2018, the New Mexico Supreme Court found the State failed its constitutional mandate to equitably educate Indigenous children, English learners, children with disabilities, and socioeconomically disadvantaged children (nmpovertylaw.org). While this ruling was contextualized within New Mexico's K-12 education, it has implications for educational transformation at all levels. Within histories of educational and social injustice, education students are not simply those who will *one day serve* future students—they are also *among those who have been impacted*.

This chapter highlights the self-study in teacher education project we engaged in one required licensure course to better serve our own (under)graduate students of color, those with disabilities, and our multinational, multilingual students who have likewise been shaped amid the struggle for educational justice. We highlight that the educational, economic, mental, emotional, and physical health that students in higher education work to maintain within an often unwell system has been further harmed by the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated social isolation and disenfranchisement. For teacher preparation students and educators, building a hopeful, humane, socially just pedagogy *in the borderlands* (Delgado Bernal, 2006; Pendleton Jiménez, 2006) means recognizing that higher education pedagogy must not only heal wounds of U.S. schooling as colonization in New Mexico (Blum Martínez & López, 2020; Gonzales-Berry & Maciel, 2003; Martinez, 2010; Sosa-Provencio & Sánchez, 2020; Suina, 1985); it also must bring students and educators together across difference and distance to foster our shared humanity and create learning spaces that are loving, challenging, critical, and life-giving (Hamilton, 2021).

Background of Our Self-Study: Fall 2015 - 2020

Nationally, over 80% of pre-service and in-service educators are White and English-dominant (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). While the makeup of the teacher education students at our Southwest institution is much more diverse (49.5% Hispanic, 5.4% Native American, 2.1% Black/African American, 1.3% Asian, and 36.7% White), program faculty navigate the fact that the dominant teacher preparation model—despite geography or demographics—is steeped in Eurocentric epistemologies (Blum Martínez & López, 2020; Rendón, 2009; Valenzuela, 2016). To contend with these realities, Mia, a bilingual Nuevomexicana teacher educator, worked to fashion a "pedagogy of possibility" (Delgado Bernal, 2006) by designing a required course into what came to be called the Testimonio Curriculum Lab. Together with high school youth, university students integrated the Latin American narrative genre *Testimonio*—first-person antiracist, womanist narratives unearthing critical consciousness and the resistance/resilience of especially Black and Indigenous Latina/o/x communities; Testimonio honors and integrates silenced intellectual legacies, languages, land connectedness, and embodied knowing across time and space (Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Menchú, 1984/1997). Course curriculum paired Testimonio with pedagogical framework expanding dominant notions of literacy to include multiple literacies ("multiliteracies") (Beach et al., 2010) to encapsulate the many ways that diverse youth make sense of and navigate multiple worlds. Between the fall of 2015 and spring of 2020, high school youth worked alongside undergraduate and graduate students to plan, teach, and evaluate student-centered, culturally relevant curricula. Through weekly lessons, youth highlighted their lived realities, schooling experiences, and visions for transformation through photography, original artwork, musical lyrics, memes, spoken word poetry, journal entries, photo collages, and excerpts of published Testimonios. Over time, their writings were anonymized, compiled, and set aside for future use.

Student-Centered Testimonio Inquiry in Teacher Education: Fall 2020

In the fall of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic prohibited our high school work and moved us online. In line with LaBoskey and Richert (2015) who assert the power of situating teachers to engage inquiry and self-reflection, Mia designed a student-centered inquiry project around the youth writing packets (which came to be called 'data packets') in order that she and her students—overwhelmingly multilingual students of color—could more deeply understand schooling experiences and multiliteracies of marginalized youth and how to build pedagogies for educational justice in future classrooms.

Our inquiry forged a space wherein pre-service students, including we three graduate student authors who were enrolled students and co-teachers, could engage our own knowing, embodied experiences, and curiosities as largely students of color to build something more hopeful and engaging than what the dominant model of schooling offered. It is this fall 2020 student-centered inquiry and *our own practice as teacher educators therein* that provide the context of our self-study.

Objectives

We utilize the arts-based self-study methodology "tapestry poetry" (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022) to more deeply understand the capacity of student-centered Testimonio inquiry in teacher preparation. By centering our own difficult narratives of schooling at intersections of race, class, gender, language/dialect, citizenship, and geography, we were transformed as educators. This chapter conveys the Findings of one self-study conducted at a large R1 institution in the Southwest by one professor and three graduate students who led and participated in this inquiry. Our four-person research/writing group includes Mia, a Chicana/Nuevomexicana Associate Professor of teacher education; two doctoral students, Ybeth, a Mexicana female early childhood educator, and Jackie, a White female secondary educator; and Helena, a Mexicana female Master's student studying antiracist literacy education.

We utilize the methodology of Self-Study in Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) to more deeply understand and disseminate how—in our process of centering the knowledge and experience of undergraduate students who are *themselves* living and learning amid contested sociopolitical identities—we four shared our own complex identities and intergenerational knowledge. In so doing, we broke open a radical space of belonging for our students, ourselves, and our own generations and ways of being which converged around our working class, bilingual, White and Mexicana, and (future) teacher educator identities.

Theoretical Framework

We position research as a sacred undertaking wherein mind/body/spirit, land situatedness, and theoretical/methodological/epistemological framing live in reciprocal relationship to each other. We situate self-study within a decolonizing womanist-centered framework of Testimonio (Díaz Soto et al., 2009; Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Levins Morales' (2001) work on Testimonio illuminates the symbiosis of knowledge, body, and land as *homemade theory—organic material to which the earth still clings* which is best fashioned *out of our shared lives* (p. 28). We not only work to unearth our own *organic intellectual soil* but likewise to expose and disentangle the colonial trappings of teaching and research conducted in marginalized communities. We utilize our theoretical framework to challenge and remember how we ourselves approach knowing—with attention to place, our positionalities, and the communities to whom our work belongs and serves now and in the future (Hamilton, 2021). To achieve theory that is embodied, justice-oriented, and feminist, we center the beauty and knowledge of our female generations and build upon the wisdom of our own marginalized communities. Through self-study, we aim to understand how we worked with students in the fall of 2020 to make theory "out of the stuff in our pockets, out of the stories, incidents, dreams, frustrations that were never acceptable anywhere else" (Levins Morales, 2001, p. 32) and the implications this has for teacher education.

Literature Review

According to Delgado Bernal (2006), the 'U.S. borderlands' is a geographic, emotional, and psychological space Indigenous and Mexican/Mexican Americans of blended Indigenous, African, and European ancestry have occupied for eons and centuries respectively even as they have been denigrated and cast as 'foreign other' by European and U.S. imperialism. Since the 1893 inception of U.S. public schooling and its contested institutionalization in New Mexico

(1893-1910), it has been one of the most powerful weapons of colonization and imperialism, utilizing Eurocentric curriculum and pedagogies aimed at social reproduction, cultural erasure, and the silencing of diverse histories and knowing (Blum Martínez & López, 2020; Kliebard, 2004; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2006). Herein, Western frameworks of knowledge—including ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies which undergird teaching, learning, and inquiry at all levels including higher education—are steeped in a *Eurocentric cognitive imperialism* that engages knowledge as "Other" and bears no reciprocal commitment to either the knowledge produced or the communities from which it emanates. Though Battiste and Henderson (2000) write the following to illuminate Indigenous students' experience with *cognitive imperialism*, students of color across identities often likewise experience White dominant schooling as,

> *looking into a still lake and not seeing their reflections….They become alien in their own eyes, unable to recognize themselves in the reflections and shadows of the world. In the same way that Eurocentric thought stripped their grandparents and parents of their wealth and dignity, this realization strips modern Indigenous students of their heritage and identity. It gives them awareness of their annihilation (p. 88).*

In order to disempower this emotional/psychological/physical detriment, especially for Indigenous, indigenous heritage Mexican/Mexican American students and all marginalized communities in this Southwest borderland, educators at all levels may adopt pedagogies of *healing and possibility* which center the identities and knowledge gained by those who navigate power and privilege while occupying multiple worlds (Delgado Bernal, 2006; Pendleton Jiménez, 2006). Adopting a "pedagogy on the borderlands" across educational institutions and particularly in higher education taps into the knowledge centers of those who straddle the space between nations, racialized identities, languages, sexualities, and spiritualities. A pedagogy on the borderlands accesses the wisdom of the diverse Peoples, including, "subtle acts of resistance…negotiating, struggling, or embracing their bilingualism, biculturalism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities" (Delgado Bernal, 2006, p. 115). Within underserved communities in particular, educators must invite students to bring their whole selves into the classroom—to disempower Eurocentric frameworks and forge belonging for the multitudinous nature of their being-ness. So doing disrupts, "neat separations between cultures…[by] tearing apart and then rebuilding the *place* itself. The border is a locus of resistance, of rupture, of implosion and explosion [formed by] putting together the fragments and creating a new assemblage" (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 49). One approach to this healing, resistant, affirming, and collective pedagogy on the borderlands is *Testimonio*.

Testimonio narrative originated in Latin America's African, Indigenous, and female struggles against erasure and brutality; it gives voice to painful events at the intersections of race/ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexuality, and residency status and honors marginalized peoples' experiences, collective ancestral knowledge, and consciousness-raising (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Menchú, 1984/1997). Because of the capacity that Testimonio has to trouble power inequities, its practice within academia as pedagogy, epistemology, and methodology enables women of color particularly to usurp the hegemony of Western academic knowledge situated as truth (Cervantes-Soon, 2012) and brings consciousness to anti-oppressive work (Delgado Bernal et al. 2012). Testimonio as a pedagogical approach and research methodology in teacher education signifies not only a tool for change but change itself. Testimonio situates critical educators and students of color to lead the charge to design healing spaces within academia and fosters belonging for knowledge and wisdom gained within communities that experience historical and ongoing traumas and engage collective resistance/resilience and continue to build hope. Through Testimonio pedagogy, the teacher education classroom becomes a space wherein "the personal becomes political, and knowledge and theory are generated and materialized through experience…As the narrator tells [their] story, [they] break the silence, negotiate contradictions, and recreate new identities beyond the fragmentation, shame, and betrayal brought about by oppression, colonization, and patriarchy" (Cervantes-Soon 2012, p. 374). We engage in this study because, as Peercy and Sharkey (2020) note, "[little] attention has been paid to the ways in which the teacher educator's social, personal, and professional practices and identities interact with and affect learning experiences in their classrooms and programs" (p. 111). Testimonio as pedagogy and methodology breaks open spaces wherein *She*, where *They*, the organic intellectual within each of us (Levins Morales, 2001), including teacher educators, may find the *means to agitate and disrupt the un-wellness of our educational institutions and (re)incarnate more joyful, hopeful alternative* (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Testimonio pedagogy and research methodology allow teacher educators to reflect on their own positionalities and the inequitable systems which may perpetuate cognitive imperialism. It enables students, especially

students of color, to center ancestral knowing emanating from experience and the wholeness of their being. Ultimately, Testimonio transforms educational spaces into, “sites of organic healing, critical consciousness, and agency” (Cervantes-Soon 2012, p. 373).

Methodology

We utilize a Self-Study Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) methodology encompassing *narrative, autoethnography, self-study, life history, phenomenology,* and *action research* to expose and challenge our most deeply held beliefs as educators as well as dominant Eurocentric approaches of teacher education to bring about antiracism, educational justice, and healing (Pinnegar & Hamilton 2009, p. 70). The narrative portion of this self-study comes through our use of the antiracist feminist narrative approach of Testimonio which was both the pedagogical and methodological foundation of our original student-centered inquiry project. This methodological pairing within S-STEP enables us as teacher educators to not only “uncover ways in which [we] participate in racism, paternalism, or sexism…” (Pinnegar & Hamilton 2009, p. 58); it highlights our strengths and knowledge sites as women, scholars, and predominantly female teacher educators of color who *ourselves* are the inheritors of these pedagogies of resistance, resilience, and transformation amid histories of oppression.

Data Collection

We utilize and expand upon "found poetry" (Edge & Olan, 2021) as data collection which “borrow[s] words from existing texts and then arrange those words to create an original poem” (p. 230). We began in the fall of 2022 by writing one poem formed by sampling, remixing, and blending excerpts of, 1) our own researcher journals during the fall of 2020, 2) transcribed research conversations over two years, 3) snippets of anonymized youth data, and stitched these excerpts together with 4) new threads of our reflective "today voice" speaking through self-study. Our "today voice" added context, filled gaps, and enriched the poem with contemporary insights. By weaving that which is "found" with that which is "freshly made," we established a hindsight vantage point and likewise bound our present self—*She* today, to *We* then who worked to make meaning of curriculum, pedagogy, and youth Testimonios. Our individual poems written as data collection during this present study conveys our experiences in the fall of 2020, our own social justice commitments and pedagogies, and growing understandings surrounding ourselves as educators.

Data Analysis

During one particular two-hour in-person focus group meeting, we each brought four printed copies of our newly written poems and handed them out to all members of the research team until each member had a packet of all four poems which were color-coded according to author/researcher. Silently and individually at first, we utilized highlighters to underscore lines in our poetry packet that were particularly salient across the four poems. We utilized scissors to cut out the highlighted excerpts from our four-poem packet. We then shared our findings and discussed the meaning our text selections had for us, for understanding our learning space, and what implications these had for teaching and teacher education. We reserved a space on the table for our paper strip excerpts and formed piles of excerpts that we decided were especially meaningful and likewise, those which were repeatedly selected. We discussed each pile, including data excerpts that were most thematically salient, and threaded these poetry strips into a larger tapestry poem (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022). In the sacred space between us, we created one large tapestry poem which, 1) captured shared experience as students and teacher educators during fall 2020, 2) wrestled with our tensions in the field as women and educators, and 3) revealed the blending and bending of our *knowing—our epistemology of practice* as teacher educators (Martin & Russell, 2020).

This process of collective poetic artmaking as data collection, analysis, and demonstration of Findings (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022) became an act of *polyvocality* transcending the voice of one member. It underscored a larger unified though multitudinous knowing, brought a chorus of consciousness together, and centered creativity and play in analysis (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022). This process gave way to a deep and multilayered knowing that, as female scholars, is often left at the 'doors of schooling' (Levins Morales, 2001). Together, we braided our historical and contemporary voices within our distinct poems and brought our writings together as an exhibition on one canvas which Helena later painted as an extension of the joyful criticality which was this work.

Trustworthiness

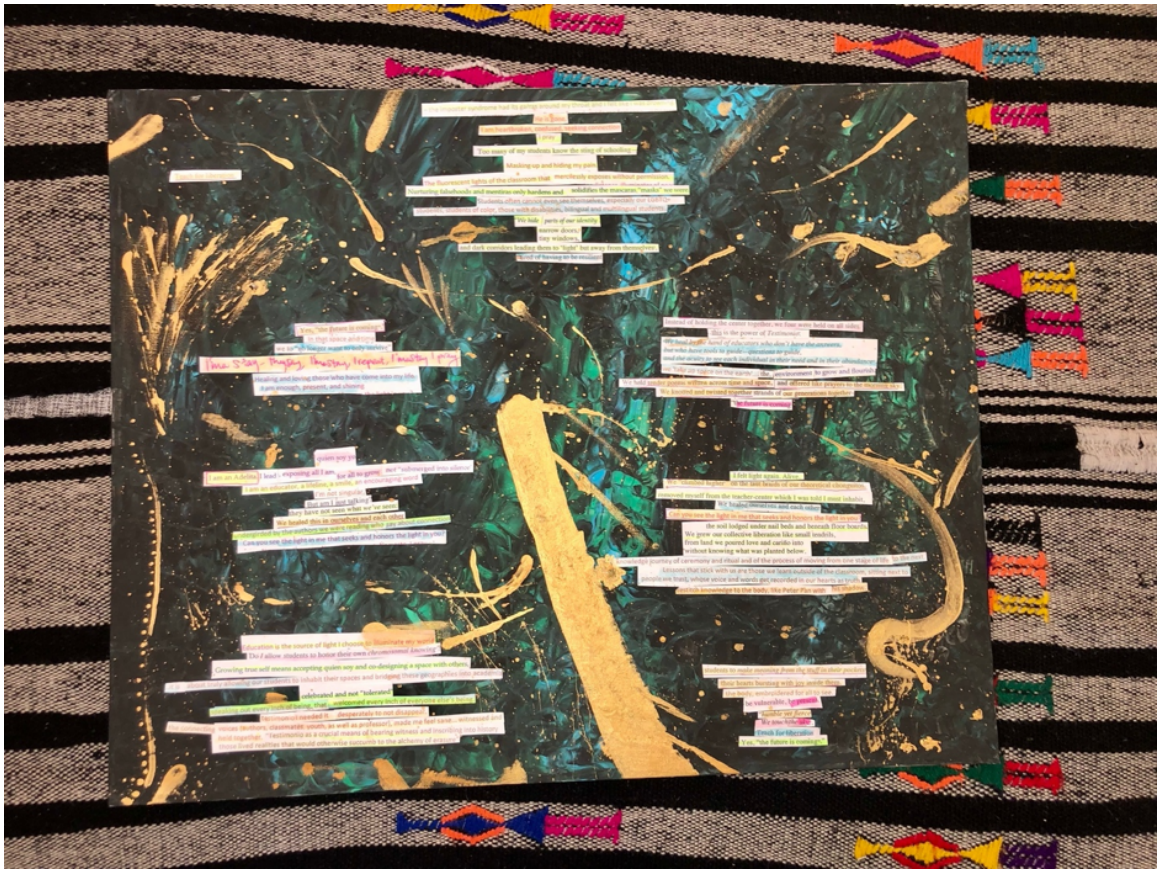
As Luttrell (2010) notes, seeking new kinds of knowledge requires advanced and multilayered methodologies and novel, expansive approaches to "validity" which include *reliability, trustworthiness,* and *reciprocity* at all stages. Our chronologically fluid tapestry poetry methodology borrows from Hamilton's (2021) *looking back to move forward* approach in order to more deeply understand the "intricate, complex and evolving patterns and experiences within the ever-changing educational field of teacher education" (p. 209). We expand upon Hamilton's (2021) *looking back* analytical approach to *move and speak and write forward as well.* Through poetic weaving of *past and present voices*, our selves of today communed with each other and our yesteryear selves as poets and critical friends, as *comadres*, female co-mother kindred spirits committed to antiracist, empowering, and womanist ways of knowing (Trinidad Galván, 2015).

Findings

As 13th century poet Rumi writes, "the wound is the place where light may enter." This self-study reveals the transformational power of pedagogically integrating our own intergenerational narratives of (im)migration, gendered oppression, racial/linguistic Othering, assimilation/cultural erasure, as well as the wisdom emanating from our spiritualities, cross-group working-class tenacity, matrilineal traditions of resistance/resilience, and mind/body/spirits as female educators teaching and living "in the colonies" (Pendleton Jiménez, 2006). This tapestry poem—woven from our newly-authored and thematically selected phrases—demonstrates how vulnerability and mind/body/spirit knowing became our most sacred offering to the teacher education classroom (see Appendix for transcription and color-coded analysis).

Figure 1

Tapestry Poem, Teaching for Liberation: The Future is Coming



While the first stanza utilizes, "garras [claws] around my throat…I am heartbroken," "hiding my pain," "mercilessly expose," "narrow doors, tiny windows," and "mentiras [lies]" to express the darkness, lovelessness, and restriction of

White dominant schooling, the second and third sections offer healing and light in response. The reader will note themes of not only 1) *pain* but also 2) *collectivity, reclamation*, 3) *land/soil/body connection*, and 4) *teaching as sacred ceremony of hope*. While each is important, we explore these last two themes—3) *land/soil/body connection*, and 4) *teaching as sacred ceremony of hope*—in detail.

Theme 3: Land/Soil/Body Connection

In section two and increasingly in section three, themes of land/body connection and flourishing are visible within pedagogical language:

> *chromosomal knowing*
>
> *Growing true self*
>
> *bridging…geographies into academia*
>
> *We 'take up space on the earth'*
>
> *grow and flourish.*
>
> *strands of our generations—*
>
> *soil lodged under nail beds…*
>
> *we grew our collective liberation like small tendrils*
>
> *Re-stitch knowledge to the body*
>
> *… embroidered for all to see.*

In these words, we tap into land rootedness and embodied, inherited knowing to open spaces of belonging for students' emotional/psychological wisdom and the layers of history which live within our generations and our very cells (Delgado Bernal, 2006). Our collective poem reveals that growth and connection live at the center of our collective pedagogy and that our commitments to integrating land and body epistemologies are likewise at the heart of the next theme we detail *teacher education as sacred practice*.

Theme 4: Teaching as Sacred Ceremony of Hope

In section one, *prayer, sacred ceremony*, and *hope* peek through the cracks between pain and restriction with the words, "seeking connection" and "I pray". By section two, evidence of this theme grows:

> *the future is coming*
>
> *I'ma stay, I pray*
>
> *Healing and loving*
>
> *shining*
>
> *we healed this*
>
> *source of light…illuminate my world.*
>
> *witnessed and held together*

By section three, this same *hope as sacred ritual* nearly eclipses how we express the essence of our work:

> *we held tender poems…*
>
> *…offered like prayers to the morning sky.*

We "climbed higher"

healed ourselves.

journey of ceremony and ritual

recorded in our hearts as truth.

"humble yet fierce,

we touch the sky"

Yes, "the future is coming".

In these lines, teaching as ceremony reverberates and illuminates our shared ethic of teacher education practiced as love, healing, radical belonging, social justice, and flourishing. We honored ancestral knowing, distinctly embodied identities, ancestral and personal resistance, and our "humble yet fierce" hearts as antiracist educational practitioners.

Discussion

Centering pre-service educators' knowing and curiosity within inquiry is, "challenging, emotionally taxing, and at times risky…[with] no easy answers" (Taylor & Diamond, 2020, p. 4). Through self-study, we came to understand the role of our own vulnerability and educational striving within the Testimonio Curriculum Lab and the potential our work has for fortifying teacher education as transformation. This self-study renewed and enlivened our professional purpose (LaBoskey & Richert, 2015), reminding us to approach through intergenerational experience and mind/body/spirit essence.

By the light of our students' Testimonios and our own, we hallowed the ground. Together, we explored the ills of assimilationist epistemologies in dominant schooling and gave space to the multitude of organic *remedios* we each bring. By enacting Testimonios as antiracist, womanist critical consciousness in inquiry, we cultivated a landscape wherein future educators are supported to foster multiple literacies of resilience, collectivity, belonging, and self-love as well as curricular creativity to design social justice curriculum around youth multiliteracies and community wealth.

Vulnerability and joy—including the sheer messiness bursting through our multicolored creation—were/are essential to educational justice (LaBoskey & Richert, 2015). These findings convey Testimonios' resistant, healing potency to expose and challenge racism, xenophobia, queerphobia, sexism, ableism, and erasure of the especially female body and to live out the full power of voice and cultural knowledge in academia. By exploring familial narratives, vulnerability, and hopeful dreaming in teacher education, we alongside our students could "bear witness to each other" and ultimately "touch the sky".

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Appendix A

Tapestry Poem: Teach for Liberation: The Future is Coming

[Section One: Located at top middle]

…the imposter syndrome has its *garras* [claws] around my throat
He is gone,
I am heartbroken, confused, seeking connection[3].
I pray.
Too many of my students know the sting of schooling—
masking up and hiding my pain.
The fluorescent lights of the classroom that mercilessly expose
without permission.

Nurturing falsehoods and *mentiras* [lies]
only hardens and solidifies the mascaras, "masks" we wear.
Students often cannot even see themselves,
especially our LGBTQ+ students, students of color, those with disabilities,
bilingual and multilingual students…
We hide parts of our identity[4]
narrow doors,
tiny windows,
and dark corridors leading them to 'light'
but away from themselves-
tired of having to be resilient.

[Section Two: Located on left-hand-side]

Yes, "the future is coming[5]"
In that space and time
We, too, "no longer want to only survive"
I'ma stay—they say—I'ma stay, I repeat, I'ma stay, I pray
Healing and loving those who have come into my life.
I am enough, present, and shining.

quien soy yo [who am I]

I am an Adelita[6]. I lead, exposing all I am for all to grow,
not "submerged into silence"
I am an educator, a lifeline, a smile, an encouraging word
I'm not singular.
But am I just talking?
They have not seen what we've seen:
We healed this in ourselves and each other.
undergirded by the authors we were reading
who say that about connection.
Can you see the light in me that seeks and honors the light in you?

Education is the source of light I choose to illuminate my world.
Do I allow students to honor their own chromosomal knowing?
Growing true self means accepting *quien soy* [who I am]
and co-designing a space with others,
…it is about truly allowing our students to inhabit their spaces
and bridging these geographies into academia
celebrated and not "tolerated"
speaking out every inch of being,
that welcomed every inch of everyone else's being
testimonio I needed it desperately to not disappear.
The connecting voices (authors, classmates, youth, as well as professor),
made me feel sane…
witnessed and held together.
"Testimonio as a crucial means of bearing witness and inscribing into history
those lived realities that would otherwise succumb to the alchemy of erasure"

[Section Three: Located on right-hand-side]

Instead of holding the center together, we four were held on all sides.
this is the power of *Testimonio*.

We heal by the hand of educators who don't have the answers,
but who have the tools to guide—questions to guide,
and the acuity to see each individual in their need and in their abundance.
We 'take up space on the earth'…the environment to grow and flourish.
We held tender poems written across time and space,
and offered like prayers to the morning sky.
We knotted and twisted together strands of our generations—

“the future is coming”
I felt light again. Alive.
We “climbed higher” on the taut braids of our theoretical *chonguitos*
removed myself from the teacher-center which I was told I must inhabit,
We healed ourselves and each other.
Can you see the light in me that seeks and honors the light in you?
the soil lodged under nail beds and beneath floor boards.
We grew our collective liberation like small tendrils,
from land we poured love and *cariño* [warm, responsive caring] into
without knowing what was planted below.
knowledge journey of ceremony and ritual and the process of moving
from one stage of life to the next.
Lessons that stick with us are those we learn outside the classroom,
sitting next to people we trust,
whose voice and words get recorded in our hearts as truth.
Re-stitch knowledge to the body, like Peter Pan with his shadow.

students…make meaning *from the stuff in their pockets*
their hearts bursting with joy inside them.
the body, embroidered for all to see.
be vulnerable, be present.

“humble yet fierce,
we touch the sky”

Teach for liberation
Yes, “the future is coming”

Thematic coding key:

Pain, restriction

Collectivity

Resistance, reclamation.

Sacred, affirming, healing, hopeful

Organic, land/soil, body connected

[1] We use the term 'Indigenous' to describe New Mexico's Native American communities, individuals, and languages—this nomenclature was selected for its common usage by Indigenous scholars in this place. We use 'Native American' only when sources list it as demographic designation.

[2] To name New Mexico's Spanish-speaking People(s) of blended Indigenous, African, and Spanish ancestry formed within Spain's 16th century conquest of Mexico and present-day Southwest, we utilize the geographically and culturally specific term 'Nuevomexicana/o'. We use the broader term 'Mexicana/o' (encompassing Mexican/Mexican American families arriving in the 20th century and long standing Nuevomexicana/o communities) to name the entirety of New Mexico's Spanish-speaking population. The term 'Hispanic' is used only when citing demographic designations in governmental reports.

[3] Jackie's reflection written in response to a former high school student of hers who committed suicide.

[4] High school youth data

[5] High school youth data

[6] Female soldiers during the Mexican Revolution—symbolic and literal figures of female strength, community protection, solidarity.

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Reading the Room

Teacher Literacy Education Pedagogy and Its Potential at the Threshold of a Pandemic

Mona Beth Zignego & Kathleen M. Sellers

Care Theory | Third Space Theory | Teacher Literacy Education | Professional Development | Formative Assessment

Providing high quality content in literacy for in-service teachers is an essential element of student success. This qualitative self-study used third space theory to investigate, in the context of the recent pandemic, the components that inform how literacy content can best be facilitated for in-service teachers. The results of this inquiry concurred with existing understandings of successful teacher literacy education, which indicate teacher educator expertise and content knowledge impact teacher learning. The findings add to existing knowledge by drawing linkages between informal, formative assessment of audio-visual cues, typical of in-person instruction but absent from most virtual instruction, and the teacher educator's experience of care (Noddings, 2003). Crossing the threshold from in-person to remote instruction made necessary the reenvisioning of informal formative assessment in teacher literacy education, a process which deepened the teacher literacy educator's experience of care, thereby allowing her to facilitate literacy content during the pandemic.

Context of the study

There has never been a time in history when literacy skills are needed to the degree they are in the world today, yet the National Report Card scores appear to indicate that America's schools are failing to equip students with essential literacy skills, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019, 2022). Research has shown that in-service teachers are an important element impacting student outcomes, and investing in teacher education can improve student proficiency (Chetty et al., 2011; Du Four et al., 2021; Goodwin & Rouleau, 2023). To teach literacy effectively, in-service teachers need to be masters of literacy content, and knowledgeable about theory, practice, and pedagogy (Muhammad, 2020). Thus, an important factor contributing to students' positive literacy outcomes is teacher literacy education (Clark et al., 2016; Eisner, 1992; Moeller, 2005; Stronge, 2018), especially for marginalized students (Muhammad, 2020).

Teaching in-service educators is different from teaching students in classrooms (Zeichner, 2005). To facilitate learning for in-service teachers, teacher literacy educators (TLEs) require content knowledge, as well as affective qualities like trust building, honesty, valuing teacher autonomy, reflection, and the courage to take risks (Loughran, 2006). Other than the above understandings for TLEs, there is no agreement internationally about the best pedagogy for TLEs to use to facilitate the learning of in-service teachers. Accordingly, further research in this area is needed (Swennen & Van der Klink, 2009).

One of the researchers in this study, Mona, is a TLE, working with in-service teachers at multiple schools across several large school districts in the American Midwest. She relies heavily on relationships, participant engagement, reflection, and literacy knowledge to facilitate in-service teacher literacy content. As part of Mona's TLE practice, we understand the facilitation of literacy content to refer to whole group professional development presentations of literacy information for licensed, in-service teachers working in K-12 classrooms, and we use the terms "in-service teachers," "teachers," and "participants" interchangeably. Mona works daily with teacher literacy education. She has long employed self-study to improve her instructional practice. When the pandemic hit, it required rethinking her pedagogy, which developed over twenty-five years of classroom teaching experience. This paper describes the challenges faced and lessons learned as this practitioner-researcher crossed this pedagogical threshold.

Aim/Objectives

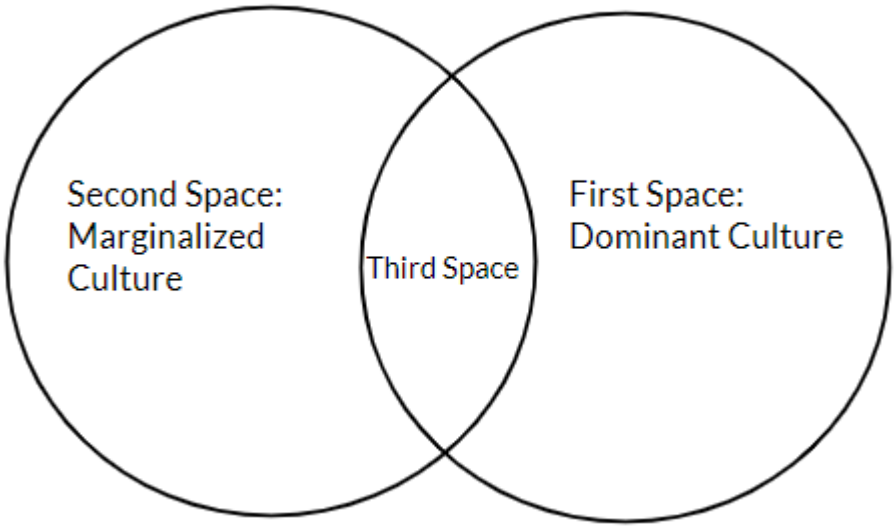
The need for quality literacy education took on greater urgency and complexity during the pandemic. What had worked with in-person teacher literacy education required significant adjustments to deliver in remote and/or hybrid instruction. Accordingly, Mona sought to explore her own practice through self-study, with the assistance of Kathleen, an in-service teacher and doctoral student in education. As Mona trained hundreds of in-service teachers in public, private, and charter schools, during the 2020-2021 school year, Mona employed self-study to answer the research question: How can I facilitate literacy content for in-service teachers in the context of the pandemic?

Creating a Safe Space for Discourse

In order to investigate the research question, the authors applied third space theory to create a safe, reflective environment for discourse on teacher literacy training and practices (Bhabha, 1994). Third space uses discussion to answer questions by placing the participants in an environment in which discourse is not socially and culturally constraining, but a productive place of reimagination for answering questions and bringing about positive change (see Figure 1) (Flessner, 2014; Hulme et al., 2009; Sawyer et al., 2016).

Figure 1

Homi Bhabha's (1994) Third Space Representation

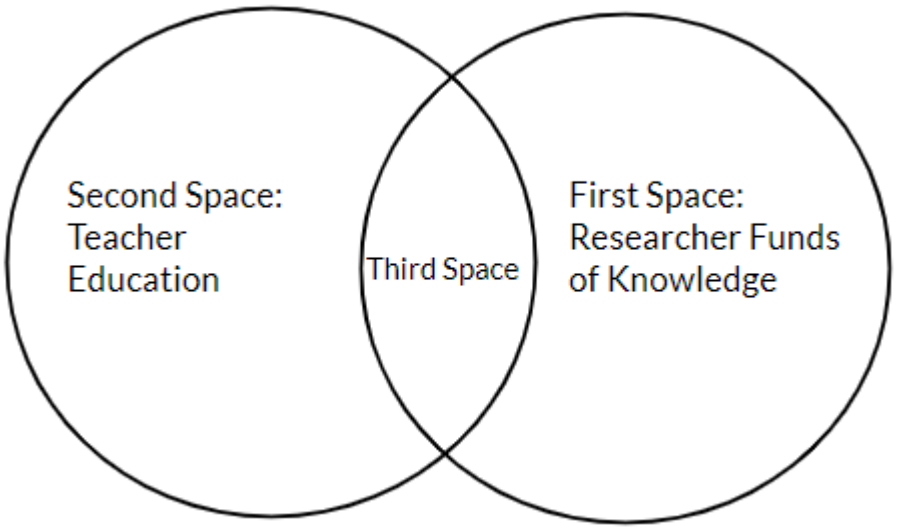


Kris Gutiérrez and colleagues (Gutiérrez et al.,1999) extended Bhabha's (1994) third space theory to ascertain how students' discourses can be used to scaffold learning (Moje et al., 2004), and this has been extended to in-service teacher education (Flessner, 2014). As shown in Figure 2, Mona's funds of knowledge made up the first space and included Mona's background, beliefs, and professional practices (Hogg, 2011; Moje et al., 2004). Funds of knowledge have been studied as sources of teacher knowledge that have value within curriculum and pedagogy and can contain

new perspectives and provide additional understandings of practice (Qi & Mullen, 2022). The inclusion of funds of knowledge in our third space provided an opportunity to honor Mona's unique experiences and skills. Second space was defined as the teaching space(s) for Mona's professional development sessions. Third space was the virtual space in which Mona and Kathleen met to discuss and examine Mona's TLE practice.

Figure 2

Representation of First, Second, and Third Space in This Study



Like many teachers, care was central to Mona's practice. Nel Noddings (2003), the creator of care theory, suggests that "the one cared-for and the one-caring are reciprocally dependent" (p. 58). A teacher that cares-for their student is affectively moved by that student, as the teacher pays close attention to their needs and responds to them. Likewise, the student who is cared-for acknowledges the actions of the one-caring, the teacher. In this sense, care is reciprocal, involving deeply receptive attention between the one-caring and the cared-for. While the onus for care is on the teacher (the one-caring) if the student (the cared-for) fails to acknowledge the teacher's care it creates a rupture which, if it persists, may result in serious consequences for the relationship (Noddings, 2003, 2012). In a student-teacher relationship such consequences might include disengagement, lethargy, or teacher burnout. This affective dimension of teaching matters not only for a TLE's resilience and longevity in the TLE profession but also for student learning. Within care theory, teaching and learning are connected to an ongoing reciprocal cycle of care with learning as its by-product (Hinsdale, 2016; Noddings, 2012).

Methods

This inquiry utilized self-study methodology. Self-study allows the researcher to delve more deeply into the self-in-practice than is accessible through traditional, isolated reflection or statistically analyzing data (LaBoskey, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2011). Consistent with prior research (Flessner, 2014), the authors paired self-study methodology with third space theory (Bhabha, 1994), which uses discussion to answer questions by placing the participants in an environment in which discourse is not socially and culturally constraining but a productive place of reimagination for answering questions and bringing about positive change (Flessner, 2014; Hulme et al., 2009; Sawyer et al., 2016). While self-study asks for transformation of researcher practice to occur and for findings to be disseminated, it expects these research actions to take place within a discoursal (i.e., third) space (Meidl, 2018). Accordingly, Kathleen served as the critical friend (Schuck & Russel, 2005), questioning and supporting Mona in her practice, through discourse in their third space.

Regular video conferences served as the authors' Third Space, where Mona's practice was discussed in depth and instructional materials were examined together. Data were collected about Mona's practice through journaling, notes, virtual meeting recordings, electronic documents, and instructional materials (see Appendix A). Data were collected,

coded, and analyzed between September 2020 and April 2021. We applied Saldaña's (2016) codes-to-theory model to find emergent themes within the data through a process of initial, concept, and pattern coding. Additional measures were implemented to ensure trustworthiness including transparent use of data, coding and analysis; triangulation; and recursive discourse between critical friends (see Appendix B).

Outcomes

This study identified multiple emergent themes that impacted the facilitation of teacher literacy education in the context of remote instruction, key amongst which were *TLE expertise* and *in-service teacher response*. We present these findings in the sections below and then, discuss what these findings reveal about the role of care in Mona's practice.

TLE Expertise: New Ways to Read the Room

Pre-Covid, when Mona delivered trainings in person, she relied heavily on visual and verbal cues from participants to assess acquisition of literacy content via eye contact, facial expressions, body language, non-verbal communication, and verbal conversations. Throughout her career, Mona had depended on her ability to read the room in person to conduct formative assessment. During Covid, however, remote instruction interrupted her ability to read the room. This left Mona questioning her expertise and reflecting on ways to improve her practice, including the elements TLEs need to facilitate literacy instruction (Muhammad, 2020): content knowledge (Loughran, 2006), being up-to-date on current research (Schmoker, 2021), flexibility (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Risko et al., 2008), and opportunities for rehearsal and participation (Payne, 2008; Schmoker, 2021). Reflecting with Kathleen helped Mona recognize specific impediments to facilitating content.

Specifically, the funds of knowledge which Mona had built teaching in-person were insufficient to navigate virtual instruction. Technology posed particular problems, both for TLE instruction and for in-service teacher practice. Not only did Mona have to learn how to facilitate her trainings using technology she had never even heard of before, but she was also expected to train teachers in their use. Further, the technology felt detached from the human element, especially when participants had their cameras and microphones off. Not only did Mona have to employ new technology, but she also needed to rediscover ways to connect with her participants, form relationships, and assess learning. Thus, Mona began to attend numerous online trainings to improve her virtual instruction.

During these virtual trainings, she noticed that she did not always enjoy participating or sharing responses in front of the group. Comparing these personal experiences with the in-service trainings she facilitated before the pandemic, Mona realized that there were noticeably different and more diverse forms of feedback than she had ever used. For example, a Google Form, Padlet, Pear Deck, Mentimeter, or Jamboard could be used to encourage multiple ways to participate and solicit public and/or private feedback in a virtual setting. In person, Mona had thought she was getting robust and accurate feedback from her participants by reading the room. However, as she reflected with Kathleen, Mona realized that "Not all learners are comfortable sharing with a large group" (April 2, 2021). Indeed, only a limited number of teachers had really ever shared; there were other voices in the room who often chose not to share in front of the group. Mona realized her methods for receiving feedback were not robust or equitable. She had been rigidly defining how to read the room, a choice that was more about her than those for whom she was facilitating literacy learning.

The intense and oftentimes uncomfortable study of Mona's practice allowed her and Kathleen to see where Mona's strengths were and where there was room for growth. "Hearing, understanding, then enacting what my participants need to access and engage in ways that suit them best is what I am wondering about. Can I do more when we get back to face-to-face to provide access points to information and opportunities for responding to all my adult learners?" (April 6, 2021). Through this work, she realized that reading the room through sight and sound was not the whole picture, "...seeing isn't everything. It isn't equitable. Not everyone wants to turn and talk to the person next to them. Not everyone wants to share with the group" (April 6, 2021).

Realizing this, Mona began to offer teachers alternate ways to engage in her trainings. She provided opportunities for quiet reflection and started to use platforms like Padlet and Jamboard that could be anonymous. She also invited private messaging in the chat. This gave participants the real-time opportunity to ask questions, provide feedback, and engage in ways that were completely private. In-service teachers responded positively to these changes in Mona's

practice. For example, during one training, a participant private-messaged Mona to affirm that the content being presented was valuable and transferable to the authentic context of their classroom. As Mona developed her expertise in virtual instruction, she became a more flexible, responsive practitioner. Moving forward, she realized there was more than one way to read the room.

In-Service Teacher Response

Just as TLE expertise is central to effective instruction, our data revealed that the dispositions of in-service teachers attending Mona's trainings also played a key role in instruction. Specifically, participants' level of engagement in and receptivity to trainings impacted Mona's instruction.

Reading the room pre-pandemic, Mona connected with in-service teachers via eye contact and through conversations intended to connect, unify, and subsequently form a TLE/in-service teacher relationship, the kind of pedagogical relationships which some scholars have suggested are essential for learning (Stengel, 2004). Remote instruction, though, deprived Mona of the in-the-moment visual and verbal feedback, which she had come to depend on throughout her career. As she observed in one journal entry, "Feeling like I am not cut out for this. Feedback was good, but hardly any participant interaction. I felt like I was just doing all the talking" (January 11, 2021), an experience that left her full of self-doubt.

This was exacerbated by barriers to participation created by technology use. For example, teachers regularly chose to keep their cameras off and microphones muted throughout trainings, creating a veritable wall, blocking Mona from audio-visual cues. And, when Mona adapted her instruction to incorporate new technologies, like Jamboad, to allow written and drawn participation, she found many in-service teachers were not "tech savvy enough for it- even with instruction from my end" (January 11, 2021). Despite these frustrations, Mona continued troubleshooting ways to connect with in-service teachers. She imagined what participants looked like to better teach them, and she sent affirmations to them verbally and in writing throughout virtual presentations, gradually letting go of her expectation that there be relational reciprocity as she had once experienced it.

By letting go of her need to see and hear participants to form relationships with them, she found openings to connect in new ways. Mona began to tell participants to "feel free to engage in the training today as you are able" (16 April 2021). Chat conversations, exit tickets, and follow-up emails provided her with new types of formative feedback that informed her practice, while also affirming that relationships were indeed formed–even though they took on a new appearance in this virtual environment. Further, these new forms of data helped her discern factors that might be at play behind the screens when in-service teachers were not able to fully engage in her sessions.

Reading the (virtual) room for cues about the culture, climate, and technological comfort within different teacher education trainings showed vast differences in the engagement of participants. During some trainings, participants were engaged in active questioning and responding, "This group is really engaged and motivated, and it puts them at another level for receiving information" (February 5, 2021). However, this was not the case for all participants. Within a few moments of trying to launch Jamboard with one group, a private message came through in the chat that the participants were not proficient in using that platform. So Mona changed her facilitation, transitioning immediately to participating in the chat. This experience reminded her that even in a pandemic, simplicity and clarity in teaching have a powerful impact on learning (Fisher et al., 2016). Yet, technology was not the only factor impacting teacher engagement.

Oftentimes, organizational factors, like teacher-administration relationships, time constraints, or administrative planning processes, impacted the culture and climate of the schools with which Mona worked. While the relationship-building with participants happened during instructional time, the foundation for instruction began when school administrators reached out to Mona's organization to request training. This could begin weeks or months of preparation, where Mona would learn about teacher learning needs, meet with school leaders, and design TLE content tailored to a school's needs. If teachers and administrators did not have a good working relationship, however, the quality of her preparation was impacted, as was the receptivity of in-service teachers to the TLE trainings. The novel demands of teaching during Covid often created stress on these teacher-administrator relationships, which were made evident to Mona through

emails, meetings, and scheduling changes prior to TLE facilitation. Accordingly, when participants were not engaged in training activities or expressed struggles with difficult circumstances occurring within their institutions, she initially tried to compensate for these institutional issues by investing unstainable amounts of time in planning lessons that were poorly received. Only through reflection in our third space did Mona begin to realize that teacher-administrator relationships, though they impacted her participants' response to her instruction, were beyond her control. By differentiating between factors within her control and those beyond it, she was able to create healthier boundaries and dedicate energy more explicitly to those pedagogical practices over which she had control.

Discussion: Recognizing Care Within TLE

As noted above, more than simply a mode of in-the-moment formative assessment, Mona entered the pandemic with the well-established practice of using visual and verbal cues from in-person instruction to build and nurture relationships with her in-service teacher participants. Importantly though, she did not recognize, at first, that this practice was functioning as more than just a formative assessment. Only through conversation in our Third Space did the practice of care emerge as a topic of conversation. After reviewing a presentation slide deck that Mona initially delivered in September 2020, Kathleen wrote,

> *curious to see you lead the whole session with the idea of "support." Did your feedback bear out that sentiment was received? It reminds me of Nel Noddings Care Theory. She posits, among other things, that care is reciprocal and must be acknowledged by the cared-for" (January 5, 2021).*

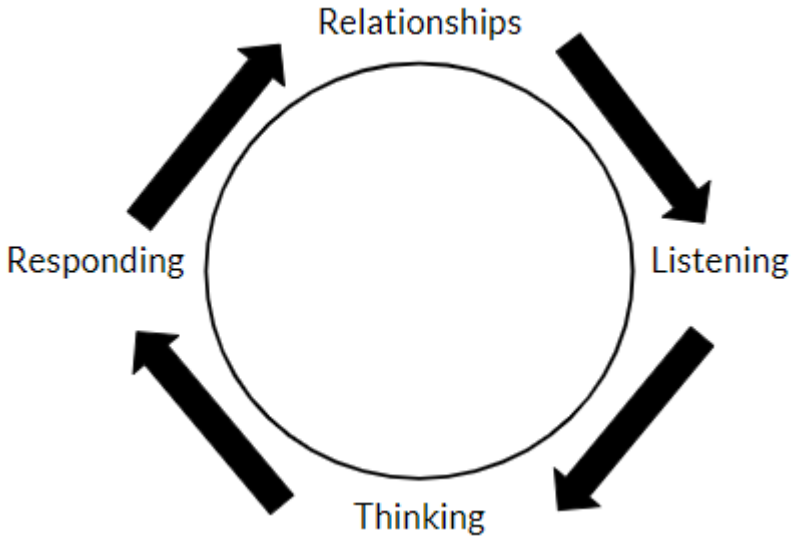
This was the first time that care theory was identified as a meaningful heuristic for understanding the challenge of teaching during the pandemic.

Analysis of our data revealed that both Mona's TLE practice and the effects of her practice on her emotional life showed signs of care. Regarding the former, Mona repeatedly built into her lessons discussion of "teacher support," and she reported on one-on-one coaching sessions with teachers and teacher-coaches with deep concern for their personal wellbeing and professional success. In short, Mona was engrossed in her participants' lives, a key characteristic of caring-for. Further, when lessons did not go well, and/or the preparation she put into lessons was disproportionate to the impact of her lessons on participants, she was deeply troubled and began to express signs of emotional burnout. This, we've noted above, is an indicator of disruption in the caring-relationship. Such disruption makes sense within the Covid context because Mona was deprived of the traditional means by which she understood her students acknowledged her caring-for them, including eye contact, verbal responses, smiles or frowns, visual evidence of note-taking, and/or heads nodding. Absent these visual and verbal cues, she felt unmoored. Until Mona identified and adopted new ways to build and strengthen relationships with her students, allowing new modes of reciprocal affect to pass between them, she persisted in this unhealthy state, which she described as feeling "overwhelmed," "incompetent," and unbalanced and led to "lost sleep."

One step in revitalizing Mona's practice was to understand more clearly how care operated in her practice. Analysis of our data revealed that each student-teacher relationship, though distinct, was built through cyclical iterations of four elements: relationships, listening, thinking, and responding (see Appendix C). Further, we understand relationship functioned as both a core element and a product of this process. Mona sought relationships with in-service teachers and deepened those relationships through listening to them, thinking about their feedback, and responding to what they shared with her. We imagine these four elements as a cycle of care (see Figure 3), and we suggest this is consistent with care theory (Noddings, 1984), generally, and its extensions (Valenzuela, 1999).

Figure 3

Cycle of Care Framework



The utility of this model is that it allowed us to identify more precisely where disruption was happening in the care cycle and what that disruption actually was. This, in turn, allowed Mona to implement more constructive responses through her teaching practice. For example, Kathleen and Mona wondered: When in-service teachers don't respond to a question in a session, is it really apathy, or are participants not responding because they are uncomfortable responding in a large group; overwhelmed with stress; or affected by something else? Questions such as these led Mona to consider the ethical implications of TLE practice and, ultimately, redesign how she solicits feedback, in order to be more equitable. Further, she realized that in order to set boundaries for herself, she needed to differentiate between what is and is not within her control in the learning environment, and to do so, she needs to better understand how policies and politics that influence her facilitation (Cuenca, 2019). By doing so, she could respond to her students more effectively and deepen the relationships she has with them. That is, by understanding her context of instruction more deeply, she could better care for herself and, as a result, better care for her participants.

Conclusions

This work endeavored to answer the question: How can teacher literacy education be facilitated for in-service teachers in the context of the pandemic? We identified multiple emergent themes that impacted the facilitation of teacher literacy education, in the context of remote and hybrid instruction during the pandemic: Teacher literacy educator expertise and in-service teacher learning. Care was later identified as an analytical heuristic, and a care framework was put forward to help visualize our data.

This study indicated that TLE expertise--including content knowledge, delivery, and reflexive practice--had the potential to enhance teacher literacy education. Covid led to unique teaching and learning conditions, namely remote and hybrid instruction, in which veteran teaching practices were no longer possible. Mona responded by learning as much as she could to support her evolving practice, including literacy and technological content as well as analysis of herself as a participant in trainings to better imagine the experiences of her in-service teachers. These processes reconnected her with the understanding that good facilitation is clear and simple, and good facilitators have flexibility, within healthy boundaries. Mona also worked to become more equitable and fair in her requests for feedback from in-service teachers, releasing her need for audio-visual cues to confirm participant engagement.

Our findings further showed in-service teachers themselves affected the facilitation of content through their relationship with the TLE and their engagement in the literacy trainings. As the study progressed, Mona noted that both relationships and engagement looked different for each participant, and visual and verbal cues were not essential for formative assessment. Through reflection in our virtual third space, Mona became more proficient at discerning what forces were at play behind the screens affecting relationships and engagement. She also became more adept at connecting with participants and discerning levels of engagement in remote and hybrid modes of instruction.

Using care theory for our analysis, we realized Mona's struggles with TLE during Covid were linked directly to her dependence on audio-visual cues, a dependence which she had been habituated to during decades of in-person classroom instruction. These struggles were both effective and affective in nature. That is, Mona had used audio-visual cues for in-the-moment formative assessments during in-person instruction, and they contributed to Mona's experience of care, by which "the contributions of the cared-for [students] sustain [the one-caring] in [their] attempts to care" (Noddings, 2003, p. xxii). The absence of such cues made remote instruction, initially, feel unsustainable. However, re-envisioning informal formative assessment for remote instruction reinvigorated her experience of care and confidence in her instruction.

The novel instructional context of Covid revealed that, for Mona, reading the room encompasses more than just the in-the-moment assessment of what's happening within content delivery. It involves reading the room more wholly and equitably through a cycle of care-inspired lens. By examining Mona's practice in our third space, she was better able to understand and facilitate content during the pandemic to be more responsive to her in-service teachers, empowering her to re-engage in caring student-teacher relationships.

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Appendix A

Data Collection

Virtual Meetings	The authors engaged in virtual meetings at least once a month to: • Conduct self-study of the first author's practice with the critical friend • Engage in discourse of data in the reflection tool • Analyze the data in the reflection tool
Electronic Documents	Electronic documents (emails, texts, the collection tools) captured: • Reflections of the first author on her practice • Notations from the critical friend • Journaling in the comments • Analytic memos • Questions from the first author and the critical friend • Member checking
Teacher Education Materials	Teacher education materials were comprised of: • Slides from presentations created by the first author • Online learning modules created by the first author • Self-created videos by the first author • Resources (anchor texts, journal articles) • Electronic teaching materials (Jamboard, Pear Deck)

Data were collected in a data collection tool, a coding tool, and a conclusion tool. These tools were collectively 38 pages in length and contained over 10,000 words. The data collection tool was the primary source for analysis.

Appendix B

Coding and Trustworthiness

Coding (Hinsdale, 2016; Noddings, 2012; Saldaña, 2016)	Initial coding • Pre-coding of data into emerging categories • Analytic memos from the critical friend and first author • Member checking • Reading and re-reading data related to practice Concept coding

	• Small actions related to the big picture were analyzed • Data were classified into 22 categories for reflection • Consolidation of data to harmonize with the big picture of what the data is showing • Additional analytic memos were created • Discussion and analysis with the critical friend were conducted to assist in extending the categories into emergent themes to be further analyzed in the next coding cycle. Pattern coding • The 22 categories were grouped into smaller emergent themes • Emergent themes were discerned: reading the room and care
Trustworthiness	• The researchers in this work made their data, methods of coding, and links between data, findings, and interpretations transparent (Loughran, 2004). • This study triangulated data between virtual meetings, electronic documents, and teacher education materials to study the self in practice through an increase in robustness and analysis of different perspectives (Mena & Russel, 2017). • This work also utilized a critical friend to analyze from an external vantage point (Mischler, 1990). • A rigorous and critical analysis of the first author's facilitation of content to inservice teachers was conducted (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015).

Appendix C:

Cycle of Care Framework

Relationships	Relationships are at the heart of care theory. They form the foundation on which teaching and learning are built. Relationships are facilitated by Mona initially and then the in-service teacher reciprocates by being receptive to creating and building this relationship. This giving and receiving between Mona and the in-service teacher to create and build the relationship facilitates the cycle of care.
Listening	Listening encompasses Mona collecting data from in-service teachers. She collects audio-visual data, data from activities in her facilitation of literacy content, and notes and notices any type of information that can provide her with data about her in-service teachers to inform teaching and learning. The teachers reciprocate this care by attending to Mona during trainings and respecting her (i.e. not arguing or acting rude).
Thinking	Thinking is the act of processing the data from the listening phase. Mona sorts through the data and determines what next steps she will take. In-service teachers facilitate the cycle of care by thoughtfully considering the content Mona is facilitating.
Responding	Mona responds to in-service teachers by facilitating literacy content. For example, creating slide decks with content, resources, and ways to support teaching and learning. In-service teachers reciprocate care and facilitate the cycle of care by engaging in activities such as discussion or a Jamboard activity.

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"Buoys in the Sea"

A Collaborative Self-Study of Teaching as a Sacred Practice

Jeff Spanke & Devon Lejman

Dialogue | Praxis | Reflection | Artifact Analysis | Sacred

As the teaching profession becomes increasingly fraught with forces within education and beyond it, teachers in all stages are searching for meaning in seemingly unlikely places. In response to Vanessa Zoltan's "Praying with Jane Eyre", we examined teaching through the lens of sacredness. Through a dialogue guided by Zoltan and fueled by the examination of our own teaching practices, we created our own criteria for what can be sacred and went on to suggest the larger implications of this concept in the field of teacher education.

Introduction

The traditional books just weren't cutting it anymore. Almost overnight, it seemed my students now needed something from me that I just didn't know how to provide. I had never taught high school English during a pandemic. And none of the resources I usually included in my teacher education classes mentioned anything about social distancing, virtual learning, mental health, or mask mandates. As 2021 wound to its COVID-ridden close, I knew that my English Education curriculum was in desperate need of a booster of its own.

I started reaching out to our alumni to see if they could offer any insights into the types of materials they were using in their own practices: not necessarily with a focus on their *pedagogy*—I wasn't looking for things they were *teaching*—but really whatever they naturally turned to whenever they needed the type of personal/professional development that they couldn't otherwise find in their school communities. I figured that if real teachers could share whatever authentic materials helped spark joy in their careers—the things they were actually reading for solace and guidance in their *lives*, and not just whatever they felt forced to read in their *jobs*—that I might be able to somehow use these materials to serve my students better in their preservice education.

A small handful of these graduates started suggesting a book written by American podcaster and self-proclaimed "Atheist Jew," Vanessa Zoltan. Her memoir-esque collection of essays—which she calls "sermons"—entitled "Praying with Jane Eyre: Reflections on Reading as a Sacred Practice", had not only comforted these novice teachers amidst their seas of classroom struggles, but also, they reported, helped refine how they approached the practice of reading.

After studying the book through the lens of a teacher educator, I realized that while, certainly, Zoltan focuses on the idea of reading as a sacred act, the book also serves as a metacommentary on *teaching* as its own sacred process. Zoltan's methods for engaging with literary texts mirror the ways in which I seek to prepare my students to negotiate the various complex elements of their own classrooms-as-texts, as well as how I conceptualize the task of preparing these future

teachers. In other words, even though on the surface it says very little about teaching-as-practice, Zoltan's book actually offers valuable insights into the teaching profession, on both P-12 and teacher education levels. With Zoltan's text as a governing theoretical framework, I decided to partner with a former student-now-friend to explore how we each navigate teaching as a sacred act in our own praxes.

Positionalities

The partnership between Devon and me actually began in January 2019, when they were my student in an upper-level Young Adult Literature seminar at our university. The following Fall, Devon and I worked together again in an English teaching methods course, and we stayed in close, professional contact the following Spring during their student teaching practicum.

After graduating in May 2020 and spending two years teaching high school in the district where they student taught, Devon took another position at a neighboring high school in the Fall, of 2022. They are currently in their third year as a secondary English teacher. I am a tenured Associate Professor and Director of English Education at the same midsized, Midwestern American university where Devon and I met and from which they graduated amidst a global pandemic.

Aims/Objectives

Just as Zoltan's (2022) book serves to chronicle her reflections of reading as a sacred practice, this study seeks to reveal how we, as two different educators, have used Zoltan's work to examine how we each engage with the various "texts" of teaching (classrooms, schools, students, etc.) in sacred ways. The distinction we ultimately strive to make in this project is delineating between treating some particular *thing* as sacred in itself and treating any *thing* sacredly. The emphasis, in other words, is on the action or the engagement itself, not the object; approaching sacredness as a verb, as opposed to a noun. Framing sacredness in terms of behavior, we hoped, would not only alleviate the tensions that derive from not "getting" a particular object or *thing*; it would also empower "readers" of the world to have it within themselves to treat the world in a sacred fashion. This held particular relevance for us as teachers who, in the wake of so many worldly crises, were struggling to view any aspect of our profession as sacred or special. Maybe the problem wasn't the profession but rather how we approached it.

Zoltan argues, "as pretentious and lofty as it may sound, the point of treating any text as sacred is to learn how to treat one another as sacred" (p. 23). As teachers and friends, Devon and I approached Zoltan's book with an earnest desire to "let it teach [us] how to get better at being [loving people] in the world" (p. 22). Especially in our current moment of myriad curricular, cultural, and climate crises, we found that by studying this book as the primary lens through which we might also study ourselves as human educators, we each might evolve in our capacity to be more resilient, empathetic, and holistic teachers for our students. We offer this project in the spirit of doing just that.

Two specific questions governed this self-study research:

1. How do Zoltan's three requisites for reading as a sacred act (which she defines as Faith, Rigor, and Community) apply to the notion of teaching sacredly?
2. How can framing teaching as a sacred act inform the praxes of teacher educators, preservice teachers, and practicing classroom teachers?

We hope that our reflective study offers a template for how other teachers might rekindle their sense of love, joy, and investment in a profession that's proven increasingly difficult to navigate. Despite our current struggles, we each have maintained our faith in the transformative power of teaching. And through treating teaching—the act we love—as sacred, we hope this project echoes Zoltan's notion that "treating something you love as sacred can be that buoy in the sea" that "[fills] the voids that find us in the dark of night and [gives] us things to hold onto in scary times" (p. 50).

Methods

For this project, we extended upon LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for self-study research to employ a variety of conceptions and methods of collaborative self-study (e.g., Bullock & Ritter, 2011; LaBoskey et al., 1998; Louie et al., 2003). We began by each reading and annotating Zoltan's text on our own. We then shared our written annotations with one another; met

in person to discuss the annotations; composed and shared written reflections on these conversations; and met again to discuss the evolution of our written reflections.

Through a triangulation of our sustained critical dialogue (both written and spoken), narrative writing, and probing/inquiry (in the form of frequent, informal virtual and in-person conversations that we recorded and subsequently coded and analyzed), we developed a greater understanding of the degree to which we each approach teaching as a sacred act, as well as for its implications on our respective praxes. Our use of critical, sustained dialogue (Murphy & Pinnegar, 2020; Guilfoyle et al., 2004), served as a foundation for developing trustworthiness in our findings (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2017). Our analysis, both of our annotations of Zoltan and our subsequent discussions, have led us to a finer understanding of how Zoltan's conception of sacred-as-verb can apply to the craft of teaching. Through critical, professional dialogue and our subsequent coding, we identified emerging themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) which we discuss below. Ultimately in this study, we echo Gauna et. al. (2020) by noting that, "the centrality of dialogue to our pedagogy and evidence of opportunities for us to refine this aspect of our practices led us to the focus of this collaborative self-study" (p. 2).

Outcomes

According to Zoltan, a reader needs three things in order to treat a text as sacred: Faith, Rigor, and Community. Faith, Zoltan argues, is rooted in the belief that imperfect things "can give you blessings not only in spite of their imperfections but because of them" (p. 8). In order to read sacredly, we must have faith not only that the text has something essential to reveal, but also that we, as readers, are capable of deciphering what that essential thing is. Rigor, Zoltan asserts, "means that you keep at it even when your heart isn't in it…It means running in the cold and when you have a cold" (p. 10). And Community, the final component according to Zoltan, "means that you need a gym buddy…someone who points out when you are being shallow or lazy…to make sure you show up even when all you want to do is stay home" (p. 11).

For this study, we took up Zoltan's theoretical lens to examine how we each approach teaching as a sacred process. If we engage with teaching through Faith, Rigor, and Community—if these serve as the anchors of teaching sacredly—what meaning/purpose might we make for ourselves as teachers? What anchors us, and keeps us afloat? What themes emerge when we view our profession through the lens that Zoltan offers?

Like Zoltan, our project was governed by 1) our shared faith that the imperfect circumstances of our imperfect practices have something essential to reveal to us; 2) rigor, insofar as our commitment to the fidelity of self-study research (LaBoskey, 2004) and the teaching profession writ large; and 3) community as it pertains to our critical friendship and scholarly collaboration. Just as Zoltan demonstrated through her sacred read of "Jane Eyre", our study has not only offered personal and professional sustenance but has also highlighted aspects of our praxes that, to use Zoltan's terms, serve as buoys in our teaching seas. We discuss each of these aspects below.

Commitment

The first buoy that we located in our seas of self-study was commitment. "Commitments," writes Zoltan, "can be freeing. They allow us to focus on one thing rather than looking around at everything, including the abyss" (p. 81). Our study revealed that, especially in our current moment, where Devon and I intersect most commonly with regard to our first buoy is in our shared commitment simply to survive. Since they graduated in 2020, for example, Devon notes:

> *I have become a licensed educator, taught through much of a pandemic, fought destructive House bills, left teaching altogether, and returned, last-minute, to a new environment, committing for the third time to a school year that I do not and cannot on any level understand.*
>
> *But commitment is not about planning to do one specific thing; it is about making a promise to fulfill a duty that we know almost nothing about. Each time a lawmaker makes it clear, once again, that education is not their goal for our education system, teachers come out of the woodwork in droves. We speak at city hall meetings. We wear red. We post confessionals on Facebook. But, most of all, we stay. Not all of us, of course; a staggering number of teachers do not make it through their fifth year in the field.*

> *Those of us who stay, however, do so for the very reason Zoltan cites as she discusses Jane Eyre: 'I will try not to die on your terms' (p. 89). With every blow to our profession, every law or mandate or ban that strives to make teaching in public schools untenable, we buckle down, grit our teeth, and refuse to be moved. I deeply resonate with Zoltan's assertion that "[a] willingness to survive is about believing in the possibility of a better future" (p. 89). I simply cannot tell whether that future is mine to experience, but, at least for now, I'm committed to surviving in order to find out.*

Like Devon, I also tethered my commitment to teaching, overwhelmingly, in the notion of surviving. Of *not* dying. This commitment to survival underscored our respective course syllabi/curricula, the feedback we offer students on their projects, and oftentimes, the design of the projects themselves.

Especially as teachers with considerably less power than the system itself, we each found comfort in Zoltan's assertion that survival is not only an act of commitment of hope but also a threat to the status quo. It is a promise of change (Zoltan, 2020, p. 90). As our data demonstrated, Devon and I both recognize the inevitability of consistent betrayals and sources of resentments in the teaching profession. Through our dialogues and narrative writing, we found that, like Zoltan, "when [we] have been betrayed, one of the main feelings is embarrassment, as if [we] have been taken for being stupid of actually been stupid…Betrayals make us feel as though we cannot trust the world" (p. 97).

Of course, this lack of trust breeds a particular type of resentment toward the teaching profession. Yet as Zoltan argues, "resentment is controlled fire. It is about feeling a sense of unfairness at being treated a certain way, and sitting with that feeling…It is a feeling that makes you notice injustice" (p. 141). Through our discussions and written narratives, we noted that as teachers, Devon and I are no strangers to these injustices, both on the P-12 level and in higher education.

Yet it is the consciousness that stems from this resentment—which itself derives from a sense of betrayal we each feel toward education—that allows us to maintain our commitment to our profession. As Camus writes of the damned Sisyphus, "the lucidity that was to constitute his torture at the same time crowns his victory." It was never the perfection of the system that we trusted. Nor was it our capacity to achieve absolution within it. Our data revealed that it was never *teaching* that betrayed us; in our own ways, we each felt betrayed by something we never subscribed to in the first place —a grandiose yet toxic myth we had fabricated for ourselves that, while tangentially linked to our earnest passions for teaching, was inherently distinct from the realities of being a teacher. So yes, we felt betrayed by the System or the World for what we perceived them to be doing to education; and yes, that betrayal bred a resentment that consistently tempts us to leave the profession altogether.

But as we studied our praxes sacredly—that is, with Faith, Rigor, and Community—we found that this same resentment which fuels our fire and flirts with hatred also keeps us safe. And this sense of betrayal compels us to, as Zoltan suggests, return to the heart of the thing in teaching that we once trusted as a means of relearning how to trust ourselves. We maintain our commitment to survive teaching. Not despite our resentments and senses of betrayal. But precisely and maybe even solely because of them.

Kindness

Of course, despite our shared commitment to survival, we recognized that constant betrayals and resentments could easily lead to a certain meanness in our teaching. Yet as our data consistently revealed, both Devon and I seem to govern our praxes very much by a spirit of kindness that serves to combat the allure of dismissive cruelty.

Even as a student of mine, Devon struggled with teachers whose pedagogy verged on oppressive or subjugating. As they reflected on one of their early practicum experiences, Devon recalled:

> *I watched for indicators of [my mentor's] relationship with students. She once called the school resource officer to the room to lecture about student behavior. When he left, she did not apologize to the student with autism whose self-stimming mumbling was just used against him, and she did not acknowledge or attempt to problematize the lack of thought she put into calling a police officer as soon as her Black student didn't listen to her. This struck me as unkind.*

> *Unfortunately, the students took notice. They were smart. When a vice principal came in to tell them that their class had received more referrals than any other sixth-grade class, one girl piped up, "well, who's writing those referrals?" She was told she was being disrespectful. I remember wondering how anyone could expect her to respect this teacher, or this system, especially when they never answered her question.*

As we examined how we each treat teaching as a sacred act, we found that in addition to our respective commitments, Devon and I also tether our praxes to the buoy of kindness. Our written narratives and discussions revealed that our conception of kindness very much aligns with Zoltan's. "True kindness must be brave," Zoltan argues. "It must be intentional, it must include sacrifice, and it absolutely must entirely humanize the other and ourselves," (p. 85). This "bold, vulnerable, and completely insensible" brand of kindness underscored not only how we engage with schools and students, but also informed how we care for ourselves as educators. Devon and I found that we equate kindness with courage and humility, with grit and an earnest pursuit to continue "fanning "the flames of humanity within ourselves," (Zoltan, 2020, p. 87). As teachers, we recognize the necessity to, on a daily basis, simply take everyone in. Embrace their circumstances and create a space where the inherently self-serving nature of niceness pales to the communal good of kindness. Of course, being kind doesn't rid the world of tyranny; but we each ground our teaching in the notion that through kindness, we might be able to live as humanly as possible to each other. Even the tyrants.

Queerness

The third buoy that we found anchors our approach to teaching involves the idea of queerness, particularly as it functions both as an adjective and a verb. As a queer teacher, Devon writes:

> *My parents each reacted to my decision to pursue teaching—which, in a very real sense, was its own coming-out story—in eerily similar ways to how they would eventually react to my being queer: my mom telling me she kind of already knew; my dad pretending to be way more okay with it than he really was. He told me it was my decision, but he clearly could not understand why I would choose this--unintentionally setting me up for the reactions I would hear for years to come, not only to my career path, but also to my orientation.*
>
> *We do choose to be teachers--it is a career, not an identity--but it is also true that many of us, once we have entered the field, cannot really get ourselves to leave. Something keeps us there. An identity does take root, and we reach the point that we can't imagine not being what we are. It's the same with being queer, in that sense.*
>
> *I experience a similar feeling of belonging at an educator's conference that I do in a gay bar, even if both do come with a certain level of annoyance and disillusionment with the group as a whole. At the same time, both teachers and queer folks are treated as monoliths, although we know we are not only deeply different from one another, but we also fail to agree on certain issues that are at the very core of who we are and what we do. In both cases, our lives are marked by fatigue, mistreatment, and legislative violence, and we seem to be the only ones who care.*

While I personally do not identify as queer, Devon and I did find that we consistently united in our collective desire to queer various aspects of the teaching profession. Whether it's through alternative text selection, unconventional/multimodal methods of assessment, inclusive curriculum design, or even the nontraditional schools in which we've each served, our data revealed 1) a latent resistance we each respectively have with dominant power structures, 2) an acute awareness of and sensitivity to alterity, and 3) an unflinching inclination to provoke disequilibrium and disrupt normative paradigms.

Thus, in addition to our shared commitment to survive the absurdities of public education and conduct ourselves by a schema of kindness, we also actively seek queerness in our teaching practices: queerness in the sense of our identities as educators relative to traditional, systemic frameworks, *and* queerness in terms *how* we each occupy and navigate these frameworks. Our pursuit of queerness in teaching, coupled with our natural tendency to queer, in a variety of ways,

the educative process, makes queerness perhaps the most significant buoy that keeps us afloat in the seas of education.

At the teacher education level, my personal attempts to queer traditional curriculum were exemplified by my inclusion of Zoltan's "Praying with Jane Eyre" in my upper-level English teaching methods class. As a pilot study of sorts, it did not go well. But that doesn't mean the effort didn't reveal promise. In the closing section below, Devon and I discuss how Zoltan's reflections on reading as a sacred practice might inform how teachers may approach not only the practice of teaching but also the preparation of teachers.

Conclusions

Even though they are no longer a preservice teacher, Devon found tremendous value in reading "Praying with Jane Eyre" as a practicing educator. They note:

> *The field of education has a long-held, stubborn refusal to change, not because it is the best it could ever possibly be, but because it is easier for certain parties if the systems in place remain as they are. Zoltan's practice challenges this, as did my own reading of her work through the lens of teaching. Viewing teaching as sacred, whether in Zoltan's terms or in my/our own, deepened my sense of identity and purpose in my profession while also revealing cracks in the foundation that I had previously missed. This practice can, and should, do both; it yields neither a net positive nor negative, much as teaching is comprised of moments of both. In addition, unlike many staff-wide professional development programs, this practice offered community while also allowing ample space for personal reflection. I was able to understand myself as a teacher without being told, either by the text or by my partner, what that understanding ought to be.*

Despite their initial difficulties and apprehensions, several of my students echoed Devon's sentiments after studying Zoltan's text. When first engaging with the book, these students reported that their primary inclination was either to 1) focus specifically on how it could directly teach them methods of ELA instruction, as opposed to offering an opportunity to construct their own meanings, or 2) approach the text through as something they themselves would actually teach their own students.

As I discovered through our class discussions and my students' reflective feedback, I failed to frame the experience in the way that Devon and I approached for this self-study; namely, rather than using the book solely as a surrogate for traditional methods instruction, I wanted my students to engage with the text through a metacognitive, reflective lens of what it can offer their entire approach to teaching. Even though this first iteration was largely unsuccessful in achieving those ends, our self-study did offer hope that when presented as a holistic guide to teacher identity and positionality—as a sort of praxis primer—Zoltan's "Praying with Jane Eyre" can verily serve as an invaluable resource for any teacher who's struggling to stay afloat in their profession or seeking to revitalize a dormant sense of purpose and progress.

For Devon and me, the overall takeaway of this study was the humbling yet encouraging reminder that there is simply no such thing as a sacred classroom. Or method. Or school or student. Or text or curriculum. Or teacher. Prescribing sacredness to *things*, we concluded, is futile because it absolves us, as agents, of any accountability or incentive to evolve. If *things* are sacred in themselves—if there *is* such a thing as a perfect student or saintly teacher or "best" practice—then their acquisition comes with a finitude that risks stagnation and apathy. Why strive for more in a world of absolutes?

Rather, if, as Zoltan does with reading, teachers can frame the *act* of teaching as sacred, then by extension, *any* classroom can be imbued with profundity and the capacity to elicit wonder. Any student or text or school or curriculum can be navigated with the faith that it has value and something to contribute. And of course, through faith, rigor, and community, treating teaching as sacred allows us to cultivate a belief that we just might have something to offer the world.

If nothing else, that renewed sense of purpose and passion might very well be the buoy all teachers occasionally need to withstand the inevitable waves of public education. Restoring our relationship with teaching, we found, became much

less about whatever riches we once sought at the end of the journey and almost entirely about the compass we used to get there. When viewed as a sacred act, the means of teaching don't only justify the ends; they become ends onto themselves.

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Exploring Our Knowledge of Narrative S-STEP Methodology Through Collaboration

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Narrative S-STEP

Developing quality Narrative S-STEP research requires the use of strong strategies and techniques for design, data collection and analysis, and representation of findings. In this study, we sought to uncover our understandings concerning this. We inquired into what knowledge we as Narrative S-STEP scholars held that guided us in conducting such studies. Our data consisted of our revisiting our own studies and those of others and collecting notes of our interaction and dialogue during the process. In examining our work, we sought to identify the questions that guided us in each stage of the research process and the report of it. We reached consensus as we consistently considered what questions guided our development of a project from design through data collection, analysis, and representation of findings. For each of the elements considered (design, data collection, data analysis, and representation of findings), the article provides a definition, an exemplar, and questions to guide researchers. This study can support those engaging in Narrative S-STEP to create stronger research.

Orientation to the Study

The purpose of this project was to explore our knowing of techniques and strategies for using narratives in studying our own practice as Self-Study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP) scholars. To do this work, we re-positioned ourselves as if at the threshold of taking up S-STEP research. We stood therefore in a space of liminality (Heilbrun, 1999) seeking to stand as beginners but with experience as scholars within this methodology and that of narrative research. We feel ambiguous as we position ourselves in an intermediate space between narrative and S-STEP research and as beginners and experienced scholars. Developing rigorous S-STEP research requires the use of strong strategies and techniques for data collection and analysis. As S-STEP researchers, we act but at the same time we also continually question our actions as we take each step in the research process. We must collect and interpret our data and simultaneously question the legitimacy and trustworthiness of each step (see Pinnegar et al., 2010). This challenge is magnified when the researchers are also using narrative as an analysis and representation tool.

Research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) argues that narratives capture identity and so analysis of them engages scholars in an additional challenge of examining their narrative data and representing it in ways that are authentic, accurate, and trustworthy for readers. The authors in such cases must be willing to allow stories that may be unflattering but accurate and important in communicating findings to stand. While the benefit of S-STEP in supporting teacher educators to recognize and value their own professional knowledge continues to serve a vital purpose, there are others external to this research community who can profit from the knowledge and understandings developed about research that uses self-studies of practice (Berry, 2020).

As four S-STEP scholars who regularly utilize narrative in data collection, analysis, and representation, we determined to collaborate to explore and uncover knowledge that could guide others in using narrative as a tool in S-STEP research.

Context of the Study

Each of us as researchers works in different contexts within teacher education: we practice in different countries, we are at different places in our teacher education careers, and we have different orientations to and knowledge of narrative research. Shaun is an associate dean over teacher education at his Canadian institution. Celina works as an adjunct professor teaching courses in adolescent development and classroom management in secondary education and methods for teaching English Learners (ELs) for all education majors. Eliza is the director of a child care center and as such is responsible for educating the teachers she employs. Stefinee is retired but has experience in teaching teachers to teach ELs and secondary methods. We encompass different understandings of S-STEP over time. Stefinee has been part of S-STEP from the start, and Shaun and Eliza are primarily narrative inquirers though they have engaged in S-STEP studies as well. Celina has engaged in work that meshes both narrative and S-STEP.

As we pause at this threshold (Berry, 2020), this space of liminality, we consider where we are and have been as S-STEP scholars and how the community has developed. Many S-STEP researchers claim narrative as their data collection and analytic tools; however, we often find ourselves questioning such work. We wondered who we were to question and what it is we know and understand about using narrative in data collection, analysis, and representation that makes us sometimes consider other competent scholars as lacking in terms of the hybrid. Our aim in this study was to uncover our knowledge by exploring the threads, themes, and plotlines that guide our practices as Narrative S-STEP researchers.

Aim of the Study

The call for this conference inspired us to revisit our knowing of narrative research methods and methodologies within the framework of S-STEP. We sought to collaborate, drawing forward our own past work and the work of others to identify, explore, and develop those threads, themes, and plotlines of our knowledge to support others as Narrative S-STEP scholars. The wonder that guided this study was: What knowledge do we as Narrative S-STEP scholars use in conducting such studies?

Method

We took up this S-STEP focused on our research practice, to better understand and sharpen our practice as scholars and to contribute potentially helpful knowledge to other S-STEP researchers who use or would like to use narrative within their own research. We are located as self-study researchers within the boundaries of S-STEP. This is a methodology but the strategies and techniques used by scholars vary widely and are not proscribed though they are mainly qualitative (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Since this study focused on our practice in using narrative within S-STEP the boundaries may differ from other S-STEP work but it remains firmly located within practice and the use of S-STEP in the exploration of it.

In collecting our data for this study, we collaboratively reviewed Narrative S-STEP studies that we have conducted and published and studies from others who have informed our work in using narratives in their work (see Craig, 2006; Coia & Taylor, 2013; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004) As we considered these research projects, we repositioned ourselves within the process of the project, asking ourselves, “What was I thinking?”, “What strategies were used for data collection and analysis?”, “What made the study trustworthy?” The data consisted of our responses to those questions and resulted in notes about our decisions, interactions, artifacts selected for representation, and our imaginings of what and how other researchers seemed to be thinking concerning these issues in their studies. We also documented our conversation about our responses to these issues. Our analysis is ongoing, in that we identified understandings that emerged in our interactions and dialogue with each other.

As we met, we reviewed our understandings and modified and built on them, being careful to anchor them to notes, texts, and artifacts and interrogate the understandings we came to in relation to our data. We continually worked to make sure that our assertions were supported by our data. Our team reached consensus as we consistently considered what questions guided our development of a project from design through data.

Findings

In all S-STEP research (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) and in doing narrative research particularly narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), while the process for conducting research can be represented linearly, researchers who engage in these forms of research in the process of conducting a particular study find themselves moving among the categories we examine here. We identify each element of narrative self-study of practice research identified in our conversations together (Design, Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Representation of Findings). The questions that emerged as we considered our studies and our examination of them were related to the processes involved in conducting narrative research. We begin by providing a summary of our understanding about the element identified and anchored with commentary in relation to a published work of narrative self-study. We end the consideration of each element with a series of questions we uncovered in our data and dialogue about it which could guide other scholars who undertake such work.

Design

For us, design refers to the formulation of the project and the decisions we made not only about the question guiding the study but also about data needed and the kind of analysis engaged in to enable us to uncover our knowing in relationship to the wonder/question/topic of the study. Usually, the topic/question/wonder emerged as we were intrigued by our experiences within the context of teacher education, our reading, or our interaction with colleagues. In the study by Shaun, Stefinee, and Eliza (Murphy et al. 2011), Eliza was beginning her practicum in teacher education. She contacted Stefinee and Shaun and indicated she would like to do a self-study of her beginnings as a teacher. Shaun and Stefinee were interested as well. Her desire to examine her experience and our desire to use her experience to bring depth to our understanding led us to engage in this study.

In this study, like most Narrative S-STEP work we begin with the questions about how collecting and analyzing narratives might lead us as researchers to uncover what we know. Then once we determined to use narratives, the next questions to be examined follow.

- What literature to review?
- What question prompt will guide the narratives we gather?
- What data and what kind of narrative analysis?

Data Collection

From our inquiry, data collection in these kinds of hybrid studies involves several choices. Just a plan to collect stories is not sufficient. Researchers must decide what narratives they will collect and how they will be collected. Equally important is how to bound them, how to determine what's a narrative or what narratives from the data will enter analysis (Miles et al., 2016). This means being clear about what type of story will be collected--which might be a kernel, a chronicle, memory work, critical incidents, artifacts such as photographs or awards (accompanied by stories), or a narrative beginning or annals (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), etc. Sometimes data collection and analysis occur back and forth--in a kind of check and balance--advancing, adding trustworthiness, and refining. In the study by Pinnegar et al. (2018), we spent a lot of time initially shaping the question we would use to prompt our narratives and how we would collect and store them. For this particular study, we had begun with a thorough examination of the literature on teacher retention (teacher leavers) and teacher identity formation. We also made lists (chronicles and annals) of potential narratives we might expand on (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As we began, we were telling stories about not being teachers in public schools anymore but about evidence of our teacher identity continuing, but we still did not have a well-articulated wonder or question.

Our question emerged as we paused in our rush to share stories, and decided how we wanted to record our stories, consider them, what we wanted to examine, and what specific question prompt would guide the stories we would record and examine. Our examination of the literature enabled us to open a space for this study, but the data collection process needed to target the study's purposes as well. Careful consideration of data collection possibilities (see Goodson et al., 2013) helped us determine to each expand on a story from our list, meet together to share and engage in analysis, then continue with more data collection. This strategy allowed us to hone our research question per

Pinnegar et al. (2018). As a group, we were four researchers who had worked as public school teachers but had left the profession, not necessarily for negative reasons. The question that guided us in our data collection had purpose and focus. “How is our teacher identity still present in our lives?”

Some guiding questions for other researchers might be:

- What are the constraints on data collection in terms of time, context, access, and participants?
- What question will guide our collection?
- How will we elicit narratives rather than exposition?

Data Analysis

As scholars that use Narrative S-STEP work, we have experience with and know of many techniques and strategies for analyzing narrative data (see Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2011). Analysis of narrative data can involve a wide range of strategies and techniques such as creating a taxonomy of story types; examining plotline, character, symbolism (or other literary modes); engaging in positioning analysis; using the three dimensional narrative space, fictionalizing, etc. Indeed, the kinds of strategies used in data collection can shape the kind of analysis utilized. In a study on the contribution of our experiences as mothers to our work as teachers (Pinnegar et al., 2005), the authors chose to use story cycles. Because the researchers are also involved in using S-STEP methodology, they have a personal connection to the stories. The analysis utilized should be very attentive to the potential for inauthenticity. In this study, we used story cycles where we presented individual stories and then responded to the collection of stories and then collected responses to the response. Using the strategy of story cycles, we were supported in the analysis and in attending to accuracy and interpretation. When we as researchers have collected artifacts, expository accounts, or other kinds of data, we move toward interpretation. In our work, we find ourselves asking:

- Given the data collected, what analysis would be most productive?
- How accurately do the stories actually account for the experience?
- What elements of the story should the analysis highlight (theme, plotline, character, positioning, story, etc.)?
- What story of the phenomenon has been revealed?
- How trustworthy is our interpretation?

In addition, we use a strategy of consistently asking these questions during analysis of the data: What does this mean? What is the story this data tells?

Representation of Findings

When we have engaged in Narrative S-STEP, representing the narratives in a way that allows the meaning to unfold and be anchored in evidence is always a complex endeavor. The narratives and the exposition surrounding them needs to link evidence and meaning in ways that capture the narratives and the understandings emerging. In Lay’s (2021) study of teacher educator knowledge, when she came to the space for representing her findings she was overwhelmed by the amount of evidence she had and the length and complexity of the data. She was confronted by how to provide evidence of her findings being true to the narratives collected without overwhelming the reader. She determined to use Saldaña’s (2016) guidelines for constructing narrative vignettes. By combining the narrative data and reforming it as vignettes, she could then present the vignette and unpack its meaning. The vignettes also enabled Lay to present the nuanced meaning of her findings. She was confronted by the same questions all Narrative S-STEP researchers must consider when they decide how to represent their findings using narratives. Indeed, we consistently wonder as we present findings:

- How clearly do the forms we are using present, clarify, and capture the meaning of the data?
- How do the forms of data representation we are using holistically hold together multiple threads or themes, characters, or the findings of the data?
- How can we succinctly represent the threads, themes, and plotlines, knowing what our analysis has revealed?
- How trustworthy are our representations in terms of the data being presented?

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide exemplars of Narrative S-STEP research in ways that would support those engaging in it in developing strong research articles. We used our work to represent the questions and dilemmas as well as strategies and techniques used by us in our Narrative S-STEP work. The elements of Narrative S-STEP research which S-STEP researchers must attend to and the questions they could consider support us and others in developing as stronger narrative researchers. The questions can guide those who engage in such work. As we completed this work, we wondered if similar work could be done with those who use autoethnography, arts-based methods, or other intimate scholarship (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2015) within the frame of self-study methodology.

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Beyond Critical Reflection

Breaking Old Habits and Shifting Pedagogical Values

Rebecca Buchanan & Margaret Clark

Creativity | Teacher Education | Critical Reflective Practice | Care | Collectivism

In this self-study, we describe an aesthetic turn in our critical reflective practices as teacher educators, which provided an opportunity to move from critique into action. Using a framework based on a set of core questions about our teaching practices and sociopolitical contexts, we found ourselves moving beyond the written form in our reflections, towards one using creative means (painting, fiber arts, and poetry) as a way to make sense of our experiences teaching during a pandemic. In doing so, we discovered a series of foundational themes emerge in our work: creativity, collectivism, care, and critical reflection. These themes in turn altered how we began to examine, design, and instruct our students. Using the model of a critical friend in self-study, this paper provides a two-phase analysis of how these themes were made manifest in a single course assignment. The first phase examines the assignment design, while the second phase analyzes how preservice teachers interacted with these themes in completion of that assignment during a course focused on multicultural education.

Introduction

Our friendship began over a decade ago when we met in a doctoral program studying the theory and practice of teaching and learning. We connected over our past experiences as educators of young children and our emerging perspectives on the field of education. Upon our completion of the program, we both began our careers in tenure-track positions at two different public universities in the northeast of the United States. We found ourselves continuing to connect about our experiences as new teacher educators, with a shared desire to engage intellectually, with a trusted friend, about our teaching practices. Since then, we have continued our collaborative reflections and engaged in a collaborative self-study (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009) and critical friendship (Schuck & Russell, 2005) for the past five years. In this work, we designed a framework for our critically reflective teaching practice in which we ask ourselves and other educators to consider *who and where* they teach, *what and how* they teach, and *why* they make those choices (Buchanan & Clark, 2018, 2021). We have found that iteratively engaging with this framework has shifted our own practice, as we hone our pedagogical commitments in relation to the communities in which we operate.

During the past two years, we have used these questions to examine our own emotional and pedagogical challenges and responses to teaching during a global pandemic. This contextual reality caused us to break with one of the ways we have previously communicated, through prose journal posts in a shared document. In order to navigate the realities of teaching during the pandemic, we found ourselves moving beyond the written form towards using creative means (painting, fiber arts, and poetry) as a way to make sense of our experiences, aiming to understand and heal (Clark &

Buchanan, 2021). This shared process of creative sensemaking also revealed the value of collective engagement, particularly in attending to the isolation of teaching during the pandemic, but has also more broadly reshaped our understanding of what it means to engage in the work of teaching.

This process was generative and has led us to examine how we may better bring these acts of care, collectivism, creativity, and critical self-reflection into our learning communities with preservice teachers. In particular, we recognize that the institutions in which we exist privilege individualism; judgment; competition; and linear, written expression- often denying preservice teachers authentic opportunities to engage collectively or creatively and deemphasizing care and critical reflection.

Literature Review

Over the past ten years, we have discovered how our critical friendship and teaching practices have been grounded in a set of themes that have emerged from our discussions, artwork, writings, and other creative acts. Utilizing the methodology of self-study (Laboskey, 2004), which proposes a process of research on one's own teaching practices by asking questions that encourage thoughtful and methodical discussion and reflection, four themes have emerged in our work: critical reflection, care, collectivism, and creativity.

Our collaborative self-study has taken multiple forms over the years, including both written and creative expression, which has encouraged both vulnerability and connection (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2016; Clark & Buchanan, 2021). Moreover, our work has prioritized a dialogic form of critical reflection, the first of our emerging themes, which emphasizes the importance of reflection in the service of social justice, always considering how power operates at multiple levels, including society, schools, classrooms, and learning relationships (Buchanan & Clark, 2018; Clark & Buchanan, 2020).

The second theme emerging from our work is the concept of care. Nel Noddings (2013) framed the concept of care as a relational, dialogic approach to learning and interacting with one another, going beyond a one-way transaction. Her work describes how the act of caring is based on a reciprocal connection, where interaction, exchange, and understanding are required from all participants. Rabin (2008) applies an ethic of care to her work with novice teachers in a teacher education program by examining the opportunities that they have to engage and understand the ethical components of care when teaching. Rabin aligns care with Lev Vygotsky's learning theory of constructivism, where interactions drive meaning-making based on social and cultural understandings. Shawn Ginwright's (2022) work directly connects this ethic to acts and understandings of justice in education.

> *"...care is deeply rooted in our notions of justice….Care is our collective capacity to express concern and empathy for one another. It requires that we act in ways that protect, defend, and advance the dignity of all human beings, animals and the environment. This gets at the core of what justice is about: the act of caring for the well-being and dignity of others." (Ginwright, 2022, p.121)*

This notion of care is, therefore, both dialogic, emerging across differences and understandings, and collective, as it requires that we move beyond our individual acts and towards our interactions with one another. Collectivism, our third theme, is defined by the relationships and communities that hold space for vulnerability, curiosity, and care as we connect with a very specific goal: supporting one another as a learning community. Education tends to emphasize individualism (Labaree, 1997), repeating patterns that exist in our capitalist economy (Anyon, 2011). Research has demonstrated that when teachers are engaged in collective work, it can lead to teacher remoralization and liberation in pedagogy (Santoro, 2018; Buchanan et al., 2020; Clark, 2018). We believe that a shift towards collectivism can support teacher well-being and retention, but also better serve social justice goals in education, by emphasizing the relational aspects of teaching and learning (between teachers and their colleagues as well as teachers and their students) instead of competition, accountability, and hierarchy.

Creativity, our fourth and final theme, has been the most recent emergence from our work. Four months into the COVID-19 global pandemic, we found ourselves beginning to move away from written journal entries towards more artistic and creative expressions to help communicate our feelings and responses to teaching during these new challenging times

(Clark & Buchanan, 2021). We found, as others have, that creative means of expression in pedagogical reflection can be both generative, innovative, and healing (Pithouse-Morgan & Van Laren, 2012; Tan & Ng, 2021; Evans, Ka'opua & Freese, 2015).

Methodology

Our ongoing practice of collaborative self-study (Laboskey, 2004), has involved a co-authored online journal, including both written and creative entries. These entries focus on our teaching practices, identities, and interactions with institutions of education (Buchanan & Clark, 2018; Clark & Buchanan, 2021). Our creative dialogues helped us deepen our inquiries, reinventing our methodology and allowing for more joy, wonder, and improvisation (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2016). Recently we have shifted from examining our personal interactions in teaching and begun to reflect on a different component: our course assignments. This particular paper reports on an examination of how the themes we identified above operate in a single assignment designed by Rebecca and an analysis that consists of two phases. We are the participants in this research, with Rebecca as a lead, Maggie operating primarily as a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005), as well as preservice teachers in Rebecca's Fall 2021 Multicultural Education course. The first phase was an examination of the assignment design, exploring the opportunities for creativity, care, collectivism, and critical reflection within one of Rebecca's assignments.

The final assignment for the Multicultural Education course that Rebecca teaches is an advocacy project. The students select a topic broadly related to culture, power, and schooling; conduct research on their topic; write a paper based on their research that advocates for a particular position; and then communicate what they have learned in some other, more creative format, called an artifact. This assignment is part of a course that is required for all undergraduate students working towards teacher licensure at Rebecca's institution.

Rebecca began the analysis process through journaling about her assignment design with particular attention to the four themes and how they operate within the assignment using the following guiding questions as prompts:

- Creativity: In what ways does the assignment offer opportunities for students to demonstrate their meaning-making in alternative ways - beyond the written form?
- Collectivism: In what ways does the assignment give space for students to think beyond the individual process of learning and teaching and shift towards a collective perspective (ie., dialogic, societal, and global)?
- Care: In what ways does the assignment offer flexibility and ways for both us (as teacher educators) to demonstrate care to our students and for them (as emerging educators) to reflect on care within their own pedagogies?
- Critical Reflection: In what ways does the assignment encourage students to examine their sociopolitical location in society and the interplay of power and privilege in learning, schooling, and teaching?

Maggie, then, operated as a critical friend, using the comment function to respond to the journal. We also met afterward to discuss our examination synchronously over the phone.

During the second phase of the study, 25 individual artifacts from this assignment from Rebecca's course, were collected and analyzed for evidence of the same four themes. An Institutional Review Board approved the collection of these artifacts and preservice teachers had the option to decline the inclusion of their artifacts in the dataset. Each artifact was downloaded and an analytical table was created with columns for all themes. The table included the artifact title, what topic it addressed, and notes on the ways in which the four themes were or were not made manifest in the artifact design. An example from the analytical chart is included below. Rebecca completed the first round of analysis. After completing the analytical chart, Rebecca wrote analytical memos for patterns she noted across the different artifacts. Acting as a critical friend, Maggie then reviewed all 25 artifacts, the analytical table, and the analytical memos, responding with comments in the margin. This process involved us returning to the assignment analysis and design, reconsidering which themes were privileged, why, and how.

Table 1

Analysis Table Excerpt

Artifact	Topic	Creativity	Care	Collectivism	Criticality
Anxie-Sea	Mental Health	Tons of evidence of creativity. Obviously, this PST is a skilled artist, but the weaving together of ocean facts with the images to communicate the emotions of the protagonist is astonishing.	This PST is thinking about how to provide supportive texts for students.	Little evidence explicitly in this artifact.	While there is little evidence explicitly in the artifact, the centralizing of mental health over content is implicitly critical.

Outcomes

The four themes we are exploring - creativity, collectivism, care, and critical reflection - emerged from our previous collaborative self-studies. This particular self-study allowed us to focus on how we enacted these principles through a specific slice of our teaching: the course assignment. The findings are organized around these four themes, explicating our learnings during both phases of analysis.

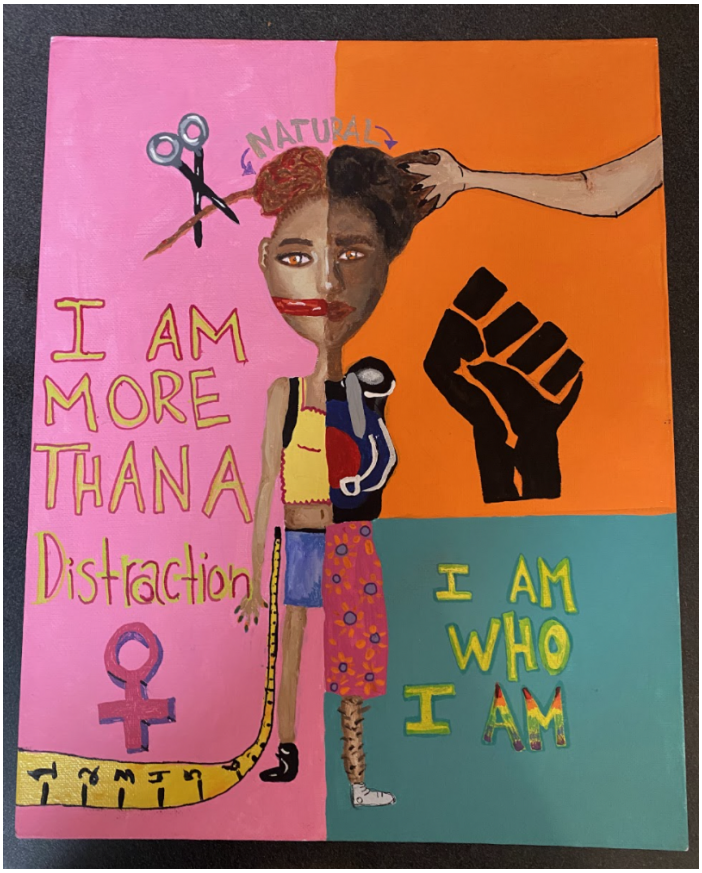
Creativity

Analysis of the assignment itself revealed that it not only offered, but required students to make sense of their topic and communicate their learnings in creative ways that are not traditionally academic. This requirement created tension for some students, who have been so well schooled, that asking them to engage creatively felt risky, because of the vulnerability it required.

However, this requirement also resulted in a wealth of creative approaches utilized by preservice teachers as they developed their artifacts. The example below comes from a preservice teacher whose final project focused on dress codes. She began the project with an interest in how sexism is embedded in dress codes, but through her research (guided in part by suggestions from Rebecca) came to learn about how dress codes also perpetuate racism and heteronormativity. This is all represented in an original collage-style painting she created for the project.

Figure 1

Dress Codes Collage



Analysis of course assignments also opened up new ways of thinking about creativity for Rebecca as evidenced in this excerpt from a collaborative memo:

> *I've been thinking about the multiple kinds of creativity that are being explored in these artifacts. I had originally conceived of creativity as something to do with fine arts, such as painting, drawing, or filmmaking. One of the pieces that is coming out of this analysis is the different kinds of creativity. How creativity can be displayed even in text-based work. And how students use different tools to support their creativity. Many of them make flyers or infographics to display their information in visually appealing ways, but they use digital tools to support their designs.*

Rebecca also reflected on the ways that processing material through creative means can feel intimidating to students. Multiple students noted that they struggled with how skilled some of their peers were with particular artistic mediums. More than one student has introduced their artifact with the disclaimer "I am not an artist." This self-study demanded that as teacher educators we consider the tension between pushing students outside of their comfort zone with assignments like this one - particularly when neither of us is an art educator - and the value of sense-making through non-linear, multimodal means.

Collectivism

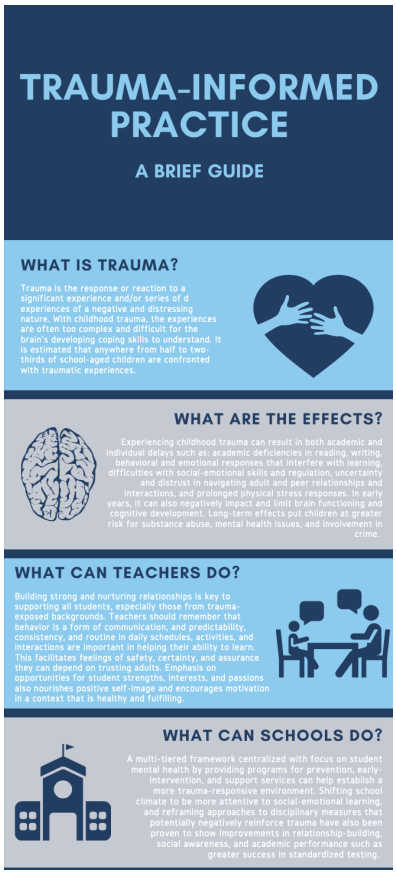
In the first phase of analysis, collectivism was one of the areas that seemed most lacking within the assignment design. In her analytical memo, Rebecca wrote:

> *The assignment is completed individually, because it also serves as a key assessment that our program reports data on for accreditation, so I feel compelled to collect individual data for each student. This, in itself, works against our goals of collectivism, and roots teacher development in the individualistic framework. However, the goal of the assignment is that it is shared beyond the walls of the classroom. Sometimes students create websites, infographics, pieces of art, and videos that they have shared on personal social media accounts, with their peers, and with practicing educators.*

Not surprisingly, in the artifact analysis, we found little explicit attention to teaching as a collective endeavor. In one preservice teacher's project on trauma-informed instruction, she explicitly calls attention to the need for multi-tiered systems of support beyond classrooms, which indicates the collective work involved in creating holistic, student-centered learning environments. This preservice teacher was particularly concerned about how useful and clear the information was in her infographic because she intended to use it at the school where she was working as a paraprofessional.

Figure 2

Trauma-informed Practice Infographic



However, our analysis also revealed how preservice teacher advocacy often involved a call to action on the part of educators, demonstrating an implicit recognition that they can not engage in transformative educational practice alone. Similarly, through prompting from Maggie, Rebecca realized that the barriers presented in accreditation requirements weren't necessarily as rigid as she had originally perceived. We began to consider ways to have preservice teachers work collaboratively to research similar topics, write group papers, and create joint artifacts.

Care

Phase one analysis of the assignment design caused Rebecca to reflect on care at two levels: how does she enact care in her support of students as they engage with the assignment as well as what ways the assignment asks preservice teachers to consider integrating care into their own educational philosophy.

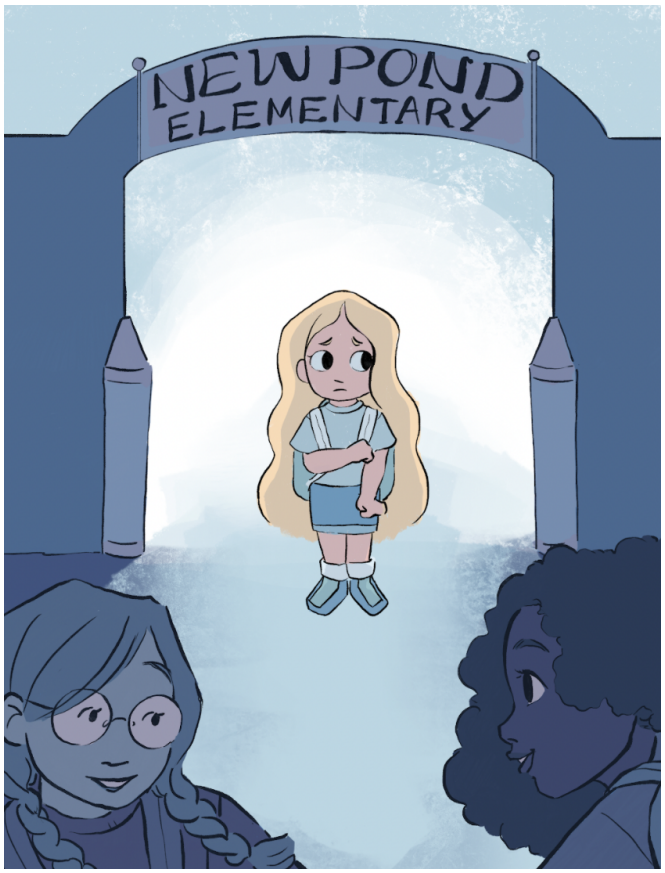
> *I guide students through the process in stages, offering feedback along the way and regular support. I also allow them to shift, redesign, and adjust their plans as necessary. I hope that this, implicitly, communicates care as I engage in humanizing pedagogies. However, this is not something I have typically made explicit. I do think that because they are often advocating for greater attention to the needs of*

historically marginalized populations through their work, they are able to explore the lack of care within traditional educational structures, and consider how to be more care-full as educators.

Phase two analysis revealed that care was an implicit component of preservice teachers' artifacts. They were typically advocating for more attention to the needs of marginalized students. This advocacy was often focused on ways to create more humanizing educational spaces, often regarding relationships between teachers and students. Many of the projects focused explicitly on the mental health needs of students, such as the project below.

Figure 3

Anxie-Sea Picture Book



In this artifact, a preservice teacher has created a picture book that examines the anxiety experienced by the adolescent protagonist by weaving in her experience at a new school with facts about the ocean. This preservice teacher adeptly, and creatively, explored aspects that are often overlooked in PK-12 schools, demonstrating both the need to attend to the mental health of students as well as a means through which to do so.

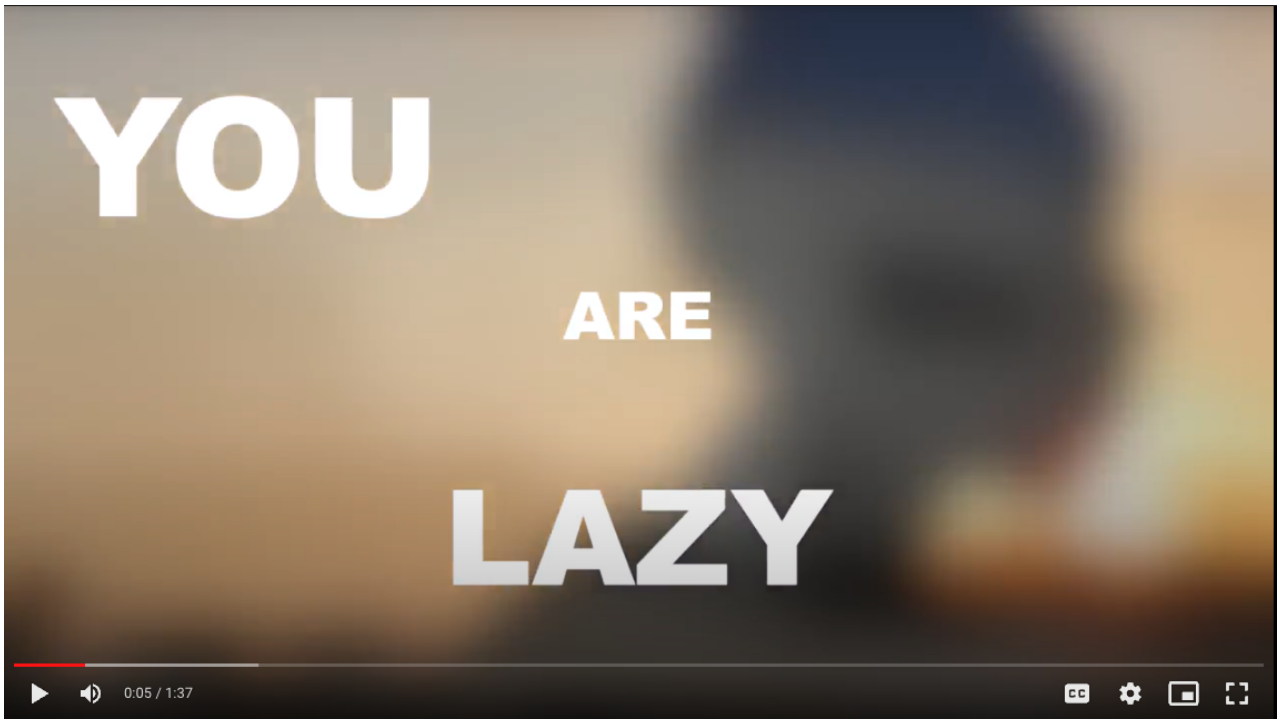
Critical Reflection

Phase one analysis illustrated the centrality of critical reflection to the entire course design. Given our previous self-study work that has emphasized critical reflection, this was not necessarily a surprise, as we have developed particular methods for asking students to critically examine their sociopolitical location and consider the relational implications of that analysis in their developing identities as educators. In reflection on this assignment in particular, Rebecca wrote, “This assignment asks them to go beyond personal reflection to consider what needs to change and how it might occur, as they make choices about how to represent their learnings and communicate them with a broader audience.”

Phase two analysis demonstrated that, like care, much of the criticality was implicit rather than explicit. However, creating artifacts that drew from their previous critical reflection and demonstrated a call to action, reveals how preservice teachers were putting that criticality to use. In one artifact, a short video that examines myths about people who experience poverty - and advocates for a universal basic income, the preservice teacher is explicitly critical as she debunks the stereotypes around poverty. This preservice teacher uses stock images, personal photos, and video-editing skills to unpack the often-unspoken biases regarding people in poverty and advocate for universal basic income, a concept she learned about in class.

Figure 4

Screenshot of Film About Poverty and Stereotypes



Acting as a critical friend when reviewing the artifacts, Maggie noted:

> *I feel like both you and I have the criticality…embedded in our pedagogies, the content, the assignments - by the nature of the topics that we choose. Criticality is a central tenet to who we are, our identities as humanizing pedagogues. However, the other three categories (creativity, care, and collectivism) seem to be harder to achieve... (or do they?)...I have to remember to offer multiple methods for expression. I have to break my habits in order to centralize creativity, care, and collectivism. I wonder how much that has to do with our own education... and our students' education. So many of them have expressed that they'd prefer to just write papers as individuals.... they don't want group work, they don't want to have to do some creative expression. [Our schools] train our students to think individually, express themselves through writing, and learn in environments that aren't always caring. By bringing forth these tenets, we are asking them to get out those traditional pathways of learning and assessment.*

This quote demonstrates the power of collaborative self-study for examining our experiences and the feedback we receive from students critically. It also highlights the challenges we face as teacher educators who seek to disrupt traditional, institutionalized patterns of learning and teaching.

Discussion

On Student Perspectives and Experiences

In this critical and collaborative self-study, we aimed to further explore a series of themes that had emerged in our prior work: care, collectivism, creativity, and critical reflection. For this project, we wanted to focus on a specific component of our teaching: the course assignment in Rebecca's undergraduate education course. In the design of this study, we aimed to create a systematic, purposeful review of the assignment and how it was enacted by the students in this course. We found that for this group of students, engaging with these concepts in their learning process of completing this assignment, was a challenge for some and welcomed by others. As seen in the artifacts shared in this paper, some students took the opportunity to design and create advocacy projects and artifacts that manifested care and collectivism in teaching and learning. However, other students were challenged by this assignment. In our analysis, Rebecca described feeling like it was a "mixed bag" of student responses at the end of the semester. Maggie connected this back to her own assignments, which ask for creative expressions and collaborative approaches, and how students have multiple "hesitancies" when sharing their thinking and learning this way. Despite these challenges, we also

discovered that this assignment, and others like it, do offer students opportunities to reflect in innovative ways that they might not have otherwise utilized in their teacher education coursework. These opportunities allow students to share their sensemaking in non-linear, non-written, open-ended, and action-focused ways. For a project about advocacy, we found that creativity can be the lynchpin for preservice teachers to feel comfortable taking action because the work has a more personal connection. At the conclusion of the assignment, the students also shared their work with one another during class, describing and discussing their process in the act of creating it, which promoted collective inquiry, sensemaking, and vulnerability.

Our Own Perspectives and Experiences

As is demonstrated in the quote above from the critical reflection section, this process provided opportunities for us to pause and think anew about our course assignment design, implementation, and assessment. In our future reflections, we plan to continue to ask ourselves: How can we better align our course assignments with our pedagogical beliefs about teaching and learning? How can we move away from a product focus (assignment/rubric/collection/grading) to a process-focused learning experience? How can we further inject opportunities for our students to engage in artistic and creative expression, ground their work in concepts of care, and connect it to a community, beyond their own learning and teaching processes? Despite a years-long focus on critical reflection, we found that diving into a particular assignment revealed blind-spots, such as the assumptions around accreditation demands. And collaborative reflection provided opportunities to imagine new possibilities and more effectively navigate (perceived) institutional barriers.

Significance in the Action

Our findings demonstrate the generative capacity of reframing teacher education and considering - at the micro level - what this means for preservice teacher experience. We found that prioritizing these four themes: creativity, care, collectivism, and critical reflection, supported our preservice teachers in thinking differently and even becoming different, because of the shifts in not only content but also process. Requiring multi-modal expression, and sharing that learning with others, also encouraged preservice teachers to consider how they might apply similar principles in their future work with PK-12 students - extending the action beyond the teacher education coursework.

For teacher educators who are interested in resisting traditional educational practices, this paper offers an exploration of how to go beyond the critique of critical reflection into the action. Praxis requires both reflection and action (Freire, 1970), and this particular analysis demonstrates how an emphasis on action and advocacy can operate both within a preservice teacher education course and beyond, demonstrating a method for navigating institutional barriers, and encouraging preservice teachers to share their advocacy more broadly.

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Revisiting Collaborative Editorial Initiatives to Learn More About Our Academic Motivations

A Collective Poetic Self-Study

Inbanathan Naicker, Daisy Pillay, & Kathleen Pithouse-Morgan

Collective Self-study | Editorials | Poetic Self-study | Self-reflexive Research | Academic Motivation

We are three South African teacher educators who, in collaboration, have edited six collections of methodologically innovative self-reflexive educational research over seven years. For this paper, we asked: "What can we learn about our academic motivations from revisiting our editorials?" and "Why does this matter?" To promote collaborative creativity and collective reflexivity, we used poetry as representation and analysis. Data sources were our six collaboratively written editorials. Retracing the trajectory of our editing projects allowed us to see what looking holistically at the projects could tell us about our motivations as academics and why this could matter for ourselves and others. By composing a series of pantoum, tanka, and lantern poems, we could make new sense of our complex and multifaceted editing experiences. We distilled our responses to our guiding questions using these progressively shorter poetic forms. This self-study illustrated the value of editorial work as an intellectual activity for us over time. We saw how editing impacted our understanding and enacting of academic leadership, identity, and learning. And we appreciated how it allowed us to connect with so many others. Accordingly, we are reenergised to pursue collaborative editing projects. We hope academics interested in their motivations will find our collaborative process an inviting entry point for their own explorations. Also, we hope that our poetic self-study will inspire others to pursue editorial or other scholarly paths that nourish their academic souls.

Context and Aims

We are three South African teacher educators from different cultural, racial, and gender backgrounds. We explore, question, and theorise lived educational experiences using self-reflexive methodologies such as self-study, and arts-inspired methods such as poetry and visual arts. Academic work by Inbanathan focuses on educational leadership and management, Daisy on teacher identities, and Kathleen on professional learning. Inbanathan is interested in developing self-reflexive and arts-based scholarship in educational leadership, which traditionally relies on more conventional methods and methodologies. Daisy's scholarship aims to cultivate a fertile ground for people to experiment with aesthetic-ethical entanglements of the self and its moral imperative. Kathleen's work includes understanding and supporting teachers and other professionals as inspired, creative learners who lead contextually appropriate change in conversation with others.

We are committed to fostering self-reflexive, polyvocal research learning communities to create new spaces for innovative inquiry that contributes to educational and social change. Accordingly, we have worked as coeditors on six educational research collections over the last seven years (Pillay et al., 2021; Pillay et al., 2015; Pillay et al., 2016; Pillay et al., 2017a; Pillay et al., 2019; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2020).

The Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP, n.d.) 2023 Castle Conference call has encouraged self-study researchers to pause and reflect mindfully to integrate new learnings from the past, present, and future. That call also prompted us to take a step back and reconsider our editorial initiatives. We recognised that we had gone into each endeavour with a distinct goal. However, we had been so busy doing the work that we had not taken the time to consider our editorial projects as a whole. Later, we were further intrigued by the American Educational Research Association president's 2023 Annual Meeting call (Milner, 2022), which encouraged educational research editors to "embrace their responsibilities to be transformative and innovative in how research is shared with others" to advance justice and equity (para. 7). These calls inspired us to interrupt our research collaboration trajectory and reexamine our editorial practice. We saw this as part of our ethical responsibility in public higher education. In particular, we were interested in what had motivated our editorial work over time, and why this mattered to us as academics committed to addressing critical and contested issues of self and social change for the public good. We decided to pause consciously, and intentionally reflect, asking: "What can we learn about our academic motivations from revisiting our editorials?" and "Why does this matter?"

Self-study was our chosen methodology because it emphasises critical self-awareness as an essential component of contributing to academic knowledge (Feldman, 2009). We wanted to contribute to scholarly discussions in which others have used collaborative self-study to investigate the motivation for their self-reflexive academic work (e.g., Grant & Butler, 2018; Samaras et al., 2015). We were inspired by Grant and Butler's (2018) argument that investigating their research "drive" (p. 326) could help academics "more fully understand their experiences and understand if and how their work has been self-healing, supportive of social justice, or promoting other positive changes in identity and practice" (p. 329). And we were intrigued by Samaras et al.'s (2015) contention that researching the "why" of their scholarship could be a way for academics to enhance personal autonomy "within the tensions and practical exigencies of contemporary university life" (p. 256) and to "[forge] a resilient language to facilitate the reimagining of the university of the 21st century" (p. 247). Accordingly, we believe our study will be of interest to academics who have ever wondered what drives them, or why self-awareness is crucial for impactful research.

In what follows, we give an overview of the professional and philosophical stance underpinning our editorial projects. Then we explain how our self-study was built around the literary arts-based method of poetic inquiry and discuss the quality standards we looked for. Next, we describe our data sources, the six editorials. We show how we used pantoum, tanka, and lantern poems for representation, analysis, and meaning-making. To close, we consider the significance of our self-study.

Professional and Philosophical Stance

We began this self-study by reflecting on what we already knew about our editing approach. We agreed that editing enables and highlights interesting scholarly dialogues, debates, and discursive practices that push methodological, theoretical, disciplinary, and contextual boundaries. In our editing projects, we purposefully included graduate students, early-career academics, and senior scholars from various settings and fields of knowledge. This cross-border academic collaboration was especially energising in light of how apartheid forced us to live in separate educational, physical, and social worlds as Indian (Inbanathan and Daisy) and white people (Kathleen). Under apartheid, we almost certainly would not have met one another, let alone collaborated on exciting projects.

As we have previously articulated (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2022), our partnership is founded on the conceptualisation of *reflexive ubuntu* (Harrison et al., 2012). Ubuntu's central tenet is the interpersonal process of being and caring for others (Reddy et al., 2014). Our understanding of this Southern African indigenous ethical philosophy orients us personally and professionally as relational and always open to self-transformation. In addition, we are committed to an ethos of *polyvocality* (creative interaction and interdependence among many voices) in educational research to bring about

positive change in ourselves and how we approach knowledge for the public good (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014; Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019).

Methods

Arts-Inspired Self-Study

Self-study researchers often develop creative methods to move their research forward (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2020; Whitehead, 2004). The literary arts (Dobson, 2010; Galman, 2009), the performing arts (Meskin & van der Walt, 2014; Weber & Mitchell, 2002), and the visual arts (Weber, 2014; Weber & Mitchell, 2004) have all influenced this methodological innovation. Arts-based self-study research captures things that are hard to put into words, fosters empathy, encourages self-reflection, elicits emotions, and keeps people interested (Weber, 2014).

Over time, we have built a strong working relationship based on mutual trust and respect, allowing us the freedom to experiment with and conceive novel research approaches, drawing inspiration from the arts. Hence, we chose collective poetic inquiry as a literary arts-inspired self-study approach. We drew on our past experiences with poetry as a way for people to create together and self-reflect as a group (Pillay et al., 2017b; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2015; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2014).

Like other art forms, poetry can operate on a spectrum, as Young (1982) has pointed out. Poetry that meets literary and artistic standards can be found near one end. On the other end, experimenting with poetic modes of expression can foster a "poetical mode of thinking" (Freeman, 2017, p. 72) without the goal of producing exceptional poems (Pithouse-Morgan, 2021). We concentrated on making and communicating poetry as research rather than on writing extraordinary poems. Each step of our poetic self-study process was built on the previous one, and evolved through collective decision-making. We had weekly meetings (a few in-person and many online) and email exchanges for over a year.

Trustworthiness

We aimed to be transparent about our research process, explain our discoveries, and demonstrate how we considered others' ideas when writing this paper (LaBoskey, 2004; Mena & Russell, 2017). We solicited feedback from three critical friends to strengthen our work, conscious of the criticisms of self-study researchers for solipsism and navel-gazing (Samaras & Freese, 2006). Six months into the study, we presented our work-in-progress during an in-person meeting with these colleagues with whom we have worked on many self-study projects. Our 90-minute conversation helped us see things from different angles, gave us fresh ideas, and helped us to put what we were thinking and feeling into words.

Data sources

This self-study relied on data from our six coauthored editorials. Each edited collection is summarised in turn below.

Our special issue of *Journal of Education* (Pillay et al., 2015) demonstrated how autoethnography can provide sociocultural insights into how teachers, academics, and researchers in higher education negotiate their roles. The autoethnographic accounts illustrated how academics can use creativity to resist depersonalising and disconnecting higher education discourses.

Academic Autoethnographies: Inside Teaching in Higher Education (Pillay et al., 2016) is an edited book that presented creative and analytical tools for studying university educators' different identities, experiences, and practices. We encouraged readers to get involved with autoethnographic research as a complex and transformative way to learn about academic selves and teaching in higher education.

Our subsequent edited volume, *Object Medleys: Interpretive Possibilities for Educational Research* (Pillay et al., 2017a), resulted from an international effort by academics, from different places and fields of knowledge, to learn more about the connections between people and things. The book showed how studying education through the meanings we give to objects, or take from them, can result in new and different ways of reworking and rethinking that could inspire social change.

Then, our themed issue of the journal, *Educational Research for Social Change* (Pillay et al., 2019), demonstrated how creative interactions with objects can lead to new ways of knowing. It revealed how thinking with objects could inspire change in oneself and others, contributing to a larger agenda of social change and transformation.

In another *Journal of Education* special edition (Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2020), we investigated the generative intersection of self-reflexive research and methodological ingenuity. Human experiences, relationships, and emotions were explored in novel ways to generate new knowledge for educational and societal change.

In *Alternation*, our most recent themed journal issue (Pillay et al., 2021), we focused on academics' innovative approaches to depicting, analysing, and theorising their lived experiences in response to social cohesion-related contestations in higher education. The articles captured the human experiences, interactions, and emotions in higher education that shape academic identities and social cohesion or fragmentation.

Our Poetic Representation

We used a poetic mode for data representation and analysis. First, as shown below, we made a found poem out of each editorial to capture its spirit. Found poems are composed of text from data sources, reassembled into poetic form (Butler-Kisber, 2005). We reasoned that these found poems would function as research poems. As Langer and Furman (2004) have indicated, research poems can be used to compress data, providing concise and evocative representations. Writing research poetry can also help researchers gain insight into the breadth and complexities of the data (Langer & Furman, 2004).

We chose the French Malaysian pantoum poetry format for our research poems. This format's repeating lines permit the recurrence of the most prominent or emotionally evocative elements (Furman et al., 2006). We assigned two editorials to each author to bring our diverse viewpoints into a conversation. After sharing our pantoums and explanatory descriptions, we merged them in a single document to view them as combined data representations.

The Pantoum Poems and Descriptions

As explained above, to represent our data (our editorials), we individually wrote two found poems to encapsulate what we saw when reviewing our coauthored work. A brief explanatory description followed each pantoum, based on two simple prompts: "What does the pantoum have to say?" and "What is the significance of this?"

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2015 Editorial

A spirit of critical inquiry
Generative socially useful insights
To act with hope . . .
Vulnerability, reflexivity, empathy

Generative socially useful insights
Conversations, productively resisting
Vulnerability, reflexivity, empathy
Qualitative difference to teaching and scholarship

Conversations, productively resisting
To act with hope . . .
Qualitative difference to teaching and scholarship
A spirit of critical inquiry

Values of vulnerability, reflexivity, and empathy contribute to a qualitative difference in our research learning, teaching, and scholarship in self-reflexive inquiry. Critical conversations help to inform generative and socially relevant concepts and ideas to resist oppressive and marginalising traditions. Acting with hope is productive resistance.

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2016 Editorial

Creative research practices stimulate
Creative research practices are catalysts
Intuition and spontaneity deepen insights
Mutual trust, mutual understanding, mutual learning

Creative research practices are catalysts
Examining, questioning, theorising lived experiences
Mutual trust, mutual understanding, mutual learning
Critical inquiry into selves, experiences, and practices

Examining, questioning, theorising lived experiences
Intuition and spontaneity deepen insights
Critical inquiry into selves, experiences, and practices
Creative research practices stimulate

Mutual trust and understanding strengthen our collaborative scholarship. As expressed through innovative research practices, creative thinking is central to our research and scholarship processes and outcomes. Theorising lived experiences serves as a foundation for our experiments to gain deeper insights into “who we are” and “why” and as a catalyst for critical inquiry with others to learn “what we do” in our daily practices.

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2017 Editorial

Negotiating multiple identities
Develop new perspectives
Playful engagement
What counts as evidence?

Develop new perspectives
Tools for thinking and reflection
What counts as evidence?
Making visible muted voices

Tools for thinking and reflection
Playful engagement
Making visible muted voices
Negotiating multiple identities

We bring our histories, personal and professional experiences, and perspectives to our collaborative work. Scholarly work can be joyful. Through play, we develop new ways of researching and knowing. Our self-reflexive work has made us think about who we are as researchers and how we can serve others.

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2019 Editorial

Entanglements!
Decentre the human actor
Unorthodox research practices
Potential for interdisciplinary work

Decentre the human actor
New way of knowing
Potential for interdisciplinary work
Agenda of social change

New way of knowing
Unorthodox research practices
Agenda of social change
Entanglements!

In conventional educational research, the researcher holds power. Using novel methods, such as object inquiry, can reconfigure the power dynamic by giving participants agency and voice. So, we can learn more about others. Learning from others increases social justice, change, and transformation. Working with new methods creates spaces for

scholars from different disciplines to collaborate and incorporates disciplinary lenses into everyday stories our participants and we tell.

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2020 Editorial

A spark igniting curiosity
Playful pathways
Imaginative encounters
In a web of relationships

Playful pathways
To confront what troubles us
In a web of relationships
For discovery and growth

To confront what troubles us
Imaginative encounters
For discovery and growth
A spark igniting curiosity

Curiosity is vital in self-reflexive research. By trying new ideas and methods, researchers become aware of their preconceptions and seek alternative perspectives. Play and imagination help researchers become more inquisitive, fun, inventive, and open to exploring their identities and forming relationships. These traits can help them identify new study routes, opening doors to addressing educational and social problems.

Pantoum and Description Inspired By the 2021 Editorial

Taking up possibility and hope
Playing, wrestling with self
Reclaiming space for dissent
Disrupting hierarchies and divides

Playing, wrestling with self
Reconsidering, dialoguing
Disrupting hierarchies and divides
To feel safe and free

Reconsidering, dialoguing
Reclaiming space for dissent
To feel safe and free
Taking up possibility and hope

People must struggle with themselves, challenge the status quo, and create new opportunities for themselves and others to create safe spaces for people to disagree and communities that can only grow when people value differences. Consider what might happen if academia were a space where people could try new things, wrestle with their identities, and imagine new ways to be in a world full of possibilities, hope, and innovation.

Our Poetic Analysis

As the first layer of analysis, we worked individually to write interpretive poems (Langer & Furman, 2004) to capture and express our subjective reactions to the medley of research poems and descriptions. We selected the Japanese five-line tanka poetry format, with a pattern of five, seven, five, seven, seven syllables per line (Furman & Dill, 2015). Tanka poems are historically concerned with expressing human emotion and personal voice (Breckenridge, 2016).

Tanka Poems and Descriptions

The first layer of analysis involved writing interpretive poems to express our reaction to the pantoum poems and descriptions. We each composed a tanka poem and a brief explanation.

Inbanathan's Tanka and Description

Inbanathan's Tanka and Description

Creative research
Productively resisting
    Mutual learning
        For thinking and reflection
        Agenda of social change

We aim to produce new knowledge through creative methods. While this type of research is not always popular in academia, we persist. It is rewarding and exciting because we always learn something new. Examining our thoughts and actions makes us realise that our scholarly work must transform us and have a social impact.

Daisy's Tanka and Description

Decentre human
Making visible voices
    Playful, safe, and free
        Productively resisting
        Reclaiming space for dissent

Playfully deconstructing the singular, autonomous human allows other voices to emerge, highlighting our entanglement and the complexity of everyday experiences. Reclaiming everyday space helps to resist hegemonic and normative discourses and practices. Liberating our essentialised limits allows us to make ethically responsible teaching and research choices.

Kathleen’s Tanka and Description

Curiosity
Igniting playful pathways
    Imaginative
        Self ↔ mutual encounters
        Sparking possibilities

Curiosity encourages us to try new things, learn, and face new situations. It inspires and innovates us. Curiosity can lead people to others interested in self-directed, wonder-driven research. These encounters offer experimentation, encouraging us to play. This sparks new perspectives, voices, and untold stories.

Our Poetic Outcomes

After reading the tankas and their descriptions, we each wrote a lantern poem communicating ideas from the tankas and descriptions. This served as a second analysis layer. With a pattern of one, two, three, four, one syllables per line, the five-line Japanese lantern poem resembles the shape of a Japanese lantern (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019). We expected this compact poetry form to push us to focus on the most personally meaningful ideas in our tankas and descriptions (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019).

We combined the three lantern poems in a poetry cluster (Butler-Kisber & Stewart, 2009), which we considered in light of our guiding questions: “What can we learn about our motivation as academics from revisiting our editorials?” and “Why does this matter?” We also returned to Grant and Butler's (2018) and Samaras et al.’s (2015) arguments about the potential value of investigating the impetus for self-reflexive scholarship.

While preparing for our discussion, Daisy (a visual artist) extemporaneously created a visual poetic response. We see Daisy’s creation as a dialogic assemblage. Dialogic assemblages are multidimensional collages of pieces that talk to each other and have multiple meanings (Pahl, 2017). Below (Figure 1), we present the lantern poem cluster, accompanied by the visual poetic assemblage with Daisy’s artist’s statement.

Figure 1

Lantern Poem Cluster and Visual Poetic Assemblage

Assembling Joy in Difference

Growth

Learn more

Try new things

Persevere

Change

Think

Learning

Decentre

Differences

Act

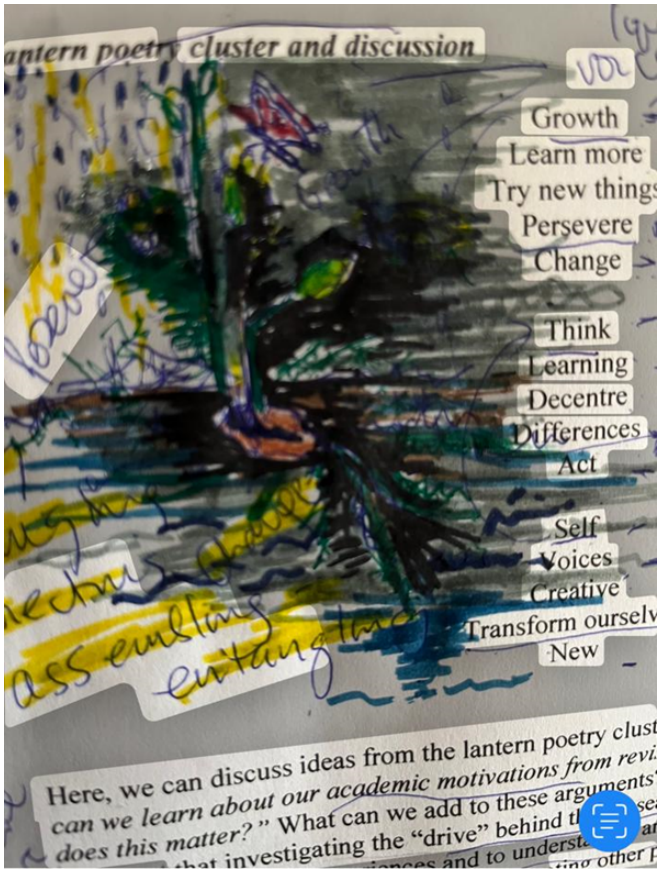
Self

Voices

Creative

Transform ourselves

New



Daisy's Artist's Statement

The visual poetic image assembles the vibrant mattering that enfolds and entangles as we reflect on the learnings we lived, shared, and experienced across the six issues. The life-affirming moments at/across each nodal moment of editorial work are about finding joy in difference—words, ideas, perspectives, concepts, knowledge, and values. The image captures the complexity and the messiness, the dark, risky moments, and delicate threads of joy—all assembling in a frenzied moment of knowledge-making, and for seeking out new pathways for living and learning in academia today and for what may exist in the future. It is about that moment.

Understandings From the Lantern Poem Cluster and Visual Poetic Assemblage

We had a 90-minute online discussion about the poetry cluster and assemblage. Our conversation was automatically recorded and transcribed. The essence of our dialogue was then extracted and condensed into three short paragraphs, each describing how our understanding of our academic motivations has evolved through revisiting our editorials. Next, we each discuss this in terms of our scholarly interests: academic leadership (Inbanathan), academic identities (Daisy), and academic learning (Kathleen).

Inbanathan

Editorial work involves the practice of academic leadership. Leadership is about vision, influence, and change (Connolly et al., 2017). Our experience in our six editorials is that how we envision the editorial project has to be fluid and subject to continual revision as it evolves. Our lines of sight and influence must be contingent on what authors and reviewers bring into the polyvocal space we open up. In this scholarly space, we are sometimes not the expert knowers of what is brought before us. Hence, we need to make shifts in the direction and the type of influence we exercise as editors. Our passion for editorial work is sustained by seeing our academic leadership as a fluid assemblage where multiple voices and epistemological, ontological, and methodological perspectives are mediated.

Daisy

Learning about identities through editorial work illuminates the potential of each moment of creative knowledge-making experience as a space for assembling new stories and meanings of self: who I want to be and what kind of scholarship I want to do. The multifacetedness of editorial work makes available the vibrant materiality of identity (re)making as unpredictable, playful, and exciting (Ros i Solé et al., 2020). Editorial work, as a momentary assemblage of/for identity making, illuminates the response-abilities editors exercise, serving as contact nodes for germinating new lines of thinking, doing, and being academic. The complex editorial process of assembling and holding the diverse, delicate, web-like threads of difference momentarily in place makes the alterity of self possible as creative, agentic, and socially response-able in a university setting. Across the six editorials, the openings for vibrant identities (versus singular fixed versions of who academics are, and what scholarship is relevant) find space to resist productively, and "'difference' is seen in a continuum" (Ros i Solé et al., 2020, p. 405).

Kathleen

We did not intend to publish six editorials in seven years. We gained momentum and moved quickly from one project to the next. We initially had a plan for each project, but the unknown takes over when you edit a collection. Editorial projects are experiments. We dispersed seeds without knowing what would happen to them. We had no idea what we would discover as we created spaces for people to bring their new work, and we revelled in our vibrant ignorance. As Jack Whitehead (2008) put it, our learning had a "life-affirming energy" (p. 103). Editing multiple collections involves multi-phased, polyvocal learning that has fluid parameters. This complex, extended learning has become part of our personal and professional lifeblood.

Scholarly Significance

How might this account of our collective poetic self-study be helpful to others? We aimed to write this paper transparently and expressively to demonstrate our research process. Methodologically, revisiting the edited collections and composing pantoum, tanka, and lantern poems was a creative analytical practice (Richardson, 2000), enabling us to make sense of our 7-year-long multifaceted editing experiences. We gradually distilled our responses to the guiding questions by using progressively concise poetic forms (Furman & Dill, 2015). Daisy's extemporaneous assemblage

complemented the unfolding poetic process. By composing the series of poems, we have made more visible, and accessible, our "understanding in flow" of the motivations for our editorial projects (Freeman, 2017, p. 86). And readers are invited to enter our poetical thinking's "felt space" (Freeman, 2017, p. 73). Self-reflexivity prompted by the arts can affect the protagonist and the audience, making a modest yet meaningful contribution to a more extensive educational change movement. We hope that other academics curious about what motivates them will find our collaborative process an inviting entry to developing their own creative analytical practices.

This paper has further demonstrated how new awareness, brought about by co-creative poetical thinking, deepened our insight into our scholarly motivations and how we understand and enact academic leadership, identities, and learning through editing. Editorial articles and collection editing are not always valued as highly as other forms of publishing for academic performance monitoring or promotion. Nonetheless, we are committed to ongoing engagement and time for editorial work. Our self-study highlighted the value of editorial work as a necessary intellectual activity for us. We were able to articulate the impact editing has had on our academic growth and generativity. And we appreciated how it enabled us to connect with, and learn with, many others. Consequently, we are re-energised to pursue collaborative editing initiatives. We hope our self-study will inspire others to pursue editorial or other scholarly paths that nourish their academic souls.

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Critical Friend Intimacy and Individual Transformations

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Critical Friends | Intimacy | Identity Transformation

We have been investigating how critical friendships develop and we found that our critical friendship evolved in ways that went beyond what is in the self-study teacher and teacher education practices (S-STEP) foundational research literature. We continue to wonder about the power of critical friendship for supporting individual transformation. This paper is an elaboration about the essence of critical friend intimacy and its complicity in influencing individual transformations by those in the relationship. We examined S-STEP literature to determine how critical friend intimacy is discussed and if others connected it to individual transformations. We found 13 refereed empirical S-STEP reports from the Studying Teacher Education journal about critical friendships for our interpretive qualitative study to address our research question. We found examples of critical friend intimacy within this literature, and we found evidence of others reporting connections between intimate critical friendships and individual transformations. However, the norms of S-STEP reporting disguise these examples and evidence. We share implications of this research and offer opportunities for future research.

Context

We are two critical friends who have been investigating how critical friendships develop. We found that our critical friendship seemed to evolve in ways that went beyond those described by the critical friend self-study teacher and teacher education practices (S-STEP) foundational research literature (e.g., Shuck & Russell, 2005; Stolle et al., 2019). In our initial report, we investigated our critical friendship using characteristics found in the literature, such as engaging in honest communication, listening, and valuing one another's perspectives, but also being critical (e.g., Costa & Kallick, 1993). We noticed that our relationship evidenced two new critical friendship characteristics – significant otherness (i.e., a desire to emulate another) and conversation residue (i.e., conversation(s) that inspires agency) – that we credited as supporting professional identity transformation (Kastberg & Grant, 2020). After additional analysis of our data corpus of recorded critical friend conversations and new conversations about recollections from key moments in our critical friendship, we recognized the space created by our friendship as racialized. This recognition promoted acceptance and curiosity about the racialized nature and implications of our relationship. Our inquiry into the racialized space created by our critical friendship included that our relationship had evolved with substantive intimacy. Such critical friend intimacy enabled us to share in racialized conversations freely and without risk and led to one of us experiencing an identity transformation toward antiracist praxis (Berman & Paradies, 2010). The adoption of an antiracist praxis can be directly linked to key experiences during the development of our critical friendship (Grant & Kastberg, 2022). Since then, we have been wondering about the power of critical friendship to support individual transformation.

Aim/Objective

The aim of this paper is to elaborate on the essence of critical friend intimacy and its complicity in influencing or supporting individual transformations by those in the relationship. All critical friendships are not equivalent (Bullock, 2020), even though many critical friendships share similar characteristics and performative processes with respect to the S-STEP literature (Stolle, et al., 2019). Bullock (2020) identified ways that critical friendships may involve "boundary crossings" including social, conceptual, and institutional (when friends are geographically distanced) that render the friends to be more vulnerable. While our past research findings about critical friendship were specific, contextual, and likely different from others, the essence of our critical friendship that led to transformations and praxis is not unique. Our critical friendship supported individual transformations and praxis through intimacy that emerged after professional identity façades were abandoned (Grant & Kastberg, 2022). In addition, our critical friend intimacy was supported by what we termed transformative characteristics, significant otherness (i.e., a desire to emulate another), and conversation residue (i.e., conversation(s) that inspires agency) (Grant & Kastberg, 2022; Kastberg & Grant, 2020). We found that members of intimate critical friendships experience deeper and more substantive conversations that incite an individual's desire for change with sufficient agentic potential for transformation. Conversely, when there is insufficient critical friend intimacy, that agentic impetus for change may be forfeited or perhaps lacks sufficient agentic potential to manifest as transformation.

In this paper, we examined S-STEP literature to determine how critical friend intimacy is discussed and if other researchers have connected critical friendships to individual transformations. Such findings would strengthen our claim of connections between critical friend intimacy and individual transformations. And support calls for further and more detailed descriptions of the role of critical friendship in self-study methodology (Bullock, 2020).

The questions that guide this S-STEP literature-based inquiry include: (a) What is the essence of critical friend intimacy in the S-STEP research literature? (b) What evidence exists in the S-STEP literature that connects critical friend intimacy and transformation of individuals in these intimate relationships?

Methods

Our research approach was qualitative and interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). We searched the *Studying Teacher Education* journal as the primary source of peer-reviewed S-STEP reports of empirical studies about critical friendships. We found 13 articles that included "Critical Friend(s)" or "Critical Friendship(s)" prominently featured in the title. Our effort was to identify contemporary peer-reviewed articles with descriptions of critical friendship rather than to conduct a systematic review.

Table 1

Critical Friendship Empirical Studies from Studying Teacher Education Journal

Author(s) (date)	**Title (Vol. #, No. #)**
Schuck & Russell (2005)	Self-Study, Critical Friendship, and the Complexities of Teacher Education (Vol. 1, No. 2)
Loughran & Brubaker (2015)	Working with a Critical Friend: A Self-study of Executive Coaching (Vol. 11, No. 3)
Fletcher, Chróinín, & O'Sullivan (2016)	A Layered Approach to Critical Friendship as a Means to Support Pedagogical Innovation in Pre-service Teacher Education (Vol. 12, No.3)
Martin & Russell (2018)	Supervising the Teacher Education Practicum: A Self-Study with a Critical Friend (Vol. 14, No. 3)

Author(s) (date)	Title (Vol. #, No. #)
Sabatier & Bullock (2018)	Living in Plurilingual Spaces: Self-Study, Critical Friendship, and the Plurality of Publics (Vol. 14, No. 3)
O'Dwyer, Bowles, & Chróinín (2019)	Supporting Collaborative Self-Study: An Exploration of Internal and External Critical Friendships (Vol. 15, No. 2)
Olan & Edge (2019)	Collaborative Meaning-Making and Dialogic Interactions in Critical Friends as Co-Authors (Vol. 15, No. 1)
Stolle, Frambaugh-Kritzer, Freese, & Persson (2019)	Investigating Critical Friendship: Peeling Back the Layers (Vol. 15, No. 1)
Appleget, Shimek, Myers, & Hogue (2020)	A Collaborative Self-Study with Critical Friends: Culturally Proactive Pedagogies in Literacy Methods Courses (Vol. 16, No. 1)
Baker & Bitto (2021)	Fostering a Critical Friendship between a Program Coordinator and an Online Adjunct to Achieve Reciprocal Mentoring (Vol. 17, No. 2)
Edge & Olan (2021)	Learning to Breathe Again: Found Poems and Critical Friendship as Methodological Tools in Self-Study of Teaching Practices (Vol. 17, No. 2)

We viewed Schuck and Russell (2005) as a foundational publication about critical friendship and is often cited by researchers in the S-STEP community when discussing this topic. The other articles are contemporary empirical research reports, published between 2015 and 2021(6 most recent years). Of the 13 articles, there were two editorials that we excluded, and we used the 11 remaining studies for this investigation (see Table 1). We do not claim that this data set is exhaustive, but it supports our very focused inquiry into how critical friendships are discussed in peer-reviewed articles published in the *Studying Teacher Education* journal which is highly valued by the S-STEP research community.

The data for this investigation comes from these 11 peer-reviewed published empirical studies and two empirical reports of our prior research about critical friendship development (Grant & Kastberg, 2022; Kastberg & Grant, 2020). We used qualitative interpretive methods to analyze the empirical studies searching for evidence of critical friend intimacy, individual transformations, as well as descriptive examples of significant otherness or conversation residue (i.e., transformative characteristics of critical friendships). Our goal was to identify evidence from the S-STEP literature descriptions of critical friend intimacy to support or refute findings from our research about our critical friendship development and transformation. We hypothesized that if evidence of these characteristics was found in the S-STEP literature our findings would be strengthened.

Analysis of the 11 published empirical studies by each critical friend researcher began in the fall of 2021 and continued through the summer of 2022. We used MaxQDA Plus (2020) data analysis software to carry out our individual analyses, using a collaboratively developed codebook. We hoped this would ensure that we might meet a reasonable standard of intercoder agreement from our individual analyses. Thus, we purposely used a narrow codebook to maintain our individualized focus. The codebook included 13 first-level categorical codes inspired by our prior research and our aims for this investigation. Examples of first-level codes for this analysis included: Context, Transformation, Critical Friend Intimacy, Power/Hierarchy, Conversation Residue, and Significant Otherness. After we each coded one or two articles, we discussed our categorical codes, clarified code meanings, and considered adding, removing, or combining codes.

On occasion, during our regular critical friend conversations, one or the other of us might bring up something significant about our analysis. Fairly early on during the analysis, we discussed that we noticed that critical friends who were geographically distanced, like ourselves, had different perspectives about the Power/Hierarchy of the critical friend relationship. So, we added a subcode, Geo-Distanced, to the first-level code Context to capture this idea within the analysis. After we both completed analyzing the empirical studies, the individual MaxQDA analysis projects were merged into a single project, and further analyses were done to examine the intercoder agreement. The individual codes were examined in search of miscoding or missed coding between the two coders. Finally, the actual data connected with the coding were analyzed for interpretive meaning-making (i.e., results) from which findings emerged. As described, our research paradigm and beliefs are aligned with constructivists, critical theorists, or more generally interpretive tradition (e.g., Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

We used our extant research to inform interpretations throughout our analyses to describe the essence of critical friend intimacy and connections to individual transformations. Our analytic interpretations were further informed as we engaged in new conversations inspired by this study as we considered the essence of our critical friend relationship. Trustworthiness is garnered through triangulation, as we both agreed on interpretations, findings from analyses, and reporting. Additionally, trustworthiness is realized through ontological authenticity because these results are manifestations of our knowledge of ourselves being revealed through this report (Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Lincoln, 1995).

Outcomes

During this investigation, we found that there was significant intercoder agreement across the 11 published empirical studies for the key categorical codes that were of interest given our research questions. Using MaxQDA Plus (2020) data analysis software, we analyzed the combined coding of both authors. When we compared our individual coding across all articles and codes, we found intercoder agreement across all articles for five codes we agreed on 245 codes (38.2%) of the total (see Table 2). Additionally, we coded the same five categories for the same text segments (overlapping by at least 25%) a total of 642 codes across the 11 S-STEP articles.

Table 2

Intercoder Agreement for Key Categorical Codes With Highest Percentage Agreement

Code	Agreements	Disagreements	Total	Percent
Conversation Residue	64	84	148	43.2%
Critical Friend Intimacy	93	158	251	37.1%
Transformation	24	72	96	25.0%
Significant Otherness	38	82	120	31.7%
CF Geo-Distanced	26	1	27	96.3%
TOTALs	245	397	642	38.2%

We noticed that the Transformation category had the least agreement, 25%. After examining the underlying data, it was clear that the descriptions of individual transformations are typically described very generally and most lack specificity within the S-STEP literature examined. By design, S-STEP literature reports primarily focus on improvements for teacher educators' teaching or practice and not their individual transformations, and this is true even when reports purport to focus on critical friendships.

Table 3

Frequency Counts Coded for Documents and Text Segments

Five Key Codes	Code Frequency of Docs	Percentage	Code Frequency of Text Segs	Percentage

Conversation Residue	21	95%	148	23%
Critical Friend Intimacy	20	91%	251	39%
Significant Otherness	19	86%	120	19%
Transformation	17	77%	96	15%
CF Geo-Distanced	15	68%	27	4%
# of Analyzed Data	22		642	

The frequency of coding was extensive across the 11 articles (i.e., documents) and the total number of text segments coded for both researchers was 642 (see Table 3). Note the number of documents must be counted twice because each researcher coded the documents independently prior to merging the MaxQDA project used for this analysis.

Essence of Critical Friend Intimacy

There is substantive discussion about critical friend intimacy in the S-STEP literature that we examined, and the idea of critical friend intimacy is not new. For example, Fletcher and colleagues have cited Costa and Kallick (1993) who described critical friends as a "trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers critique of a person's work as a friend (p. 50)." We assert that embedded in this definition is the assumption that some level of intimacy exists in the relationship. We specifically discussed the emerging intimacy with respect to our developing critical friendship (Grant & Kastberg, 2022) in ways that support our interpretations during the analyses for this inquiry. Within the 11 articles examined, there were myriad (i.e., 251 coded or 39.1%, see Table 3) examples of critical friend intimacy. Stolle et al. (2019) articulated "three characteristics central to an effective critical friendship: vulnerability, reflection, and skepticism" (p. 23). We assert that these characteristics suggest critical friend intimacy within effective critical friendships. We noticed that many of the examples identified within the 11 articles used these characteristics to describe critical friend intimacy; vulnerability and reflection were the most prevalent.

Examples of critical friend intimacy were found in nine of the 11 articles. With respect to our analyses, critical friend intimacy was among the top two categorical codes identified by the researchers (see Table 2 and Table 3). Some of the instances coded were interpreted by us as examples of intimacy and other instances were more explicit not needing our inferences. We highlight several examples of descriptions from the S-STEP literature of critical friend intimacy (see Table 4). The Stolle et al. (2019) critical friend intimacy example offers a well-articulated description of a relationship that has grown over time with intentionality. Similarly, the O'Dwyer et al. (2019) intimacy example is well-articulated and developed over time but is perhaps less formalized and intentional compared to the Stolle et al. example. Appleget et al. (2020) describe intimacy using the Stolle et al. (2019) characteristics – they use the word "vulnerable" and then they describe a reflective practice related to their conversations.

We asked, what is the essence of critical friend intimacy in the S-STEP research literature? Critical friend intimacy is discussed extensively within the S-STEP literature when critical friendship is a focus. Sometimes intimacy is well articulated explicitly, and other times different language is used in lieu of intimacy, but the intent appears to be clear. Developing critical friend intimacy is described as taking time to develop. In our critical friend development we noticed that in time a relational shift occurs that we called "dropping professional identity façade" (Grant & Kastberg, 2022, p. 130). After dropping an identity façade the participant reveals their authentic self without barriers that afford greater critical friend intimacy to develop. Fletcher et al. (2016) discuss dropping professional identity façades in terms of revealing and hiding parts of themselves until the relationship interactions became less risky (p. 310). Critical friend intimacy is not established by following defined processes or protocols to establish relationship credibility or trustworthiness during research. Instead, attempts to follow critical friend guidelines or communication templates may constrain the development of intimacy. Fletcher et al. (2016) describe ways guidelines for engaging in critical friendship could result in contentious commentary. "Tim also felt pressured to be contentious even when he agreed with Déirdre's pedagogical decisions or actions" (p. 312). We too experienced such feelings as we began our critical friendship when our actions were overly constrained by critical friend tenets. We now look to the evidence and connection between critical friend intimacy and transformation.

Table 4

Examples of Transformations & Critical Friend Intimacy

Author(s)	Transformation Descriptions	Critical Friend Intimacy Descriptions
Appleget, Shimek, Myers, & Hogue (2020)	Through critical friendship, we were motivated by each other's actions, inspired to try new things, and reflective of our own practices more deeply (p. 303)	By sharing our personal experiences, being vulnerable, and listening to the perspectives of each other, we more clearly defined practices we felt encouraged CPP and revisited our conversations in ways that continue to stretch us as educators. (p. 302)
O'Dwyer, Bowles, & Chróinín (2019)	Richard shared how he learned more about his individual coaching through participation in the collaboration: . . . I realised . . .my coaching situations to date, I've always been most comfortable as a leader, not wanting to give too much control of the session to anyone else. On Wednesday, I felt very comfortable with our division of duties where we both work autonomously. (p. 147)	. . . Anne and Richard had got to know each other personally and shared experiences and understandings, . . . were important to support openness and honesty in the process, and to develop a foundation of trustworthiness and sensitivity (Nilsson, 2013). (p. 142) As coaches, who also shared the same work-space, there were many informal conversations and reflections in the staff room or walking to the car park after training sessions. (p. 144)
Stolle, Frambaugh-Kritzer, Freese, & Persson (2019)	With these two distinct layers of critical friendship – Elizabeth and Charlotte acting as critical friends in a more traditional sense, insiders embedded in the actual study; and Anne and Anders acting as critical friends external to the study – we both noted how we experienced our own growth more exponentially compared to previous self-studies. (p. 21)	Our dialogue exposed the conundrums we have faced in our own critical friendship work surrounding vulnerability. For instance, as close critical friends worrying about hurt feelings or our limited perspectives. . . researchers need to be 'tougher-skinned' and less sensitive. . . does sensitivity lead to honest insight? . . . if we avoid vulnerability, we block out uncomfortable feelings, [and] . . . lose the joy of discovery. Vulnerability gets to meaning. (pp. 23-24)

Evidence of Critical Friend Intimacy & Individual Transformation

The S-STEP research literature generally does not address individual transformation directly because by design the emphasis of S-STEP research is the improvement of teaching or teacher education practice. Even in the case of the 11 articles we examined for this inquiry whose focus was critical friendship, individual transformations were still not addressed directly. However, despite this design or feature of S-STEP literature, researchers readily share instances or utterances about individuals' transformations. The examples of transformation shared are shown beside the examples of critical friend intimacy (see Table 4). There were many examples to select from for transformation (96 or 14.95%) and critical friend intimacy (251 or 39.1%) (see Table 3). There were only two S-STEP articles (i.e., Martin & Russell, 2018 and Sabatier & Bullock, 2018) that researchers did not identify any evidence of one or both categories (i.e., critical friend intimacy or transformation).

We asked, what evidence exists in the S-STEP literature that connects critical friend intimacy and transformation of individuals in these intimate relationships? Descriptions of individual transformations in the S-STEP literature we reviewed made general or implied statements with occasional connections to critical friendship influences. Critical friend intimacy is generally not explicitly stated in connection with individual transformation. Our examples (see Table

4) are more the exception than the rule with respect to connecting critical friend intimacy and individual transformation within the S-STEP literature. This lack of explicit connection in relation to critical friend intimacy and individual transformation follows the norm in S-STEP research reporting.

The O'Dwyer et al. (2019) transformation example described Richard's professional transformation from an implied stance (see Table 4). We postulate that Richard's transformation might be a professional identity transformation related to delegation within his coaching; this is our interpretation. He also connects his transformation, explicitly to his critical friendship. The interesting thing about this transformation is that Richard was the experienced senior coach, and the expectation was to develop Anne's coaching. She was a novice coach and a recent elite player who was a key player and the focus of the research. Richard's transformation is very similar to the transformation we documented in one of our research reports (e.g., Kastberg & Grant, 2020). Melva's teaching and practice were the focus of our S-STEP research, but Signe was impacted because of the transformative characteristics (i.e., conversation residue and significant otherness) that influenced her transformation. Similarly, Richard's and Anne's critical friendship led Richard to reflect on his coaching as he reflectively considered Anne's coaching and engaged in interactions with her (O'Dwyer, et al., 2019). Additionally, there is clear evidence of critical friend intimacy in their relationship. This is a strong example of what we found in our critical friend development research.

For the other two transformation examples (i.e., Appleget et al., 2020; Stolle et al., 2019), the actual individual transformations are not explicated with specifics but are strongly implied for all researchers (see Table 4). In these examples, unlike O'Dwyer et al. (2019), we cannot decipher each individual's transformation. However, these authors make clear that their transformations are tightly connected to their critical friendships that possess a high level of intimacy. Again, these are two more examples of critical friend intimacy connected to individual transformations but written using the normalized style of S-STEP research reporting.

Implications of Geographical Distance

This S-STEP literature inquiry revealed a new influencer of critical friend intimacy, "geographical distance" (Bullock, 2020). Bullock identified ways geographical distance can invite and constrain the sort of conversations critical friends have. In our critical friendship, we recognized that our geo-distanced context served us well and enhanced our ability to establish critical friend intimacy across differences in rank and institutional structure. When we started our relationship, Signe was at a higher rank than Melva, and we recently questioned how our relationship may have been impacted had we been within the same institution. Loughran and Brubaker (2015) identified possibilities for concerns related to confidentiality when critical friends are at the same institution and must manage confidentiality concerns. While managing distance and hierarchical power dynamics can influence S-STEP work, geographical distance can influence power dynamics as well as sociocultural and epistemic risk-taking, which may influence relational intimacy potential.

Schuck and Russell (2005) experienced geographical distance during their S-STEP research as well as rank and experience differences. Sandy felt these differences significantly, but they were imperceptible to Tom. Sandy was unsure about what and how to interact with Tom and Tom welcomed whatever Sandy offered (p. 109). Further, they posited that email alone is "an obvious constraint on the quality of our communication; had even one face-to-face observation and discussion been possible, we expect the quality of our critical friendship would have improved considerably" (p.113). Conversely, Schuck and Russel offered

> *[f]ace-to-face observation enables the critical friend to ask at any time, 'What would I be doing in a similar situation?' and this means that both members of the critical friendship can be considering their teaching at the same time. It also allows the critical friend to observe aspects of the class that might not have appeared significant to the practitioner. (p. 118)*

This idea of reflecting on one's practice during observation positions all participants to experience transformative characteristics, conversation residue, and significant otherness, that create opportunities for individual transformation (Kastberg & Grant, 2020). These transformative characteristics can influence the individual critical friends and inform their reflections about their teaching, practice, and lives. Sometimes critical friend relational experiences can incite sufficient agency that leads to substantive transformations to the individual that is typically outside of the scope of the

S-STEP research and critical friendship. When that happens there is a connection between critical friend intimacy and an individual's transformation. We discuss specific examples of this in Grant and Kastberg (2020, 2022).

Conclusions

We described the essence of critical friend intimacy as articulated in the S-STEP research literature by sharing several specific examples and comparing them to research about our critical friendship development. We then described connections between critical friend intimacy and individuals' transformations in these intimate relationships. We shared three examples that supported findings from our research and hence strengthened our research findings about connections between critical friend intimacy and individual transformations. Going forward ongoing study of critical friendship intimacy and connections to individual transformation is a promising aim. Geographical distance and critical friendships offer another context-rich space for future inquiry as well.

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Constructing Spaces for Professional Development in an Action Research Course

A Self-Study of Teacher Educators' Practice

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Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices | Professional Development | Action Research | Professional Identity

Teacher education has an important role in preparing teachers for active participation in creating future educational context. We are three teacher educators at the University of Iceland exploring how we can enhance our teaching in an action research course at graduate level. The aim of this research is to strengthen our professionalism to give teacher students opportunities to develop their understanding of action research. The objective is to illuminate how we bring our professional identities together supporting students in developing their emerging identities as action researchers. Data was generated and analyzed by mapping our journeys into teacher education, specifically in teaching action research, highlighting incidents and individuals that impacted our educational beliefs. Data included three-step interviews and material generated within the course. We searched for pedagogic turning points to identify opportunities for enriching our understanding of practice and develop pedagogical discourses. Findings illuminate how our professional identities and beliefs emerged and developed in the process of supporting students negotiating their identities as action researchers. We argue that by sharing our challenges and experimenting, knowing that we are there for each other, we generate new possibilities and perspectives for understanding and being, personally and professionally.

Context of the Study

Education is an important pathway to empower people to be active participants in society. As teacher educators, we believe that teacher education has an important role in preparing teachers to respond to future educational contexts in ways that respect and draw on the background, knowledge, and abilities of their students (Biesta, 2013; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015). This requires conceptualizing teacher preparation as more than a technical endeavor in which student teachers acquire a set of 'tools' to be used across settings and contexts. Rather, we need to prepare student teachers to welcome and engage with the complex processes involved in learning to teach by positioning them as teachers developing skills, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior in response to their experiences (Loughran, 2006; Hamilton and Pinnegar, 2015). Teachers must avoid the urge to seek simple solutions to educational challenges and accept the responsibility for directing their own learning (Loughran, 2006). We need to prepare student teachers to approach their practice with humility and vulnerability, and willingness as professionals to step beyond their comfort zone to explore unknown topics or situations.

Vulnerability is inherent in the process of teaching. It is the way in which “teachers live in their job situation” (Kelchterman, 1996, p. 307). Understanding who we are as teachers is imperative for us as teacher educators to serve our teacher students faithfully (Mitchell & Weber, 2005; Palmer, 2004). Such teaching, in our understanding, comes from within (Korthagen et al., 2013), or “from the identity and integrity of the teacher” (Palmer, 2007, p. 10). If we believe this, we need to design spaces within our teacher education programs that address the fundamental questions we ask about teaching: who is the self that teaches? Who do we think we are? (Mitchell & Weber, 2005; Palmer, 2007). Collaborative self-study allows us to address these questions “openly and honestly, alone and together” (Palmer, 2004). Thus, we hope to “challenge, deepen and extend professional knowing in the interest of making a qualitative difference to professional practice for self and others” (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015, p. 1).

To create conditions for a dialogue that builds on mutual trust and care for each other, we need to design spaces that support “circles of trust” (Palmer, 2004): spaces that invite the student teachers’ and our own selves to show up, to lead us towards professional growth. A circle of trust is “a group of people who know how to sit...with each other and wait for the shy soul to show up” (Palmer, 2004, p. 59). People who trust one another are more likely to share sensitive information that they would not reveal to others outside the circle (Leana & Pil, 2006). Relationships developed in such a group involve patience, compassion, and faith in each person’s capacity to learn from within (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015; Korthagen et al., 2013; Palmer, 2004).

A circle of trust is a community that can be chaotic and creative, with emergent forces at play that need constant tending (Palmer, 2004). Creative work and the freedom that it calls for are often limited by the angst teachers experience when planning teaching (Jónsdóttir & Gunnarsdóttir, 2017). Creative ideas that are not expressed or publicized are lost if they are not allowed to emerge and be tested (Jónsdóttir, 2016). Pithouse-Morgan and Samaras (2022) emphasize that co-creatively “embracing the uncertainties, complexities, and elisions of practice in company of trusted others through unexplored means can lead to fruitful results” (p. 212). The facilitator’s role in a circle of trust is to create and protect a space where everyone feels safe (Palmer, 2004), and where participants can express their ideas without fear of judgment (Freire, 2000).

We are three teacher educators at the University of Iceland School of Education exploring how we can enhance our teaching in a graduate-level 10 ECTS action research course. Our students come from different disciplines, mostly within the School of Education. Some of our students have prior knowledge of action research, but most choose this course because they recognize the usefulness of this research approach. The course emphasizes the nature of action research and helps students develop the mindset of an action researcher through conducting their own research projects: defining a topic to explore, developing a theoretical foundation, collecting and analysing data, and presenting findings. We believe that this inquiry approach is essential to professionalism in education.

In the course, we position ourselves as researchers to examine our understanding of our professionalism, drawing on each other’s knowledge on teaching and development as teacher educators, offering our findings to the larger research conversation (Berry, 2020; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015; White et al. 2020). We bring to our study different educational and lived experiences (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). These influence our understanding of and belief in the importance of action research, including our roles as facilitators. These differences impact our capabilities and comfort in exposing and expressing our professional identities. We come together to design and lead students through a process that acknowledges multiple and constantly emerging professional selves (Berry, 2020; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015): our own and those of our students. Our pedagogy emphasizes artistic methods, creating dialogical spaces, and formative learning.

In this study, we engage in a search for pedagogic turning points or threshold opportunities that can enrich our personal understanding of practice through raising new possibilities, perspectives, and discourses (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Aim, Objective, and Research Question

In our action research course, students begin by uncovering who they are and what is important to them personally and professionally. While we think this is an essential step in equipping students to reason and reflect on issues they confront in their various professional settings, we are aware that opening the educational space in this way makes it

dynamic and unstable, leaving us vulnerable to encountering and working with whatever emerges (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015). In reflecting on the overall design of the course and the processes it releases, our challenge is to work with students to create circles of trust where they dare to share issues that are important to them.

The aim of the study is to strengthen our professionalism individually and as a community in creating spaces that give students opportunities to develop their understanding of action research and negotiate their identities as action researchers.

The objective of the study is to illuminate how we bring our diverse professional identities together to generate new possibilities, perspectives, and discourses as we support students in developing their emerging identities as action researchers.

Our research question is: How do our professional identities emerge and develop in creating (trusting and caring) spaces for students to negotiate their identities in becoming action researchers?

Methods

In this research, we explain how we created a space for ourselves to come together in designing trusting and caring spaces for students in a master's level course on action research. For this purpose, we utilized some of the same methods and tasks students use within the context of the course as they carry out their action research projects. This allows us to understand how our professional identities emerge and develop in interaction with students and their enduring challenges in negotiating their identities as action researchers in the process of conducting their research projects (Berry, 2020; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015).

Data Generation and Analysis

In August 2021, we generated our primary data by visually and rhetorically mapping our journeys into teacher education, both in general and specifically in teaching the action research course. To understand where we come from and how that has informed our professional development, we began this exploration by creating and sharing individual mind maps highlighting incidents and individuals that had an impact on our educational vision and dispositions. Next, we conducted three-step interviews with each other. The questions that guided the interviews were: why do you want to study your own practice? How does your professional identity influence the process of the course? What are you hoping to illuminate through the research process? Secondary data included material generated within the context of the course in spring 2021: teachers' input, students' hands-on activities in relation to different aspects of the research process, recordings from weekly in-class rapport meetings, students' final research reports, and students' self-evaluations.

The data analysis was iterative; we traced emphasis emerging in our primary data in the secondary data to verify or challenge our understandings and interpretations. We engaged in a search for pedagogic turning points to identify opportunities for enriching our understanding of practice by trying out new possibilities and perspectives, and to develop discourses of pedagogy (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Participants

Karen used to be an Icelandic teacher of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Her PhD teacher research explored how to draw on her students' linguistic and cultural resources in practice. She has been working in teacher education since 2012 and has been involved in teaching the action research course since 2009.

Svanborg was a primary school teacher for almost 30 years before doing her PhD research on innovation education. She has been a teacher educator for 14 years and has taught the action research course for six years. She has conducted several collaborative self-studies in teacher education and has led two group action research projects with teachers across four school levels focusing on enhancing creativity in teaching and learning.

Edda had been a coordinator for special needs education in a compulsory school for 14 years when she embarked on her doctoral research, which emerged from her worries that her teaching practice was working against the school policy of inclusive education. Through this self-study research project, she found that she needed to develop her leadership

skills and attend to the discourse of disability to transform the practice of supporting students. She has taught the action research course for two years.

Developing and Co-creating Our Professional Identities

In our findings, we illuminate how our professional identities and beliefs emerge and develop in the process of supporting students negotiating their identities as action researchers. In looking through the data we illuminate the driving force behind our educational practices and how these are rooted in and transformed through our lived and professional experiences. This findings section is divided into four segments: our entry points, creating trusting and caring spaces, making ourselves vulnerable, and developing creative professional courage.

Our Entry Points

The three of us bring to the course different educational and lived experiences. These impact our capabilities and comfort in exposing, expressing, and embracing our own and each other's professional identities as we come together to support students in developing a stance of inquiry. Through an ongoing dialogue, we revealed how the mundane experiences we bring to the course are important in developing a supportive space for students.

In sharing her journey to teaching this course, Karen explained how becoming a teacher of students who are deaf through teacher research had a transformative impact on her developing professional identity by forcing her to confront who she was as a hearing professional in deaf education. This process was both emotionally and intellectually challenging, culminating in a "professional existential crisis." This is how she explained this to Edda and Svanborg as she talked them through her mind map:

> *This process was challenging. I experienced conflict within myself, about myself, with the subject matter I was teaching, and the school environment. What helped me through this conflicting experience were people willing to listen and believing in what I was doing at moments when I felt chaotic. In these moments I was given a space to talk myself into an understanding of the situation I was in, to the extent that I began to see some opportunities to work through these challenges.*

This experience is the foundation of Karen's educational beliefs and vision. She believes that as a professional, you must develop critical subjectivity and cultivate competence to create a space to lean in, listen for who you and those you work with are, and interrogate critical incidents in order to nurture ever-emerging identities within situated contexts.

Svanborg explained her journey into teacher education as a long road that she initially did not intend to take:

> *Until university, I intended to become an artist. I always loved school – but art school turned out to be the only school I did not like. After graduating as a compulsory school teacher (6- to 16-year-old students), I taught nearly all subjects (not PE) and leaned towards applying creativity and arts in my teaching, whether it was teaching to read and write, science, or history. I took many professional development courses and when I got to know innovation education I was smitten. I loved teaching it. It engaged students and they were creative on their own premises.*

After teaching at the primary level for almost 30 years, Svanborg conducted her master's and PhD research on innovation education (IE) in Icelandic compulsory schools. She wanted to uncover what in IE "made the magic." This research made her realize that her artistic drive could also be fulfilled through supporting others to express their creativity in different ways.

As Edda explained her mind map, inclusion was the common denominator of her ideas -- that education should be democratic and based on human rights. Central to these ideas is to approach teaching with a growth mindset, to make sure that students feel they are included and belong; that they are active participants and experience achievement in their learning. Edda shared how her upbringing laid the groundwork for her emphasis on inclusivity in her professional life:

I grew up with seven siblings –five older siblings and two younger. Being the typical middle child, a bit invisible and a little obsessed with fairness and balance, I became very attuned to the needs of others.

Edda's ideas about research echo this. As a teacher educator, she views research as a process to learn with people to improve educational practices – not to judge people or practices. This is something she wants students to embrace. Thus, in her mind action research is a means to learn about oneself as a person and how to create inclusive practices in educational settings.

Creating Trusting and Caring Spaces

Within the overall structure of the course, we begin each class by dividing students into small status groups, which we facilitate. In these meetings, students are allocated time to talk about their projects, while the other students are encouraged to ask questions or provide support. We emphasize that students have obligations toward each other and that everything discussed is confidential.

In analyzing our data, we noticed how we all talk about the importance of creating different kinds of spaces where students "develop the mindset they need, to inquire into and make decisions based on the student population they teach and the educational contexts they find themselves working within" (analytical meeting, September 22nd, 2021). Below we discuss the kind of learning spaces we think are important.

Svanborg: Students need spaces to experience doing something new to help them understand their practice and understand the importance of scrutinizing practice in order to become more than skilled technicians. Also, to use theories (experiences of others) to deepen one's understanding.

Karen: I find it important for students to experience a space that allows them to name and work with influences on their professional lives. Their concerns are often rooted in and between their personal and professional experiences, blurring the boundaries between the two. So, these spaces need to allow students to work at this intersection; to explore values they want to enact in their personal and professional lives.

Edda: I agree, my point is also to use the course to empower students to think in terms of solutions -- how to find solutions to our challenges in practice rather than wallow in them. I want students to experience the importance of action research for their own work -- that they see that action research is self-empowering and helps them strengthen their practice and professionalism.

Through our dialogue, we determined that the spaces we create in the course need to creatively challenge students and encourage active participation. To enable the vulnerability this requires, we try to develop trusting and caring spaces where students feel that they are emotionally safe and will not be judged.

Making Ourselves Vulnerable

Vulnerability is built into the course design. In developing their research projects, students are invited to revisit memories and experiences that affect them professionally. This encourages them to stir up and rummage through the baggage they have accumulated on their personal and professional journey before they focus on and formulate a research question. This design creates the challenge of capturing and openly addressing unexpected issues or emotionally loaded experiences that may emerge. In an analytical meeting, we discussed our feelings involved in this exposure and its importance for students' research.

Edda: I feel most insecure when people are not exploring their work but are more geared towards personal challenges. It's difficult to embrace, I find myself resisting, because I can be so helpless in how to support them.

Karen: I agree, and I keep wondering how we can bear witness to this personal aspect or challenge. Students are often faced with emotionally charged challenges that we need to accept, finding ways to support them in exploring from different perspectives.

Svanborg: … and analyze. At this point, a needs analysis is called for – they must ask why is this a problem? 'Why, why, why.' We need to get the students to focus on analyzing the problem and think 'what can I do about it'? In relation to our professional work, psychological factors or emotions are often important in taking constructive steps.

Edda: … they bring up these challenges because they go so deep into their project. If they were just scratching the surface, we would not be hearing about these emotionally loaded issues… but I think this is related to what we are talking about, to the fact that we are open to all kinds of projects.

Svanborg: I think that with this emphasis on the personal, students' research projects seem to reach a deeper level and be more enduring.

When students become vulnerable enough to divulge their difficult experiences in becoming professionals, we are there to respond with empathy and sensitivity toward their feelings. Yet, our role is to support them in exploring how they can leverage their experiences for personal and/or professional growth. This leaves us in the position of having to rely on and draw from each other's professional strengths.

Developing a Creative Professional Courage

In the course, we emphasize processes in which students experience embodied learning, artistic expressions, and using metaphors as symbols for how they feel or interpret elements and processes in their action research.

For one task, we ask students to use recyclable materials to make a symbolic expression of what they learned from their data collection and analysis. We used this approach in another context and Karen really wanted to bring it into our course. Svanborg was a bit hesitant, even though she had used similar creative methods elsewhere. She wrote in her research journal: "In this context, a research methodology course that I feel is supposed to be serious and strict, these approaches are not a safe choice." However, students' reflections indicated that this experience helped them make unexpected connections with their work, as this example shows:

It was fun and informative to express my research visually and artistically. I had broken my arm and thought I couldn't do anything. It turned out differently. I dreamt that I produced a piece that gave me a profound understanding and when I had to make the artwork and present my research it was a piece of cake. When I scrutinized the sculpture, I saw that it exemplified the journey I had been on. It was powerful. Presenting my research, supported by the sculpture, went well, and there I also found the light to illuminate the rest of writing the research.

Reading this, we realized how this work gave students a bit of a shake-up, helping them to see their data and analysis as creative and symbolic actions that led to a deeper understanding. While some expressed difficulties, more conveyed their enjoyment. Even those who started out skeptical shared that they surprised themselves by enjoying the work and learning from it.

These creative and embodied processes not only supported our students in exploring their research projects from different perspectives; they seemed to release invisible energy that enriched our professional development, creating new possibilities for how we could relate to each other through the co-creation of pedagogical practices, as evident in this interview excerpt.

Karen: You were talking about how you bring to the course innovation education methods to put the focus on students' voices…and that you have gained a deeper understanding of the importance of these methods. Could you explain this?

Svanborg: …along the way I have been able to transfer this emphasis to teaching in general…to cultivating with students, student teachers, and professionals in an educational setting that they are all creative, and believe in their abilities as professionals, that their voices matter.

Karen: Can I add? These methods and having the opportunity to teach with you, being in the presence of your professional confidence and resilience, has touched me. How you lead students through each step, this analytical work and working with recyclable materials. Suddenly I find myself daring to follow through various ideas.

Svanborg: You added one thing here, to dare. Our cooperation in various contexts has given me the courage to dare more or become stronger in doing. I have noticed that you dare and with support, like with the poetic inquiry which I was a little hesitant about at the beginning, you jump. So, these are the creative methods we have cultivated together.

Through an ongoing dialogue, we identified how these creative ways of teaching and our collaboration in various contexts gave us a "professional courage" we didn't think we had to embrace students' developing identities. This gave us a new starting point to flip the roles of students and teachers and to begin with issues that seemed urgent for students.

Discussion and Conclusions

Professional development resides in the foundational beliefs and assumptions educators and teachers alike have about teaching and learning (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015; Loughran, 2006). These beliefs and assumptions develop over time and are rooted in experiences inside and outside of schools, blurring the boundaries between the personal and the professional. We traced our educational beliefs and assumptions about teaching and learning to our upbringings, important events and individuals, and the theoretical work we have read. We recognized the multifaceted nature of our personal and professional stories and how they come together as we search for threshold moments in our work to push ourselves further.

It takes emotional and intellectual work to embrace, support, and challenge student teachers' developing identities in ways that prepare them to critically approach their educational practices and contexts (Loughran, 2006). Our data shows how we found a way to cross the threshold of embracing students' emotional issues as part of developing their action research projects. In sharing and discussing our vulnerability, we experienced how we grew professionally and in so doing advanced the knowledge base of our teaching and learning (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2022). That is, working collaboratively and creatively gave us the courage to sustain and develop engaging, trusting, and caring spaces for students.

As self-study researchers, we continue to challenge ourselves to deepen and extend our professional knowledge and practice (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015). Analyzing our data, we see that through our collaboration we create spaces for our students and ourselves that allow us to share and intertwine our expertise and embrace our vulnerability. In these spaces, we push and support each other to step outside of our comfort zones. We encourage each other to share our challenges, put forth half-formed ideas, and experiment, knowing that we are there for each other not to judge, but to collaboratively explore and generate new possibilities and perspectives for understanding and being, personally and professionally (Hamilton et al., 2020).

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Me, Myself, and I

Finding the Self in Self-Study Through Scholarly Personal Narrative

Tamar Meskin

Self-study of Creative Practice | Scholarly Personal Narrative | Personal History Self-study | Self-narrative | Writing Memory

As self-study scholars, we often engage in crafting narratives to reveal the stories and structures underpinning our practice. Such narratives are crucial for interrogating the self within self-study, and often provide the foundations for our research endeavours. How we might construct these narrative(s) is my focus in this paper. In my doctoral study of my practice as a director of formal theatre productions in a South African university, I employed Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) (Nash, 2004) as a technique to investigate the evolution of my educational philosophy and my journey to becoming a director-teacher. In this paper, using my own research as an exemplar (Mishler, 1990), I explore the connections between self-study and SPN in order to interrogate the value and benefit of SPN as a method for self-study. Through a comparative discussion of SPN and self-study, and a close reading of my own SPN, I examine whether, and how, the tenets of SPN lend themselves to self-study purposes. I believe that SPN, which embraces a gazing inward (Ritter & Ergas, 2021) alongside an engagement with context and a recognition of contingency, offers a powerful tool for the interrogation of the ontological self that is central to self-study.

Context of the Study

This paper emerges from my self-study PhD research (Meskin, 2021), which considered my identity as a director-teacher of drama, and its relationship to my educational philosophy and creative/teaching practice as the director of formal theatre productions in a South African university context. Locating my director-teacher self "at the intersection between theory and practice, research and pedagogy" (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 827), I employed personal history self-study (Krall, 1988; Samaras et al., 2004) to frame my study, and utilised a bricolage approach (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2019; Rogers, 2012) that drew on multiple theoretical and conceptual ideas. Central to my study was an understanding of narrative in terms of how it shapes understanding and experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), navigates past, present, and future interactions (Clandinin, 2006), and crosses boundaries (Riessman, 1993). The way such narrative(s) can emerge is my focus here.

One of the ideas used in constructing my self-study story(ies), was the Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) (Nash, 2004). As "an autobiographical story, rooted in the life experience of the writer" (Meskin, 2021, p.46), I used the SPN to develop and understand my own educational journey to becoming a director-teacher. In this paper, I explore the connections

between self-study and SPN, using my own research as an exemplar (Mishler, 1990), in order to interrogate the value and benefit of SPN as a method *for* self-study, and in particular, as a means for constructing personal history narratives. I am particularly interested in the potential SPN offers for the Self-Study of Creative Practice (S-SCP) (Meskin & van der Walt, 2022), a self-reflexive research engagement in which artists and practitioners can use self-study methods to interrogate how they work creatively, as well as the products of their creative work, which is my long-term research focus.

Aim of the Study

Hamilton and Pinnegar (1998) assert that "The value of self-study depends on the researcher/teacher providing convincing evidence that they know what they claim to know" (p. 243). In personal history self-study particularly, this evidence is framed by the researcher's personal history narrative. Among the challenges of personal history self-study is first, how to construct this narrative, which relies largely upon (often elusive) memory (O'Reilly-Scanlon, 2002); and second, how to include and connect that narrative within the broader framework of a study. For me, SPN proved useful as a method for addressing these challenges. In this paper, therefore, I pose the question: how can SPN operate as a method for interrogating the self in self-study?

Answering this question involves understanding the parameters and guidelines of SPN as they intersect with, and offer alternatives to, the kinds of narrative conventions most often employed in self-study practice. I seek to draw out both the overlapping devices and the interstitial spaces between self-study and SPN, foregrounding an engagement with the 'self' in self-study, rather than how that self affects others (Ergas & Ritter, 2021). As a technique that recognises the centrality of the subjective 'I' to the research process (Nash & Bradley, 2011), SPN embraces openly a gazing inward (Ritter & Ergas, 2021) that seems especially pertinent in the light of these framings of self-study research.

Methodology and Methods

In this paper, I focus primarily on methodological issues, rather than offering a self-study *per se*. That said, self-study principles underpin this work and I argue that SPN as method facilitates the "simultaneous focus on. . .self as it enacts practice" (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p. 6). In doing so, it creates space for discoveries about the self, the self-in-practice, the practice itself, and the experience of that practice. Given that practice "emerges from our narrative history as humans and names the things we have learned that have become intuitive and instinctive" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 21), SPN seems an apt approach.

As method, SPN highlights the value of narrative as a means of revealing the self, recognising that "we know the world through the stories that are told about it" (Chase, 2005, p. 641); in self-study, those stories are our own personal ones, where "the researcher becomes the research subject" (p. 645). Thus, a narrative becomes "a way of understanding experience" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi), synchronically and diachronically, facilitating the exploration of past, present, and future, and the intersections between them, as we look backward to move forward.

The primary data for this paper emerges from my own SPN as personal history, which I use as a case study to explore how SPN functions in developing the self-narrative. To frame my study, I offer a brief review of personal history self-study and its key components, before embarking on a discussion of SPN and its strategies. I use a close reading of my doctoral SPN as an example of SPN within self-study. I then offer a comparative discussion of SPN and self-study, interrogating how the tenets of SPN lend themselves to self-study purposes. Finally, I explore how SPN materialises the self so as to allow for an unpacking of those interior mysteries that drive so much of who we are and what we do, permitting insights into the ontological self. These insights are particularly useful when thinking about using self-study to interrogate the creative, artistic self, and the connection between self and creative practice.

Understanding Personal History Self-Study

As noted above, self-study encompasses multiple possible methods, many of which adopt narrative form. Among these is personal history self-study, which has a long history of application in the self-study lexicon (Graham, 1989; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1994; Krall, 1998; Samaras et al., 2004). As described by Samaras et al. (2004), personal history encompasses "the historical or life experiences related to personal and professional meaning making" (p. 909-910). Looking at oneself historically enables "critical insight into both the nature of her/his relationship to individuals,

institutions, cultural values, and political events, and the ways in which these social relationships contribute to. . . identity, values, and ideological perspectives" (Britzman, 1986, p. 452). These claims resonate strongly with me since I have no doubt that my lived experience has shaped, and continues to shape, the way I live in the world, and everything I do both personally and professionally.

For me, the key challenge of personal history self-study is its focus on memory as key to the writing process. Inevitably, when we write about our past, it must be "retrospectively interpreted, in terms of the meaning that life is now seen to hold" (Graham, 1989, p. 99). To navigate memory, we often use "nodal moments" (De Lange & Grossi, 2009; Graham, 1989; Tidwell, 2006), disentangling each moment like a "knot, which requires reflection and working through to get it 'undone' in the memory" (De Lange & Grossi, 2009, p. 204). We must remember, though, that any history is written at a particular moment in time, and consequently, "The dominant autobiographic truth. . .is the vision or pattern or meaning of life which the autobiographer has at the moment of writing his *[sic]* autobiography" (Weintraub, 1975, p. 827). Thus, personal history self-study must navigate a looking forward-looking back dynamic. It was largely the necessity to engage with the vicissitudes of memory and how it plays out in the narrative present that led me to SPN. What emerges is a prismatic view of selfhood, where each turn reveals a different facet to contribute to the complex construct that is the 'self'.

Understanding Scholarly Personal Narrative

There are remarkable overlaps and similarities between personal history self-study and the SPN approach; both are invested in recovering the past in order to make sense of the present and shape the future, and both are concerned with the individual's personal story as a means to engage with broader discourses. Nash and Bradley (2011) describe SPN as "a methodology that allows for the "'subjective I' of the writer to share the centrality of the research along with the 'objective they' of more traditional forms of scholarship" (loc. 294). SPN is thus an autobiographical story, rooted in the life experience of the writer, which "tells the story of the author in such a way as to analyze, interpret, and reflect upon some larger idea, event, or important figure in the writer's life" (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 350).

There is no set form for the SPN, but the essential criterion is that "SPN writers intentionally organize their essays around themes, issues, constructs, and concepts that carry larger, more universalizable meanings for readers" (Nash, 2004, p. 43). Thus, while SPN foregrounds the researcher's self in the narrative, the intention is to use the narrative to draw broader conclusions. Like self-study, therefore, the intention of SPN is not simply to narrate the story of one's life, but to do so in order to make an impact on both the researcher and the world. As with self-study, then, a transformation and improvement agenda, which "puts stories in the service of ideas" (Nash, 2004, p. 110), is present.

In SPN, we write "under the influence of our context bubbles" (Nash, 2004, p. 39), requiring a clear explication of context and an awareness of the perspective of the writer at the given moment in time. This influence means that "the research language [we] use …comes through the prisms/filters/screens of the ways we view the world" (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 1365). Since I see the self as prismatic, reflecting many different facets depending on perspective, prismatic writing seems appropriate as a method.

A key feature of SPN is the need to explore larger implications arising from the researcher's personal story, a process Nash (2004) refers to as "Universalizability" (p. 6). The personal story becomes a catalyst for something that goes beyond the singular researcher experience, facilitated by the intersubjective connections between self, other, and the world, through its "applicability, extension, commonality, consensus, and relevance" (Nash, 2004, p. 161), which extend the story's ramifications beyond the self.

This is not to suggest any idea of singular universal truth. Rather, universalizability enhances "narrative truth" (Nash, 2004, p. 41), in which "there is only interpretation, perspective, point of view, and personal preference" (p. 41) and "the universal plot line of contingency, choice and chance" (p. 39). In accepting this reality, as writers, we recognise, as is the postmodern precept, that there is no singular meaning or truth, only meaning and truth for that particular moment. Awareness of how this temporal specificity shapes meaning is an important signifier in self-narratives.

The concept of “proof-texts” (Nash, 2004, p. 65) is important in SPN. These proof-texts can provide support, critique, or simply illuminate the writer’s narrative in some way. Elsewhere, Nash and Bradley (2011) refer to these as “lit embeds” (loc. 2194) to contrast with the conventional notion of a literature review, arguing for “referenced scholarship” to be “embedded within the writing, not set apart from it” (loc. 2197). For me, embedding the “referenced scholarship” in the narrative provided a way to integrate my academic and writerly voices.

Like self-study, SPN rejects the conventional notions of generalisability and replicability as measures of research validity. Instead, Nash & Bradley (2011) suggest using criteria that arise out of the researcher’s ontological positioning, which Nash (2004) describes as, “trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, interpretive self-consciousness, introspectiveness/self-reflection, and universalizability” (p. 5). These expanded validity criteria seem to me especially useful in the self-study realm.

Examining My SPN

In my doctoral thesis, I used SPN to excavate my personal educational philosophy by exploring the various phases of my lived experience as a learner and teacher. All of this, as with this paper, engaged a critical friend in the writing process. While there is no space here to examine the whole SPN, I highlight some examples to show how the recursive writing and thinking process of SPN operates to open windows into the self.

The first extract from my SPN comes from my early schooling:

Figure 1

SPN Extract 1 (Meskin, 2021)

I never studied drama at school, so the lessons for my drama-teacher future came from other sources. My history teacher, to whom I shall refer as Mr. W, provided one of the earliest of these lessons in the art of teaching, learnt from having it modelled for me by someone who loved learning, and taught us to do the same. If I had to name the single most important educational influence on me as a school girl, it was my three years studying history with Mr. W. Mr. W was a maverick and he was one of those teachers who make space to imagine an infinity of possibilities. For my final two years of high school, we studied in his completely redecorated classroom, complete with armchairs and coffee, and learnt the art of argument, the importance of independent thinking, and how to challenge what constituted ‘truth.’ Above all, he would say, “Think for yourself, don’t just accept what is told to you – make your own decisions, be informed, stay outside the crowd.” What he taught me went beyond a history lesson and I will never forget those lessons and that experience. He made me realise that learning is not about how many facts you can remember and regurgitate back; instead, it is about providing the tools to make sense of your world. Or, as I have discovered in later years, what education icon John Dewey articulated as his mantra: “Education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.” This lesson has stayed with me longer than any specific piece of content.

Key here is the detail provided since “Being explicit in your findings. . . and using examples. . . shifts the reader’s lens from ‘this is the writer’s narrative’ to ‘this is our shared narrative’” (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 1822). The way the memory is framed from the perspective of now evidences the dual dynamic of past and present existing simultaneously: I tell the story in the present and so it reflects the way the memory is viewed from the perspective of now.

The reference to Dewey constitutes a proof-text, provided to locate the SPN in the literature of the relevant field. Finally, like any good narrative, it contains location, character, action, and dialogue – the elements of story that make someone want to read it. This is crucial in SPN (Nash & Bradley, 2011), where such literary devices as interesting characters, conflicts, climaxes, and resolutions are vital, to demonstrate “the imaginative touch of a creative artist as well as the scholarly touch of a vigorous thinker” (loc. 1457).

In an echo of the idea of a critical friend in self-study, I added a second voice to my SPN, using a "layering" (Ronai, 1992) technique to indicate a dialogue between my past self (the remembered self) and my present self (the researcher). I used italics here to denote the different voices. Here is what followed the above section:

Figure 2

SPN Extract 2 (Meskin, 2021)

> *It might seem that this learning is not related to directing or teaching theatre in any way, but for me, that history class changed how I knew the world. I think that the way I direct, my fascination with context, and with how events fit into a broader frame than may be presented in any given play, stems from these years. In addition, the significance of being told to think for myself, to make my own informed decisions about what was happening around me, cannot be overstated. I often think that who I am as an educator is rooted in those lessons, modelled on a pedagogy that taught* ***how*** *to think, rather than* ***what*** *to think, and that finally, content matters less than process. If I think about my philosophy of learning, that is as close to a basic principle that I can come, and that principle is translated into my directing practice in my desire not to dictate, but to evoke; not to give answers, but to ask the right questions to elicit the students' own answers.*

This is an example of universalization– bringing the story into a broader research framework and making connections that resonate not just for the researcher, but for those reading the research, as it is disseminated and presented to the wider world.

It is important to note how the narrative always engages with those others who form a crucial part of the lived experience as well as the telling of it. While not the participant experience of self-study, this nonetheless reflects a similar injunction: that our stories are not solo acts but examples of intersubjectivity in action. This technique resonates with the notion of creating an "'inner relationship'. . .that takes place within the confines of the 'self'" (Ritter & Ergas, 2021, p. 8), rather than the more conventional external ones of self-study, a crucial distinction from my perspective.

A second extract discusses the key concept of learning through failure and reflects my decision, while living in Los Angeles, to abandon the pursuit of a career as an actress:

Figure 3

SPN Extract 3 (Meskin, 2021)

It was at a Hollywood party—a very fancy one, high up in the Hollywood Hills, with A-list celebrities as guests and vast quantities of alcohol and any other substance you might imagine flowing free—where I found myself 'working the room,' making conversations with agents and casting directors, trying to sell myself as someone with whom they needed to work, that I felt a seismic shift in my sense of self. I remember so distinctly the moment of decision, when I let go of my Oscar dream, realising that while acting was my passion, I didn't want to spend my life playing the role necessary to make it in the soul-crushing industry that is acting in America, where talent counts less than looks, and who you know matters more than what you know. I stopped playing the Hollywood game. I still acted, but I withdrew from the constant pressure of agent-hunting and audition-stalking that is the life of the average unemployed actor.

I can speak of this decision dispassionately here, but it was difficult giving up on something that had been so important to me. At the time, I had no positive response to the experience but in thinking about it years later, and in particular about how it altered the trajectory of my life, I have realised that while it certainly was painful, it was also liberating. I had held on to a singular vision of myself for so long that I was unable to recognise other options. Letting go opened up the doors of possibility for me. This has also become a very important aspect of my teaching: I believe that we learn from our (perceived) failures as much as from our successes. The important thing is to recognise that 'failure' is also opportunity.

I include this to show the kind of vulnerability and openness required of the researcher in SPN, highlighting the inherent risk in telling our stories. These are key factors in narrative truth – authenticity emerges from the honesty of the storyteller made evident within the construct of the story.

The final example from my SPN explores my evolution as a university teacher, and describes a nodal moment from early in my teaching career:

Figure 4

SPN Extract 34 (Meskin, 2021)

I was asked at short notice to teach a section on DIE and, specifically, the work of Dorothy Heathcote. I had about four days in which to prepare a double lecture (one and half hours) on Heathcote's DIE theory. Since I knew (at the time) almost nothing about the subject, I began reading. About four books later, I felt I had enough material to try to prepare a lecture. Terrified I would forget something important, I wrote out my whole lecture word for word; it came to 63 pages! When, after half an hour of the period, I had covered only seven pages, and the students were restless and disengaged, I knew I was in trouble. And so, taking a deep breath, bracing myself, and mentally reminding myself about what lecturers I liked had done, I closed the folder, stepped out from behind the lectern, and began to teach them. I didn't cover nearly as much as I should have, and there were large gaps in the theory that I didn't have time to explain, but I believe they left the lecture knowing something about Heathcote and her ideas on drama as methodology. My overwhelming feeling at the end was relief at having gotten through it; but after my heart rate had slowed, I thought about what had happened and made some early decisions about the kind of teacher I was going to be. It was the first time that I called myself a teacher without mentally adding an asterisk to the title to note that it wasn't my real job, just something I was doing because I couldn't think of anything else. It was the first time I saw teaching as opening up my world rather than as a second choice that constricted it.

The experience outlined above remains vivid in my memory; I still have the notes on Heathcote: The folder is dirty and torn in places from lots of use, and the handwritten 63 pages are still there, although slightly yellowed with age. I keep it as a reminder of how I began to learn how to become a teacher.

This section of my SPN marked a pivotal shift in my thinking about myself. Two important considerations for self-study emerge: "ethical truth" (Nash, 2004, p. 137), which requires "being as honest as possible about what one remembers, feels, knows, and senses about events and people, both from the past and in the present. . . and … has everything to do with an author's motives, intentions, and attempts to be accurate" (p. 137). Ethical truth underpins the integrity of the researcher and the study, thus adding another level of validity to the work. Second, this speaks to the need for self-study researchers to "turn inward to inquire into, discover and reaffirm our inwardness" (Ergas & Ritter, 2021, p. 8) and, in so doing, embrace "a stance that celebrates 'self' rather than seeks ways to constantly validate its authority" (Ritter & Ergas, 2021, p. 6). These ideas are especially significant in imagining S-SCP.

Narratives, for Nash (2004), exist as "Constructivist Circles" (p. 49), in which "Each of us is both constructivist and constructed. The stories we construct then turn around and construct us, and we them... forever" (p. 49). These circles of stories, told from different perspectives, shape and re-shape each other to construct the intersecting, multi-storied self that is central to the self-study approach. Bringing the constructivist circle into self-study offers rich possibilities for navigating ourselves in practice.

Comparing SPN and Self-Study

Self-study as a method is framed by the following key tenets (Meskin & van der Walt, 2018):

1. It is personal and self-initiated
2. It is aimed at improvement of practice
3. It is a collaborative, interactive process
4. It uses transparent, multiple qualitative methods
5. Validation of research is through examples and through making the findings and the knowledge generated public

These ideas, drawn from LaBoskey (2004, p. 842-853) and Samaras (2011, p. 72-82), encapsulate the self-study approach, and can thus be used to compare self-study with SPN.

To create a similar encapsulation of SPN, I suggest, in summary, the following key tenets:

- Focus on self, context, and practice
- Search for narrative truth
- Integration of relevant literature through proof-texts
- Universalizability and making the personal public
- Requirement to be explicit and detailed, with a systematic, transparent process
- Alternative validity measures

The close parallels between the two approaches are apparent: both self-study and SPN are personal, context-specific, and engaged in the examination of practice. They both require an engagement with relevant literature and texts. Both insist on transparency and providing an explicit, detailed account of the research process. In both, there is a clear demand to disseminate the research into the public sphere. Finally, validation in both instances is achieved through means that are alternative to the objective requisites of conventional research.

Less immediately apparent connections are also evident. For me, the injunction to ensure universalizability speaks both to the improvement agenda that is key to self-study and to the interactive element. The implication is that the personal narrative only has efficacy once it moves into an arena in which it interacts and resonates with others – the "universe", which "consists of persons outside the author's field of vision with multiple fields of interest, diverse disciplinary identifications, unique personal and professional lives, and a vast array of communities of belonging" (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 1879).

There are also areas of overt difference between self-study and SPN. In particular, in SPN there is less focus on the direct engagement of participants and on the use of critical friends. That said, Nash and Bradley (2011) offer this exhortation: "It takes a village to offer ongoing support to the SPN writer. . . . [This] village can be a small group of people, or just one person who knows what you are embarking on, and who is willing to assist you at all times in the process" (loc. 737). This resonates with the notion of critical friends and the need in self-study to build a like-minded community of scholarship. Similarly, the ultimate test of SPN is not in the narrative itself, but in the connections it makes beyond the narrative.

The SPN As Method for Self-study

In summary, we can look at the four main components of SPN:

1. Identification of key themes
2. Connecting these themes to the writer's personal stories in order to exemplify and explicate the points being made
3. Draws on relevant, pre-existing research and scholarship in order to ground and enrich the personal narrative
4. Ends up with universalizable ideas and applications that connect with all readers in some way. (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 2515)

These components are equated with the concepts "pre-search, me-search, re-search, and we-search" (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 2515). All these phases may be equally applied to self-study, which moves in a "hermeneutic spiral of questioning, discovering, framing, reframing, and revisiting" (Samaras, 2011, p.72). We can identify in the four components exactly this spiral: pre-search (questioning and discovering); me-search (framing); re-search (reframing); and we-search (revisiting). With the recursive nature of the work, the need to draw larger implications, and the recognition of the significance of prior experience and knowledge, the SPN process offers unique synergy with the self-study endeavour.

The similarities and differences between self-study and SPN produce a rich, complex framework in which to investigate and reflect on the self; the different foci make for deeper insights and more surprising moments of storytelling, which can give personal narrative/s more weight and relevance, as well as offering a three-dimensional portrait of the researcher-self. There is great potential for enriching both self-study and SPN approaches through considering the parallels and dissonances between them, using SPN as a method *for* a method (e.g., personal history self-study), facilitating writing oneself into the story.

Three key observations support my argument for using SPN in self-study. First, and specifically in regard to personal history self-study, the challenge with writing personal history is always to find ways to move beyond the perceived limitations of memory and to situate the narrative within the broader framework of the more conventional and formal research endeavour. By embracing the philosophy of SPN and, in particular, its willing acceptance of the centrality of the personal within the scholarly, I was able to navigate a pathway toward both personal understanding and scholarly awareness. This, for me, seems to embody the spirit of self-study as one "writes oneself into the story" (Meskin, 2021, p.46).

My second observation concerns SPN's acceptance of contingency within narrative and the understanding of the backward-and-forward dynamic that is often at the heart of a historical narrative. Rather than discouraging retrospective narratives (like mine), SPN recognises that the past and present are never entirely dis-entwined. Indeed, as Nash (2004) notes: "as we try to recall our pasts, we inevitably reconstruct them. . . We remember *then* according to what we need, feel, and think *now*" (p. 140). This was particularly liberating for me in my research experience.

Lastly, SPN offers useful and unique ways to address the constant challenge to self-study researchers to find ways to demonstrate validity and trustworthiness, through the use of proof texts, universalizability, and narrative truth (Nash, 2004). All of these offer to self-study researchers the potential to engage in research that is both "me-search" and "we-search" (Nash & Bradley, 2011), an articulation of the research endeavour that seems uniquely suited to the self-study project.

Looking Forward

Finally, I wonder how SPN might intersect with reimagining self-study as a "non-instrumental approach" (Ritter & Ergas, 2021, p. 11), making it "more self-focused as opposed to merely self-initiated" (p. 11). In such a reframing, the potential applicability of self-study in multiple contexts is expanded, a view that lends itself to facilitating S-SCP. The particular significance of SPN for me is that it "integrate[s] scholarly discourse and content (re-search) into the self narrative (me-search)" (Nash & Bradley, 2011, loc. 44). This is exciting to me in the same way that self-study is exciting: creating a space for the personal story to be valued within the research arena.

For S-SCP, this is especially important since, as creative practitioners, we are always navigating the complex, often uncomfortable dissonances between creativity and academic discourse. Such methodologies allow me to imagine building a self-study community of creative artists/scholars through providing a palette of narrative possibilities that might shatter the perceived boundary between creativity and scholarship. By highlighting the power of stories, SPN offers one such approach within the broader realm of self-study scholarship.

Nash (2004) claims that "We are storied selves who write our own realities based on these unique stories" (p. 22). How might we tell those narratives using our artistic voices? How might my story speak outwards? How might the very experience of telling my stories change my own – and others' – perceptions? These are the wonderings that excite my artistic-researcher self and frame my hopes for future explorations.

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From Tourist Teachers to Place Rooted Educators

Road Blocks on the Journey

Laura C. Haniford & Rebecca M. Sánchez

Tourist Teacher | Place Rooted Teacher Education

This self-study, rooted in New Mexican conceptions of place, explores a continuum from what we describe as "tourist teachers" to "place-rooted teachers." We define tourist teachers as those who accumulate and appropriate teaching experiences without regard for communities and focus on their own professional and personal goals. This is often done with good intentions, but their short tenure in communities with great needs exacerbates long standing issues. We explore the distinctions between "tourist teachers" and teachers who are authentically rooted to communities and places. We draw on our experiences, as tourist teachers ourselves, and as teacher educators also committed to place rooted practices. We identify two themes regarding the importance of attending to place in more nuanced ways: 1) the transactional nature of tourist teaching; and 2) examples of conditional engagement. Finally, we discuss findings from the analysis of our own teacher education practices, and explore ways to resist the tourist trap.

Context of the Study

The self-study described in this chapter details our ongoing efforts to teach in "place-rooted" ways (Haniford & Sánchez, 2022) in an institution that pays lip service to place but is driven by neoliberal aims of efficiency and standardization. We work from New Mexican conceptions of place in order to better understand a continuum from what we describe as "tourist teachers" to "place-rooted teachers." Multiple events have happened at our institution over the past year, underscoring the ways in which a tourist approach is privileged in higher education. By privileging work that is "novel, efficient, and safe" (Dialogue Transcript, September, 26th, 2022), institutions of higher education make it challenging for teachers and teacher educators to engage in authentic, place-rooted experiences. In this inquiry, we aim to uncover the ways in which our current programs limit our abilities to engage in place rooted work. In a recent journal, Laura articulated the shift in focus in the following way, "In this chapter, we are highlighting in more detail the ways the institution makes our choices for us–or maybe it's more accurate to say the institution circumscribes our choices" (September 27th, 2022). In understanding the constraints we attempt to then begin to collectively imagine alternatives and possibilities to avoid the tourist trap.

Drawing on the theoretical frames of querencia (Arellano, 2007; Romero, 2020), and a critical pedagogy of place (Gruenwald, 2003), we engaged in a co/auto-ethnography (Taylor & Coia, 2006, 2020) to articulate the particular challenges that divert our attention from rootedness in place and position us and those we work with in a tourist trap.

Author one is a white woman, originally from the midwestern United States. She has made New Mexico her home for over 15 years. The second author is a Chicana social studies educator from New Mexico. Both authors are faculty within a teacher education department at a university in New Mexico.

Literature

We define tourist teachers as those who accumulate and appropriate teaching experiences without regard for local communities, instead focusing on their own professional and personal goals and needs (Haniford & Sánchez, 2022). Often, the teacher is positioned as an adventurer, seeking to fulfill other aspirations of their own in these unique contexts.

Current schooling practices, with a focus on standardization and reliance on market discourses, remove learners from place. Gruenwald (2003) describes that "In place of actual experience with the phenomenal world, educators are handed, and largely accept, the mandates of a standardized, 'placeless' curriculum and settle for the abstractions and simulations of classroom learning" (p. 8). A critical pedagogy of place requires that educators work toward reinhabitation and decolonization, "for the purpose of linking school and place-based experience to the larger landscape of cultural and ecological politics (Gruenwald, 2003, p. 9). Other scholars urge critical place-based educators to move beyond the local, in order to recognize and remedy systemic issues that distance people from place and make it difficult to create meaningful change. "While each act of reinhabitation contributes to a more just and sustainable world, systemic issues require sweeping policy changes that are beyond the scope of localized approaches to change" (Thacker & Bodle, 2022, p. 423).

We also integrate New Mexican critical place-based orientations of homeland and querencia, that seek to reassert local wisdom in colonized spaces. New Mexico, with its own legacy of layered colonization and isolation, has a storied relationship with land, culture, and experience. Querencia refers to a deep love of place, "which anchors us to the land, that which makes us unique people" (Arellano, 2007, p. 50). Querencia, as a place orientation, highlights connections between language, culture, and history (Anaya, 2020). Querencia further calls on individuals to commit to place, conceptualized as a homeland, by stewarding resources–both natural and cultural–and resisting colonization. An ethics of homeland must "move toward 'reclamation' of those other sources of values and ideals delegitimated by the hegemonic colonialist ideologies that have developed by exclusion of indigenous knowledge and lifeways" (Garcia, 1998, p. 93). In preserving a homeland, García cautions against tourist tendencies, "Unintentionally, tourists and environmentalist newcomers often intrude upon people whose relationships with places may be invisible and inaudible to them at first, so delicately have they been inscribed- within the flesh and not merely upon the body (1998, p. 108).

Methods

Our coming to know in this work is grounded in relationship--our relationship to one another, our relationship to knowing, and our relationship to place. We utilized co/autoethnography (Taylor & Coia, 2006, 2020) to work together to build our understanding of the impact of place on our teaching and on our relationships with the communities within which we work. As the work unfolded, we also began to articulate initiatives coming from our institution that worked against our efforts.

We began by revisiting our manuscript (2022), looking for the key ideas we established regarding tourist teachers and teacher educators. We created a shared online journal where we wrote to prompts we had defined through dialogue and where we individually recorded experiences that felt either place rooted or tourist in nature.

Over the course of this project, we met via online video conferencing eight times to further unpack these ideas and to ground our ideas in concrete examples of practice. During these meetings, we raised questions about ideas in our shared journals and pushed one another to clearly articulate how what we were experiencing was or was not reflective of our growing understanding of place-rootedness. Utilizing dialogue as "a way for developing understanding or insight that can guide or determine practice" (Guilfoyle et al., 2004, p. 1112), we sought not to uncover "truth," but to explore meaning.

Through our analysis, we identified two themes regarding the importance of attending to place in more nuanced ways: 1) the transactional nature of tourist teaching; and, 2) examples of conditional engagement. Over the course of the year we have been working on data collection and analysis for this chapter, our institution has repeatedly made choices that constrain our ability to emphasize place rooted approaches to teaching and teacher education. We documented and analyzed each of these instances, looking carefully at the institutional systems, structures, and priorities that position us as tourists in our own communities and that model for our teacher education students the efficiency and ease of adopting tourist teaching identities.

Outcomes

Below we contrast two teacher education pathways that have been developed at our institution. In our descriptions, we highlight the ways in which a tourist approach is privileged by the institution. We end with a discussion of our current thinking regarding ways to resist the tourist trap.

A Tale of Two Pathways

Before describing these approaches, we must clarify that we are not critiquing the models of teacher education per se. We are simply highlighting how higher education, when given choices, chooses again and again to support and foreground approaches that are efficient, standardized, and that provide the capital that counts to the institution. We both responded to a prompt where we addressed our understanding of the history of these two pathways and include our journal entries describing these two initiatives in their entirety.

Community Centered Teacher Education

As teacher educators, both authors have worked to bolster our teacher education programs to address the needs of local communities and integrate the knowledge of stakeholders into the programs. Rebecca worked to establish a pathway for elementary education licensure students focusing on funds of knowledge and addressing the needs of a distinct local neighborhood. In a long journal entry, she detailed features of the program.

> *Approximately five years ago, a group of faculty from three departments and two colleges united to create a teacher education initiative to better serve students seeking bilingual and TESOL endorsements, two high need teaching credentials in our state. One of the colleagues worked in the Art Education program and because as a group we all had connections to the arts either personally, professionally or both, we decided to focus on utilizing art integration as a way to support language learning. Several of us had a longstanding relationship with a local school so after much planning and major departmental resistance, we received permission to place a cohort of teacher candidates at the school. (Journal from Rebecca).*

Faculty revamped methods courses, shifted the focus of the student teaching seminar to include arts integration and language learning strategies, and over time, developed a robust curriculum to do site-based, community centered teacher education. As part of the initiative, we have hosted school-wide arts events where our teacher candidates and their classroom mentor teachers work to develop thematic units around themes and issues that are central to the school. For example, one year the theme was migration because many children in the school were experiencing or had experienced some sort of migration.

This initiative has always faced resistance in our college and has not received much institutional support, despite receiving external foundation funding and substantive private gift donations. With the change in leadership at all levels (program, department, college), the initiative became the target of further cuts even though there was outside funding to work with the existing students in the project to at least get them finished with their program. College-level administration suggested that there were no measurable outcomes despite the fact that numerous reports had been provided. Ultimately, the administration decided to cancel the initiative. This initiative, working at two high-needs local schools had operated as a generative space to consider and apply place centered understandings of both curriculum and community engagement. Canceling the initiative without a meaningful explanation, positioned the faculty members participating in the initiative as tourists. This despite the fact that the vision of the initiative was to work in meaningful and connected ways with communities in specific parts of town (July 20, 2022).

In a later dialogue, Laura and Rebecca discussed how to avoid being tourists when there is not institutional support for place rooted work. Rebecca concluded, “Yeah. And if things we try are canceled, then we start another thing where we try not to be a tourist.” (Dialogue Transcript, September 26, 2022). In processing the forced closure of this particular initiative, we came to realize through dialogue the ways in which we ourselves are forced into tourist positions due to lack of institutional support.

Standardized Teacher Education

Our university has been involved in developing teacher residency programs for the past five years. According to our college website, a teacher residency is “a paid year-long rigorous guided apprenticeship with an experienced co-teacher. Residencies occur in partner Districts or Charter Schools that intend to employ the resident for three years post-residency.” Different from the traditional model of teacher preparation classes linked to practica in schools, culminating with full-time student teaching, teacher residents are in schools full-time from the very beginning. School districts request the particular residents they want in any given year (i.e., elementary, secondary math, etc.).

> *Several years ago a faculty member at our institution received a grant to implement a residency model teacher preparation program. The residency program was created as a separate track for graduate students to receive their teaching license and a Master’s degree as quickly as possible. This residency model was a joint project between a few faculty members and the local school district. Changes were made to the program course sequence (i.e., moving some courses to the summer) without the consultation of most program faculty, but that made the program doable for students (Journal from Laura).*

While program faculty were not involved in the design of this pathway, the grant money and external accolades resulted in a high level of support for this approach by our College leadership (under two different Deans). During the most recent legislative session, our state budgeted money to support the expansion of residency models throughout the state’s teacher education programs. The budget was approved in February of 2022, providing funds for our college to add residencies in four new school districts and two local charter schools. We do not know how these districts and schools were chosen. We also do not know who was involved in designing the programs for the new partners. But these residency programs had to be planned and ready to go before the start of the fall semester in order for students to be placed and paid.

Unlike the original residency program, these new partnerships were simply laid over our existing programs with no changes to course schedules or expectations. One of the districts chosen is in a nearby community which is known for its commitment to scripted curricula and strict fidelity to scope and sequence. The disconnect between the vision of teaching and learning in this district and in our individual courses has highlighted for us how tourist approaches can be appealing in the short term. Place rooted epistemologies take time and position teachers as capable professionals and curriculum builders (Gruenwald, 2003).

While to a certain extent, this disconnect has always been true; the cognitive dissonance currently experienced by our students is greater than we have ever seen before. On the first day of classes this fall, when I described the assignments for my class (all of which emphasize the particular, the local, and the micro), students told me they have no control over what they teach. While they would like to teach in culturally responsive ways, they have no authority to alter the curriculum in any way. The two main assignments (a student study and a community cultural wealth mapping) each require students to “be able to learn about their students’ linguistic, social, cultural, ethnic, racial, academic backgrounds, and use this information in planning appropriate curriculum and instruction” (Student Study learning objective). The message our students receive from the current residency approach is that all that matters in learning to teach is more time spent in schools.

Currently, our classes are about half residency students and half “traditional” students. The residency students are less likely to have completed course readings and assignments and are the most overwhelmed by course expectations. In our conversation yesterday, we said that initiatives that are touristy are 1. Novel, 2. Efficient, and 3. Safe. But institutionally these touristy initiatives get laid on what already exists, like barnacles on a sunken ship. So this year all

the money the legislature gave to higher ed to implement residencies has resulted in a bunch of fast (efficient), novel, and in a lot of ways safe teacher preparation. When we place students in a district that doesn't believe teachers can and should build their own curriculum, when they are in a district that doesn't ask them to be change agents in any way, our students feel safer (September 27th, 2022).

Unpacking the Transactional Nature

In an early dialogue, we discussed the transactional nature of being a tourist teacher (October 11, 2021). The work with communities is about garnering prestige, credibility, or even bragging rights. A tourist teacher does offer time, talent, and knowledge, but the exchange is ultimately self-serving and about the experiences of the teacher. This echoes Garcia's (1998) reflection:

> *Truly, knowledge is power, but there are different kinds of knowledge and power. There is the cyclical knowledge generated and sustained within communities and ecosystems, but there is also the narcissistic knowledge generated by isolated individuals who use it to manipulate others instead of enhancing their mutual survival (p. 106).*

In the standardized approach described above, both the faculty member put in charge of the residencies and College leadership have received numerous public accolades while we are left struggling to make an impact on teacher candidate learning. These new residencies do fill particular needs of the state. There are teacher shortages and the university can say that it worked to address this need. But how we engage communities matters. As Laura wrote in her journal "It is a veneer of relationships and community. People are able to say, 'We've engaged the stakeholders'" (June 29, 2022). But engaging stakeholders is different from building community and a shared purpose.

Unpacking the Conditional Engagement

Often tourist teachers enter teaching situations with conditions: time, quantity of interactions, research goals, directions of the learning, clear definitions of the type of expertise to share, etc. This characteristic of tourist teachers has been difficult to tease out, and in early reflections, it emerged when we described how tourist teachers want to impart very particular types of knowledge or share certain expertise, regardless of community need. These conditions create a set of externally imposed parameters that result in few opportunities for sustained and reciprocal engagement.

The community centered teacher education initiative described above attempted to attend to the linguistic and cultural history of the children attending the school. In his work on place and homeland, Garcia describes, "Knowledge nourishes the good life when its complexity and richness are derived from its connections to networks of living communities (1998, p. 106). The community centered teacher education initiative was a working example of place rooted teaching, conceptualized and implemented as a joint project with the intentional inclusion and integration of the local knowledge of the community.

The residency model is currently funded by the state. While school districts have had an opportunity to express their needs regarding the teacher shortage, the conditions for the program have been predetermined based on the knowledge generated from outside of the communities being served. In a dialogue, Laura and Rebecca explored how conditional engagement was operating with the residencies in the following dialogue:

> *Rebecca: But I guess when I think of the part, the layer that is the conditional engagement, I guess I could say like our colleague who conceptualized the residency, like it's like, this blanket residency approach.*
>
> *Laura: And we go there to these districts and we say this is what we're doing.*
>
> *Rebecca: This is not the best way to prepare teachers. Are you in? Are you out? And all of the conditions are set.*
>
> *Laura: But then the colleague doing the programs does get to say I went and filled a need in New Mexico (Dialogue Transcript, September 26, 2022).*

While we currently have a Democratic governor, if we elect a Republican governor in the future, the residency money is likely to go away. There is no sustainability if the state government changes its priorities. A lack of sustainability inevitably becomes a tourist approach and damages our relationships with local communities when we engage with them only when we have state funding.

Avoiding the Tourist Teacher Trap

As we have articulated elsewhere (Haniford & Sánchez, 2022), one way of breaking the tourist teacher cycle is to establish roots in a place. Learning the history of a place, adopting a sense of care about the environment and others, and listening to the stories of the people who call the place home can root us (Anaya, 2020; Arellano, 2012; Romero, 2020). The challenge we have identified through this chapter is that the institutions within which we work make it very difficult to choose place-rooted approaches. We are an underfunded institution of higher education in a low-income state. The needs are many and great and the allure of quick fixes is powerful.

In our previous manuscript (2022), we developed a descriptive framework contrasting place-rooted and tourist approaches. Through the work described here, we have found our framework helpful in explaining both macro and micro level issues within teacher preparation. The realization we have come to through the work described in this chapter is that our spheres of influence grow smaller and smaller with every passing year. One journal written by Rebecca articulated a list of things that get in the way of our efforts to create place rooted teacher preparation. The first item on the list reads “Leaders and Colleagues” and contains the following descriptors:

- “Who support regimentation
- Who are comfortable with the neoliberal agenda
- Who seek out efficiencies and quantity measures over quality experiences
- Who are afraid of or threatened by work that addresses diversity” (June 27th, 2022).

By contrasting the two licensure pathways above, we have highlighted the choices made that align with regimentation, standardization (and the neoliberal agenda), efficiency, and quantity over embedded, localized experiences. The community centered approach described above focused on a neighborhood in our city with a high population of students from low-income, immigrant backgrounds. The teacher education provided through this pathway helped prepare teachers not only capable of but committed to addressing issues of language inequity. As such, the privileging of the standardized pathway combined with the abrupt dismantling of the community centered pathway calls into question whether our institution is authentically concerned with social justice in our schools and communities. What seems to matter is that we appear to care, not that we actually care.

Our choices have become circumscribed by the initiatives backed by the administration in our college. We are currently left with the micro-level choices available to us behind the doors of our classrooms. But even those feel like they are growing smaller and harder to sustain. As Laura said in a meeting via Zoom, “The macro, institutional level is making it really difficult for us to even make the kinds of choices that we want and need to make at the micro level in order to avoid being a tourist” (Dialogue Transcript, September 26, 2022).

Over the course of this self-study, one significant finding is the need to balance our small acts of place-rooted approaches amidst a dominating culture and practice of tourist initiatives. In reviewing our reflective writing and transcripts of conversations from the last year, when we attempt to articulate what we are doing to work with and in community, we find ourselves returning to obstacles outside of our control. We are still learning how to best navigate this terrain, and welcome ideas from our colleagues in teacher education. In an early reflection, Laura commented, “How do you be a small light in a dimming environment?” (April 14th, 2021) This reflection exemplifies the tension between a desire to make a difference for our students and the communities they serve within the context of teacher education, even if it is not systemic.

To return to Thacker & Border (2022), ultimately our call is for leadership in colleges, universities, and local and regional governments to support teacher education efforts that reinhabit the particular places they are situated. We must

commit to long-term efforts to build true alliances across boundaries to provide the educational opportunities our children deserve.

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Who Is the ‘I’ in All of This?

Learning About Myself Through Self-Study

Tanya van der Walt

Visual Mapping | Creative Collaboration | Self | Self in Self-study

As a methodology, self-study places the self at the centre of the research endeavour; we have to grapple with the self, in order to understand our practice. This is not an easy or comfortable task, asking us to confront our self/selves in ways that are challenging, demanding a high degree of self-reflection. As a result, much self-study research tends to foreground what I would call the 'doing' self, rather than the 'being' self. This paper arises out of a larger self-study project which examined my own collaborative, creative practice. Through methodological meta-analysis of my earlier study, I consider how I 'gazed inward' to grapple with my self/selves in my practice, and the tools I used to do so. In sharing my approach to answering the question of who I am as a creative, collaborative theatre-maker and educator, I offer an exemplar of how I have attempted to site my self at the centre of my research endeavour, allowing me to grapple with both my doing self, and my being self in my work. In particular, I explore the value of exploring the being self within the self-study paradigm.

Context of Study

> *…thinking about you as a collaborator, partly what I love is the ability and the freedom to go on these circular journeys that come back to the point (Participant A).*

Self-study. The name says it all, doesn’t it? Or does it? Self-study is the study of the *self in action*, by the self, through the self (and others, of course). As Jason Ritter and Oren Ergas (2021, p.1) point out “Studying oneself is not new. Well over 2000 years ago Socrates expressed the view that an unexamined life is not worth living, while the Buddha similarly stressed how it is important to be a lamp unto yourself.”

Self-study methodology places the self at the centre of the research endeavour. Vicki Kubler LaBoskey (2004, p. 826) reminds us that, “Self is central, and that means the whole of the self – past and present, emotional and cognitive, mind and body.” As self-study researchers, we have to grapple with the self, in order to understand our practice. However, this is not an easy or comfortable task; it asks us to confront our self/selves in ways that are challenging, demanding a high degree of self-reflection. It strikes me that much of self-study is often directed toward understanding the self through interaction with participants, sometimes to the exclusion of the inward gaze on the self. This may be in response to the all-too-common accusation of navel-gazing that is levelled at self-study (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p. 8), but an essential part of the process of self-study for me is coming to knowing the self better through the inward gaze. That process, as explored in my doctoral study, is my focus in this paper.

In line with the self-study imperative to share and make public our insights and new learnings (Kubler-LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011), this paper elucidates how I sought to deepen my understanding of my 'being' self, in my larger study. It is also, however, and more recently, motivated by my own response to Jason Ritter and Oren Ergas' fascinating work regarding the place of the self in self-study (Ritter & Ergas, 2021; Ergas & Ritter, 2021), which has prompted me to go back to my earlier study to consider the ways in which I gazed inward (to appropriate Ergas & Ritter's term) in my own work.

In my self-study doctoral project I examined my own collaborative, creative practice as a South African theatre-maker and university educator (van der Walt, 2018). In doing so, I sought to gain a greater understanding of how the forces of creative collaboration played out in my work with my two key collaborators and critical friends, and the students with whom we work. I wanted to discover the personal qualities, values, ontological and ideological positions, and ways of thinking that I bring to the process of collaborative theatre-making, to uncover who I am in my practice. This lies at the heart of my quest to understand what I would term my being self, which encapsulates all of the aspects listed above, as opposed simply to my doing self, which is more focused on my actions in the world. Excavating the inner workings of my own practice, exploring what makes my collaborative practice work, and what I bring to my practice in terms of knowledge, attitude, and expertise, allowed me to uncover that being self more fully.

Aims

In this paper, I use the notion of the being self and the doing self to distinguish between two foci: inward and outward. Obviously both matter in self-study, but the inward-looking, being aspect of our engagement with self is often marginalised, partly because of the challenge of *how* to know that self. What I offer here is a methodological exemplar (Mishler, 1990) of an approach to meeting that challenge, allowing us as self-study researchers to position the self unashamedly at the centre of the research endeavour, and "make self-study more self-focused as opposed to merely self-initiated" (Ritter & Ergas, 2021, p.11).

The paper thus offers one answer to the challenge of *how* to know the self in self-study, by demonstrating a methodological approach that uncovers the being self, rather than just the doing self, and which foregrounds the being self (which is essentially private), in a public and researchable way. In so doing, I also seek to show how graphic representations such as word clouds and concept maps can help to highlight and reframe data generated through interviews, making the hidden self tangible and material. These processes facilitate self-reflection and an understanding of how who I *am* affects what I *do* in my practice as a self-study researcher.

Method(s)

In my discussion here, I am not seeking to re-analyse the data from my doctoral study, but rather to offer a meta-analysis of the results of my initial analysis, using my earlier work as an example of an approach that grapples with the being self. Thus, I am able to re-examine and re-interrogate my earlier study in a new way. Before doing so, however, it is important to understand how that data was generated.

In order to learn more about my creative, collaborative, being self/selves in my initial study, I drew on:

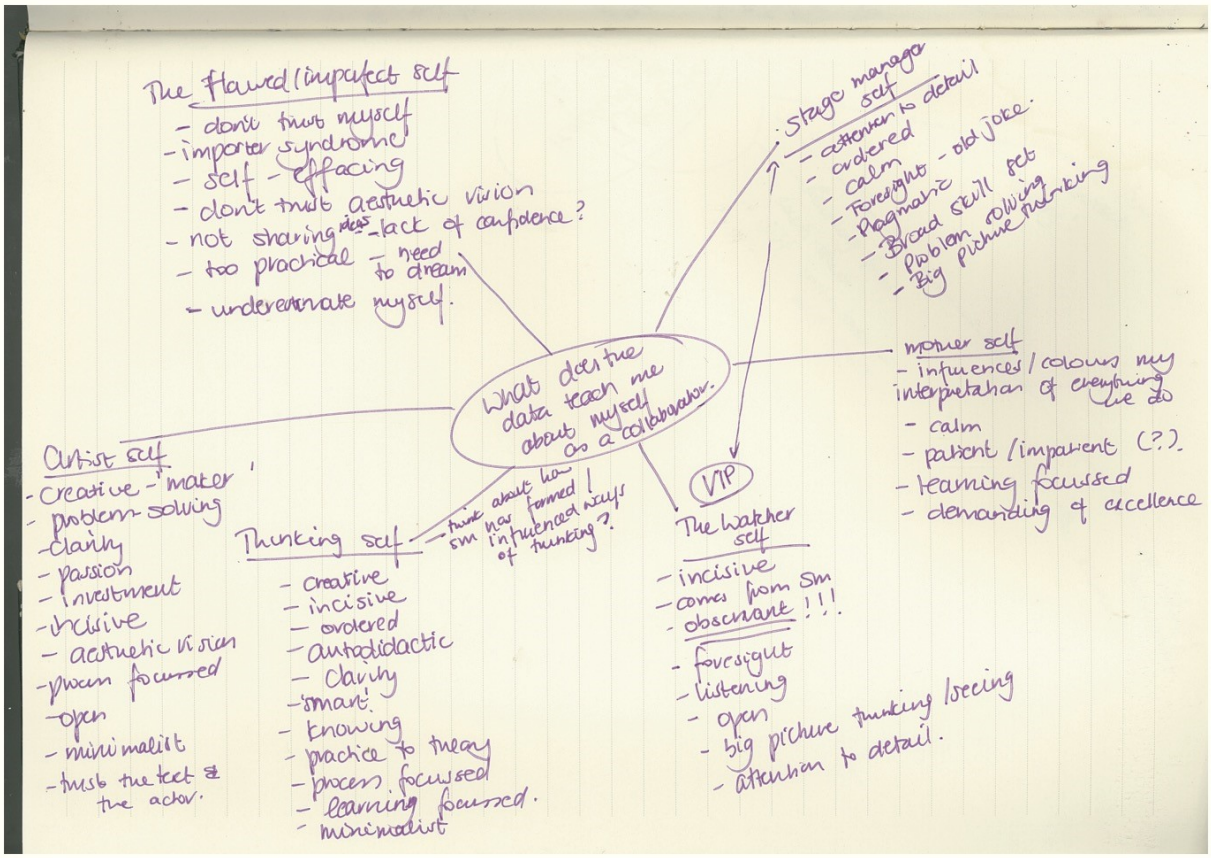
- data generated through interviews with both of my collaborators, who are also critical friends (Participants A & B);
- data generated through interviews with former students who were involved in my theatre-making project (Participants C, D, E, F & G), conducted after the completion of the project.
- my Reciprocal Self Interview (RSI) (Meskin et al., 2014), in which I was interviewed by my critical friend, using a schedule of questions that I had drawn up myself. This process allowed for deep introspection and self-reflexive engagement.

Each of these interviews was recorded, and then professionally transcribed. Initially, I read these transcripts as I would any play text, seeking the subtext and the hidden meanings embedded in the dialogue. Having done this and gained a broad overview, I examined the data repeatedly, in a recursive, hermeneutic process of "making meaning of [my] data" (Samaras, 2011, p. 198), looking for repeated ideas, key words, and themes, and common phrases.

In analysing these data sources in my initial study I looked closely at the ways in which my collaborators in particular had answered my questions. I did not provide specific descriptors for my self; rather, I asked each of them directly to characterise me as a collaborator and describe what it is like to collaborate with me. Their answers provided me with a list of descriptive phrases and adjectives that they would use to describe who I am as a collaborator. I was also able to glean a number of other descriptive words and phrases from my interviews with student participants. I first created a rough list of these and then used concept mapping (see Van der Walt, 2020) to code these, grouping the words and phrases thematically.

Figure 1

A Concept Map of the Ways in Which My Respondents Described Me As a Collaborator



I then compared these to the insights I had gained through my RSI, to understand the points of connection, overlap, and difference in the way I perceived my self, as opposed to how others saw me. This use of a range of sources and perspectives allowed me to 'crystallize' (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) my understanding of my self/selves as a creative collaborator. In so doing, I was able to identify six different 'selves', and generate a word-cloud formation for each of them, using the lists of words and phrases in my concept map.

Outcomes: Finding My Being Self

What this process of analysis and meaning-making revealed to me was that I can conceive of a series of selves that are me as a creative collaborator: the Stage Manager self, the Mother self, the Watcher self, the Thinking self, the Artist self, and the Flawed self. I have chosen here to present a general, summative discussion of each of these selves, showing how the ways in which I have been described by others helped me to understand myself.

1. The Stage Manager Self

So much of what I think and do as a theatre-maker, and as a researcher, is because I was a Stage Manager first. The practical stage skills, the interpersonal communication skills, and the organisational skills that I developed while working as a Stage Manager have all continued to be the basis of my practice. I believe that a large part of why I am a collaborator is because Stage Managers have to be good at working with others, as they are the one person in any theatrical production who has to interact and communicate with every artist and technician. The Stage Manager sits at the centre of the spider web that is the production, connecting all the disparate parts, and this has influenced the way that I work in collaboration with others.

In my RSI, my critical friend challenged me to think about the skills and ways of thinking that I have carried over from being a Stage Manager, into my directing and theatre-making practice. My response reveals a deep understanding that my years as a Stage Manager have made me the director and theatre-maker I am today:

I think that a Stage Manager has to be able to listen, hard. They have to be very observant because they have to pick up on things …. it is that sense of anticipating the problem before it arises, and fixing it…I think that does affect how I direct, in that I will see the problem coming before it has even got there….

> *Thus, Stage Management has taught me to be a pragmatic, listening, observant director, who is able to foresee problems before they arise.*

When I analysed the ways in which my collaborators described me, many of the skills and attributes they identified had developed as a result of my Stage-Management experience. These included my high level of attention to detail, my ordered and calm approach (if the Stage Manager in a production panics, disaster is surely imminent!), my broad theatrical and stage skills, my ability to problem-solve and foresee problems before they happen (as the old joke goes, "How many Stage Managers does it take to screw in a light…. oh, it's already done"), and my ability to see the *big picture* of a production, and to consider all the moving parts of a theatrical performance, can all be linked back directly to my experience as a Stage Manager.

2. The Mother Self

At a research seminar years ago, a colleague asked me to think about the ways in which my being a mother influences and changes what I do as a practitioner and researcher. At the time, I was struck by her question but really did not know how to answer it. I do not think that I am particularly motherly in relation to my students and my work, and there was, at first, no obvious response to her question.

However, while looking at the data, it became apparent to me that the reality that I am a mother influences what I do and who I am as a collaborator. As I explored the interviews, I noticed that I came back repeatedly to the idea of how having children affected my work. On a practical level, of course, having them means that I cannot simply go off and rehearse every evening or every weekend. My theatre-making and research work has to fit in around the needs of two boys with busy lives, who need me more than the production, the project, my collaborators, or my students ever will. Being a mother has meant that over the years, my ability to completely submerge myself into a theatrical or research project has been increasingly curtailed. Despite this, and even though I consciously try not to take a mothering role with my students and cast members, they felt that I had a very patient and caring approach. Participant C commented on this, saying:

> *Oh you're very patient with us. … the fact that you could actually sit there and devote even two extra minutes to a performer who needed a little bit of extra help was awesome.*

While I would characterise myself as very impatient at times, the student's response indicates a more nurturing perspective in the time available.

Another aspect of my work that reflects my Mother self is the fact that I am, as Participant B put it, "incredibly focused on learning." To me, it is imperative that students learn from the process of collaborative theatre-making, and this focus on learning and on the development of the students is related to my mothering instincts. Like any parent, I want the best for the children in my care, and this feeling extends to the students for whose learning I am responsible. Like any parent, I can be demanding of excellence; I challenge my students because I fully believe it to be in their best interest, and that by expecting more of them, I am making it possible for them to grow and develop.

3. The Watcher Self

Early in my process of interrogating my practice as a collaborative theatre-maker, I examined rehearsal photographs and videos which revealed something that I was only aware of on an unconscious level; while the photographs and videos consistently show my collaborators working at the front of the stage, actively engaged with the students and what they are doing, in many cases, I am not pictured with them, simply because I am sitting up in the auditorium, watching what is happening. This really struck me; initially, I thought I seemed too distanced and removed from the process, that I was somehow less involved than my collaborators in the making of the work. However, in my RSI I had a revelation:

> *I didn't study directing as such. … I know how to do it because I was a stage manager…I learnt how to direct by observation. And I think observation is very important in my process …. I sit and watch …, and for a long time I thought 'you are being too passive' but I have realised that it isn't about passivity. It is about observation.*

I realised that what I had initially perceived as a weakness in my work, was just a different way of approaching the work. As Participant A noted, "the broad stroke is clear to you"; because I tend to sit back and look at the bigger picture of what is happening on the stage, I am able to see the whole of the canvas of what we are trying to achieve.

My collaborators both characterised me as observant and incisive. To me, these two things go hand in hand; because I am a watcher, I work through careful observation, and equally focused listening, to see to the heart of a problem or an issue. Participant A described this aspect of my practice as being "able to cut through stuff and go 'there's the problem'. It's being able to manage the orderliness of it with ease." As a result of my close observation and careful listening (which I believe go hand in hand), I am able to pay close attention to detail, while also being able to foresee problems before they happen.

This ability to observe also extends to life outside of the rehearsal room. I am not only a watcher in the creative theatre-making process, but also in life. When I interviewed Participant A, I observed that "to be a good director, you have to be a good observer of life, because you have to have observed human behaviour." This is important to me; I have come to understand that this quality of observation and incisiveness, rather than being a weakness in my work, is probably my greatest strength.

4. The Thinking Self

In considering my Watcher self, and my critical friend's questions about what ways of thinking I have carried over from Stage Management, I examined the types of thinking that I bring to my collaborative theatre-making practice. All my theatre work is an enactment of my thinking, brought to life on the stage. Thus, the ways in which I think, and the types of thinking that I bring to the process determine, to a large extent, the type of theatre that I make.

My collaborators characterised me as a creative, incisive thinker. I am ordered in my approach, and this counterbalances Participant A's own admission that she is "not very good at order". Because of this, I am able to create clarity out of moments of apparent chaos. In many ways, I am something of a minimalist; I tend to remove the *noise* to simplify a concept or an idea, in the pursuit of clarity.

Participant A characterised both of us as "smart" in her assessment of me. I think she meant that we both have a wide range of *knowings* that we are able to bring to the work. She explained, "I think, because we read, because we engage with the world, I think we're interested in the world, so we bring [that] to it." This sense of value in what I know and what I think is an important part of the Thinking self that I bring to the process of collaborative theatre-making.

Participant B saw me as process-focused and learning-focused. Because the students' learning is important to me, I am very focused on the process of what we are doing, rather than on the product. While the quality of the finished theatrical work is important, to me, the learning that happens within that process is more important. Linked to this is the fact that I tend to think from practice to theory; I work practically and instinctively, and then later use theory to understand what we have done and why we did it.

5. The Artist Self

At the heart of my practice lies the fact that I am making a work of art. Thus, my creative, artistic self is a crucial part of who I am as a collaborator. I am a *maker* of all sorts of things; I spend a lot of time knitting or sewing, or engaging in other crafts. The fact that I *make* things is integral to who I am, and offers me an enormous amount of pleasure. These acts of making are all, in a way, attempts to solve a problem of one sort or another. In trying to solve the problems inherent in making a shawl, or in directing a play, or writing a research paper, I am focused on the process, rather than the product.

My sense of myself as an artist is, of course, deeply tied up with my Thinking self. The qualities of clarity and incisiveness that I identified as part of my ways of thinking are also an important part of my ways of making as a creative person. I have a fairly strong sense of aesthetic vision, and I bring this to bear upon my work in numerous ways. Because I am open to new ideas and concepts, I am able to bring these to the art that I make, to enrich the work that I do.

When asked to characterise me as a collaborator, Participant B said:

> *What overrides are the ideas of creativity and learning, and you know what, passion! The absolute whole embodied engagement in what you're doing with the students, with the show, the thematic content, with everything. And investment: If you're in something, you're invested in that.*

This sums up so much of my artistic approach: if I am involved in making a theatrical work, I bring to it a sense of investment and passion. I am completely engaged with what I am doing, and bring to bear all that I have in my arsenal of skills, in the making of a new work.

6. The Flawed Self

Of course, no one is perfect, and while I identified a number of strengths that I bring to my creative, collaborative work, the data also helped me to examine the weaknesses in my approach. I have chosen to call this the Flawed self, to convey the ways in which my self can have a negative effect on my work.

The biggest flaw that my collaborators identified is my tendency not to trust myself and my own judgment, in the theatre-making process. I underestimate my own contribution to what we are doing. Participant A observed, "I don't think you trust yourself enough." This links back to a sense of imposter syndrome (Clance & Imes, 1978); despite all my years of working in the theatre, and all my experience, I am still sometimes crippled by the thought that I don't actually know what I am doing.

This is also reflected in the fact that I tend to be very self-effacing. Participant A again characterised this when she commented that, "I sometimes think that you are not assertive enough; you allow yourself to be not assertive, if that makes sense. Like you take a backwards step." This sense of "stepping back" from the work reflects in the fact that my collaborators felt that I sometimes don't share my ideas freely enough; I am, at times, content to just go with their ideas, rather than fight for my own.

Conclusion

In considering what I have learned about my creative, collaborative, being self/selves, through self-study, I am able to conclude that the selves that I have identified through my examination of the data – the Stage Manager self, the Mother self, the Watcher self, the Thinking self, the Artist self, and the Flawed self – all co-exist and overlap within my practice. I am not any one of these things on their own; rather, my practice is an enactment of all of these selves simultaneously.

In conceiving of a series of selves that are me as a creative collaborator, I also show how the ways in which I have been described by others have helped me to understand my self in my own study; an understanding of myself as the 'Watcher self' allows me to use my powers of observation more effectively in my work, instead of seeing them as a weakness; an understanding of myself as the 'Flawed self' allows me to consider the ways in which I can be more assertive about my ideas, bringing greater confidence in myself to my practice. In this process of coming to know about my being self/selves, I embrace Sandra Weber's notion that "Self-knowledge is power; sharing self-knowledge is empowering" (Weber, 2014, p. 17), and so in developing a deeper understanding of my being self and my practice, I am more empowered to use that practice in meaningful ways.

In particular, my analysis of these various aspects of my self/selves has led me to a more complex understanding of the "I" in my self-study, as a multi-faceted, complex, doing entity, which is fundamentally connected to the complexity of being that underpins all of the selves that I inhabit in my work. Thus, my understanding of both my doing and my being self is expanded through the inward gaze of my research endeavour. Developing graphic representations such as

concept maps and word clouds of the multiple aspects of self I had excavated, allowed me to navigate the complexities and interactions within and between my selves. By focusing on the data using the lens of who as opposed to what, it is possible to engage more deeply with what underlies actions, behaviours, and thought processes, and what these reveal about the being self. While I only discuss one method for investigating the being self, what is crucial, for me, is the determination to do so. By focusing on the who (vs. the what), we can explore the self in multiple ways, deepening insights and offering new possible perspectives and interpretive insights, framing the self-study project in a more holistic and (potentially) probing way.

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Making the Familiar Strange Again

Pausing to Re-evaluate How Self-Study Scholars Describe Their Critical Friendships

Charlotte Frambaugh-Kritzer & Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle

Critical Friends | Trustworthiness | Social Constructivism | Quality | Reflective Thinking

This self-study reflects the work of two literacy teacher educators who built off their previous work in examining the effectiveness/quality of critical friendship (CF). The implications from their original study led to the creation of a guide called the Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide (CFQAG). To contribute more nuance to their understandings of CF, they turned to the literature to see how self-study authors demonstrate commitment to describing and sharing the use of CF as a research tool, especially as many self-study scholars associate CF with the concept of 'trustworthiness'. They asked, "How do S-STEP authors' transparent descriptions, or lack of, about their use of CF inform our understanding of how to promote more descriptive uses of CF in self-study research?". The theoretical framework was drawn from reflective thinking and social constructivism perspectives. Data sources included: 55 articles from the 2018 - 2021 journal Studying Teacher Education, written dialogue exchanges, and audio-recorded conversation Three themes emerged: 1) reseeking quality, (2) implicit telling, and (3) explicit explanations. The researcher's intentions were not to define CF quality or dictate what (or how) authors share, or do not share, about their use of CF. Rather, they offer an author's guide for sharing quality descriptions of the ways CF impacts one's study in meaningful and thoughtful ways. They still posit the original CFQAG can serve as a tool for overtly sharing and ensuring CF quality, however, their revised version (which now includes an added subtitle, revised questions, potential locations for explanations, and an additional column that explicitly connects the quality/trustworthiness descriptors we identified in the data) seems promising for richer descriptions of CF for the field of self-study scholars.

Context & Objectives

We situate this self-study in the long-standing conversation about critical friendship (CF) as a research tool, firmly established in the field of self-study methods (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Russell & Schuck, 2004). Indeed, CF has become ubiquitous in the last decade, "Quantitatively, we noted a 7-fold increase in the 2020 Castle publications. Specifically, 67 chapters out of 72 used CF, compared to the 2008 Castle collection where only nine chapters out of 66 used CF" (Stolle & Frambaugh-Kritzer, 2022, p. 34). This is not surprising since CF is highly encouraged (Samaras & Roberts, 2011) and has been proposed as an additional "interactivity" (Fletcher et al., 2016a, p. 19) to support 'trustworthiness' while conducting self-study research.

For background, in a previous study (Stolle et al., 2019), we reviewed the 2008 – 2016 Castle Conference publications with the goal of gaining new understandings of CF. In this study, we found the term CF was “often referenced superficially, without a clear description of how critical friendship was overtly applied” (p. 19). We noted authors referenced CF in connection to the study’s trustworthiness, but failed to describe how their CF collaborations were *effective*. Ironically, we found that these limited, or missing, descriptions of CF disrupted our thoughts on trustworthiness. Our focus on CF quality is not to be confused with the larger conversations of those discussing what makes quality self-studies as a whole (e.g., Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Laboskey, 2004). Although, there are some parallel concepts that we will address later.

We recognize we are not the first to inquire about CF quality, as we follow Russell and Schuck (2004) who asked, "How critical are critical friends and how critical should they be?". Others have also questioned CF quality (Loughran & Brubaker, 2015; Fletcher et al., 2016b). Moreover, we appreciate those who have offered CF guidelines such as Davey and Ham (2009) who created a continuum, reminding authors to highlight the number of critical friends involved, purposes for collaboration, decision-making in the inquiry, and intentions for benefit. Samaras (2011) specifically suggested critical friends: (1) create a working structure, (2) take a critical approach, (3) embrace alternative perspectives, and (4) acknowledge the complexity of collaboration.

In this same line of thinking, we created the "Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide" (CFQAG) (see Figure 1) to provide more nuanced recommendations for self-study scholars connected to quality (Stolle et al., 2019). In the CFQAG, we presented questions authors might consider as they forge a collaboration. We offered this tool to improve our own quality of CF (acknowledging we, at times, lacked description/clarity in our own self-studies), while also encouraging other self-study scholars to use it. Since our 2019 study, we still remain curious to how scholars overtly describe their CF interactions and what this means to not only our own work, but to the S-STEP community.

Figure 1

Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide

Start	Why should I have critical friends? What is the purpose of the CF? What do I hope to gain?
Throughout	What do critical friends do? What should the critical friends reflect on?
End	How did CF impact the study? Did the critical friends offer alternate perspectives, lead you to new insights, or help to reframe your thinking?

When the Castle 2022 Conference invited us to “pause at the threshold,” we were reminded of Moje’s (2009) stance, drawn from Bruce’s (1998) words, “We need to critically examine what has become commonplace, normalized, and even invisible” (p. 272). For us, two literacy teacher educators who have been engaged in self-study research over the past 15 years, often acting as critical friends, CF had become familiar. When this happens, Moje (2009) suggests researchers — make the familiar strange again by digging deeper. Thus, in this study, we are not proposing the necessity of CF, or even what CF should be; rather, we seek to continue developing our understanding of CF as a methodological choice in self-study. We turned to the literature to see how self-study authors (including us) demonstrate commitment to describing and sharing the use of CF as a research tool, especially as many self-study scholars associate CF with the concept of trustworthiness. For example, Kucera et al. (2020) proposed that when critical friends provide trustworthiness, they also

raise “reliability related to the data analysis” and “credibility” (p. 3), which bolsters the *quality* of the study. Similarly, Allison et al. (2016) reported their CF collaborative inquiry provided a “a range of perspectives, thereby testing the validity or trustworthiness” of their analysis (p. 340).

Driven by this repetitive connection between CF and the term 'trustworthiness', we also investigated the criteria associated with trustworthiness in qualitative research, otherwise known as 'rigor', such as *reliability, credibility, transferability, validity, dependability,* and *confirmability*, linked to producing quality studies in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As noted earlier, connections exist between these terms and the descriptions we seek of authors’ uses of CF within a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) are often credited for initiating the discussion of trustworthiness surrounding qualitative data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). With that, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested strategies for strengthening validity and reliability, such as: receiving feedback from participants, using peer feedback, corroborating data through triangulation, and using multiple coders. However, LaBoskey (2004) advised that if these four conditions of self-study were met: (1) self-initiated, (2) focused on inquiry into teaching practices, (3) aimed at transformation, and (4) dependent on qualitative methods, then the reader must judge its trustworthiness.

As stated previously, there are a number of commentaries that offer advice about the quality of CF, but we believe our study is the first to investigate how authors describe the effectiveness of CF in the form of a literature review while simultaneously constructing a guide for authors surrounding quality. Hence, we hope to contribute more to this line of inquiry, while also exploring new insights about our 2019 CFQAG. The research question guiding this self-study is: "How do S-STEP authors’ transparent descriptions, or lack of, about their use of CF inform our understanding of how to promote more descriptive uses of CF in self-study research?".

Two theoretical perspectives informed how we structured and engaged in this self-study. First, we drew upon Dewey’s (1933) reflective thinking, which includes a careful consideration of a supposed form of knowledge - in our case, CF and quality. In this, Rodgers’ (2002) synthesis of Dewey’s work resonated with us. Reflection is: (1) a meaning-making process highlighting relationships, (2) systematic and grounded in scientific inquiry, (3) collaborative and happening in community, and (4) personal and valuing intellectual growth. Second, we looked to Vygotsky’s (1978) understanding that learning occurs through dialogue when learners interact with sources of knowledge in social settings, as well as take an active part in reconstructing knowledge within their own minds. Through dialogue, we reflected on and interacted with our understanding and knowledge of CF and quality in a social setting, taking an active part in reconstructing knowledge of these concepts within our own minds.

Methods

As stated above, not only have we been engaged in self-study research over the past 15 years, often acting as critical friends, we have also conducted research on the term CF (Stolle et al., 2018, 2019; Stolle & Frambaugh-Kritzer, 2022). Thus, we position ourselves as more experienced researchers on this phenomenon. In this study, we articulate our CF roles as ‘insiders’ (Stolle & Frambaugh-Kritzer, 2022), which means we are both embedded as critical friends in this self-study, and fully involved by conceptualizing the study, serving as participants, analyzing, and co-authoring. Additionally, for transparency, we are close friends (personally and professionally), acknowledging the biases this can bring. Yet, in our closeness, we note a deep trust that affords us more vulnerability, which is recognized as a critical attribute to self-study (Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2006). As critical friends, we sought to challenge each other to rethink and gain new insights on descriptions of CF quality, with ambitions of improving (LaBoskey, 2004) our CFQAG (see Figure 1).

To answer our research question, data included: (a) published articles, (b) written dialogue exchanges, and (c) audio-recorded conversations. Published articles were selected based on our original analysis of the 2008 – 2016 Castle publications, which had fewer word limits than other journals (e.g., *Studying Teacher Education* [STE]). This time, we sought articles with a higher word count, reviewing a total of 70 articles published from January 2018 – August 2021 in *STE*, to secure a deeper view of how authors were applying CF and describing their use of CF. To begin our process, we first used the PDF ‘find and search’ digital tool to determine who was using CF, searching keywords such as: *critical*, *friendship,* and *collaboration*. In case of digital errors, we also manually skimmed each article. This resulted in 55 articles for analysis. Next, we read each article and created a table to record descriptions of how CF was being enacted

juxtaposed to the CFQAG. Then, we engaged in dialogue to determine how we would categorize CF quality in these articles. In a previous study (Stolle et al., 2019), we noted CF is applied most consistently in two areas in which one or more critical friends: (1) support/coach the transformation of another's teaching/pedagogy, or (2) support the trustworthiness of research methods. For this study, we found the same delineation.

Next, acting as critical friends, we engaged in both written and real-time dialogue, which also served as data sources we later analyzed as critical friends. We wrote dialogue exchanges two times a month for five months. The written exchanges not only opened space for us to reflect upon and explore what we were discovering in our literature review but also provided us an opportunity to reflect, wonder and re-examine our CFQAG against what other authors were doing and sharing around CF. Simultaneously, we met virtually twice a month over 6 months to share emerging themes and persisting questions about the data. Through this iterative process, we both generated data while also engaging in ongoing analysis to uncover ways we were rethinking, or rediscovering, CF in similar, yet distinct and unique ways. These conversations were organic and provided us a space to "make the familiar strange again". These meaningful exchanges, both written and spoken, allowed us to live out our theoretical beliefs about reflective thinking (Dewey, 1933) and the social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978).

Data analysis included: (a) both open coding and direct content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005); (b) "real-time" dialogue (Taylor & Coia, 2009); and (c) "writing as a way of 'knowing'" (Richardson, 2000, p. 923). First, we individually coded our discussions as we reread the data, looking for recurring themes. We also employed direct content analysis where we used predetermined codes established from our CFQAG protocol as we examined the articles from the selected literature. Then, using both real-time dialogue and writing as a method of discovery to process and discuss meaning, we analyzed our codes, grouping/categorizing them in various ways, which led us to the following three themes: (1) reseeking quality, (2) implicit telling, and (3) explicit explanations. Themes were brought forward in our analytic discussions while serving as critical friends, visible in all data sources, and supported in the literature we reviewed. In this way, we systematically analyzed our data (Samaras & Freese, 2009).

Outcomes

Overall, our findings showed that we constructed new meaning, specifically concerning descriptions of CF quality, as we engaged in ongoing conversations with the selected literature. Accordingly, we present our findings organized by each theme, while also describing/evidencing our own CF. As a result of our CF collaboration, our new understanding also prompted us to revise our CFQAG, which we will share in the final discussion as it relates to our implications.

Reseeking Quality

Analysis of both our written and real-time conversation data showed that we initially sought to better understand the characteristics of CF quality. However, as we examined the 55 *STE* articles we identified using CF, we ultimately realized we were actually attempting to solidify our expectations around how CF quality is described in the literature.

Our first attempts at 'reseeking' were apparent in our conversations as we reflected on our original CFQAG (see Table 1). In one of her written dialogues, Charlotte explored key terms typically related to *rigor/trustworthiness* within qualitative research and began to wonder if we actually meant 'trustworthiness' when we said 'quality'. Thus, we dug into the criteria/terms associated with trustworthiness: *reliability, validity, credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability.* Although multiple definitions could be found in the literature for each concept/criterion, we drew upon the following notions as a result of our dialogue:

'Credibility' is analogous to internal 'validity' (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and addresses the "fit" between respondents' views and the researcher's representation of them (e.g., peer debriefing, member checks) (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

'Transferability' is comparable to external 'validity', noting the degree to which results can be transferred to other contexts/settings. Thick descriptive data can assist in facilitating transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

'Dependability' is linked to both 'reliability' and 'confirmability' (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In that, dependability often seeks objectivity, which can be achieved through external audits and replication (Lincoln & Guba, 1986).

While reflecting, Charlotte recognized how the specific term trustworthiness dominates the self-study literature surrounding CF. She started wondering how trustworthiness and quality are connected, along with how these other terms should be addressed with regard to trustworthiness and CF. She wrote:

> *When we first created the CFQAG, I fixated on the term 'trustworthiness' because we kept seeing CF described as a way to 'ensure trustworthiness'. But I never equated quality with trustworthiness. I don't recall thinking about different characteristics/criteria (e.g., credibility, etc…) connected to CF quality, which would also be connected to trustworthiness. But now I see that some of the questions we posed in our CFQAG actually promote, or better align with, specific criteria of trustworthiness. Therefore, I created a new chart (see Table 2) and tagged our existing questions with what I think are matching characteristics linked to quality that dig into rigor and trustworthiness descriptors. I also recognize that my interpretations of the questions may cause disagreement as I see overlap in Lincoln and Guba's definitions. Nevertheless, I propose revised wording (in bold) to include more characteristics that will ensure deeper CF quality. And, maybe we change the title to be trustworthiness, instead of quality?*

Figure 2

Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide Revision

Process steps	Questions	Tied to Quality Descriptor
Start	Why should I have critical friends?	Dependability
	What is the purpose of the CF?	Dependability
	What do I hope to gain?	Dependability
Throughout	What do critical friends do?	Transferability
	What should the critical friends reflect on?	Transferability
End	How did CF impact the study?	Credibility
	Did the critical friends offer alternate perspectives, lead you to new insights, or help to reframe your thinking?	Transferability

Elizabeth expressed some concern, and several discussions ensued as we pushed each other in our revisions around definitions and criteria of quality and trustworthiness in the CFQAG (e.g., credibility, dependability, etc…). Elizabeth noted:

> *I reviewed one of the STE articles using CF, and the author equates "member checking"to CF. It's hard for me to completely make sense of the author's justification that the participants could both member check and serve as critical friends, but he makes that leap. I would love to know how the author defines CF, but I can infer it has something to do with digging deeper and complicating interpretations, while ensuring credibility.*

In this instance, we reflected that member checking is an integral part of creating credibility for trustworthiness in qualitative research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1986). Yet, similar to CF, despite its ubiquity, there is little written about member checking outside of it being an item to be crossed off a research project's task list (Hallett, 2013; Koelsch, 2013). This dissonance did not settle well with us. Thus, as critical friends, we kept digging deeper into what

we meant by quality CF. One example of this digging came when we considered one question in our CFQAG, "Why should I have critical friends?", which appeared quite linked to member checking. We asked ourselves, could researchers use CF as a way of “member checking”, bringing in a person to validate the experiences and analysis? And, although we see this as a possibility, we also note the limitations of using CF for these purposes, as LaBoskey (2004) connects CF to challenging another beyond the immediate, in hopes of gaining new perspectives and insights. However, ultimately, we don’t seek to dictate what is and what is not quality CF. Rather, we seek authors’ descriptions around the why and the how of CF, noting how CF created quality for them within their study.

After further “real-time” conversation, we acknowledged our original pursuit - seeking to define CF quality - appeared quite positivistic. We realized that we do not see quality as a specific “thing". Rather, we equate our pursuit of quality to the ways we engage in literary response. In other words, we embrace all answers/thinking/transactions, yet we are responsible to justify and support these with adequate textual support. This is true in self-study research, as well. There is no set way of using CF, or one way to define CF quality. Rather, we celebrate the unique ways authors use CF within self-study research to grow their thinking, yet we recognize the importance of fully describing CF with “textual support”, which illuminates the quality/effectiveness of the CF.

Seeking to answer our new questions led us to our two next themes. While analyzing the STE articles through both written and real-time discussions, it was not always easy to determine CF quality/trustworthiness/effectiveness. However, when we brought a critical light to these articles, specifically focused on the CF descriptions, two findings emerged, categorized as implicit and explicit. We do note that when pointing to examples from the STE articles, we did not reference any authors when our tone could be implied as critical, as our goal is to reveal how the article helped us to make new meaning of describing CF quality. Thus, we attempt to mask our examples by speaking more generally and refraining from direct quotes or exact language.

Implicit Telling

An analysis of our written and real-time conversations showed that we struggled to see the effectiveness of CF when little detail was shared in the telling. For example, Elizabeth wrote in her dialogue entry, “Just like in our original study (2018 & 2019) with the Castle chapters, I also noted several STE articles where CF was ‘name dropped’.” Charlotte confirmed this same analysis. We both agreed this left us craving more detail. In our coding, we noted that this issue was the hardest for us to decipher when authors only tell us they had a CF in their methods, yet left out specifics about the relationship or contributions. This required us to draw our own conclusions about the impact of CF on the study, which impacted our thoughts about trustworthiness. Although we acknowledge various reasons authors may not choose to share those details (e.g., space limitations, alternate focus), the absence of description left us wondering. Specifically, Elizabeth wrote, “I wonder if any of these studies actually experienced negative CF, leading them to ignore or exclude the details”. To that point, we have only found one study detailing a negative CF outcome. If others experienced negative CF outcomes, those are left for interpretation. And yet, we imagine descriptions around CF downfalls or shortcomings could be as important to a study as brilliant and cohesive CF. As we continued to challenge each other, we came to the agreement that the quality of a CF isn’t static, but rather dynamic and connected to the ways the relationship impacts the study in meaningful ways. And thus, self-study researchers have the responsibility to provide the textual support necessary for the reader to see how the CF impacted the study in quality/effective ways.

Alternately, our analysis and ongoing dialogue demonstrated we appreciated when authors described their CF evidence. Yet, as Charlotte pointed out,

> *While reading one article, I noted their use of CF in the first phase of data analysis, explaining that they worked individually to develop initial codes and then came together later to work as critical friends. However, the authors never elaborated on how they served as critical friends. Although they note the use of journaling to help them as critical friends, they never offered a description of their written work as critical friends.*

Our data revealed that we desired more details (e.g., roles, actions, and benefits) . . . literally wanting authors to articulate, “As critical friends, we did XYZ”.

Additionally, analysis revealed many authors *showed* how CF impacted the study, rather than explaining. These authors detailed, throughout their findings, various accounts of critical friends asking specific questions, wondering aloud in analysis meetings, etc., which often helped us, as readers, experience the CF anecdotes. These showings offered an in-depth view of how CF contributed to the quality of the study. However, we still needed to draw some of our own conclusions because the quality descriptions were more implicit. For example, another article explained in the methods section how the author came to bring in a critical friend as an expert. Then, throughout the findings, the author described specific instances where the critical friend asked questions to help the author think deeper and in new ways, but this was never specifically acknowledged as the act of CF or explained as such. Thus, we were left to draw inferences about the relationship, purposes, and interactions. With that, we also acknowledge some self-study researchers use and describe what we might define as CF, but they do not name it CF. Thus, there were opportunities in the data to implicitly explore quality collaborations that were considered something other than CF.

Explicit Explanations

Out of the 55 *STE* articles, we did identify several articles that provided explicit information surrounding their CF throughout their study. Our analyzed conversations showed how much we appreciated when authors accounted for the CF purpose and explicitly explained their process. We also examined how some articles did both by telling and showing. Yet, as we continued to discuss certain articles, we came to have even more appreciation for authors who explicitly explained the impact of their CF work and those who showed how CF offered an alternate perspective which led to new insights. For example, Elizabeth wrote,

> *Check out this article by O'Dwyer, Bowles and Chróinin (2019). I think they provided a stellar example of sharing their CF impact. They explained their rationale and thinking behind the use of a dual layering of critical friends, highlighting the identities of the critical friends, the rationale behind the procedural processes, and the purpose of using CF. Then, they explicitly described how contributions from the CF guided analysis and understanding of the data. Finally, they shared examples of how the critical friend offered critique, support and encouragement to improve practice, noting CF was key in pushing reflections further beyond self-justification.*

Because of this detail (showing *and* explicit explaining), we see not only trustworthiness, but confirmability criteria in their study linked to quality. Based on this study, and the other exemplars we analyzed, we hope to bring these same descriptions of CF quality to our own future work because we see how easy it is for the trustworthiness criteria to be missed. In other words, we noted how many authors fail to end their article by describing the impact of CF.

As we identified the importance of explicit explanations, we started to unpack the idea of where we should find these explanations within the text of any written study. In that, Charlotte started challenging ideas around the chronological order noted in our original CFQAG: Start, Throughout, and End. As we pushed each other's thinking in both our dialogue journal and our real-time conversations, we came to see that we no longer needed these linear markers, as we recognize CF work is cyclical and dynamic. Yet, we left them as helpful markers for researchers, while also adding locations for sharing information about CF for authors to consider when writing up a traditional study, thus noting the expected locations in our revised CFQAG (see Table 3).

Conclusions

Based on our written and real-time conversations, which served as both a reflective (Rodgers, 2002) and collaborative (Vygotsky, 1978) space, one of our biggest discoveries is that we do not need to define CF quality, but rather offer an author's guide for sharing quality descriptions of the ways CF impacts the study in meaningful and thoughtful ways (i.e., "textual support"). Another discovery we made was surrounding the pressure we put on ourselves to model our own call for full descriptions of CF within a study. While we tried our best to demonstrate our commitment to describing our CF in this particular study (e.g., purpose, positioning, actions, structure, impact, new insights), in the end, the reader must decide if we met this goal.

As a result, we revised our "Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide" (CFQAG) (see Table 3) to include: an added subtitle, revised questions, potential locations for explanations, and an additional column that explicitly connects the

quality/trustworthiness descriptors we identified in the data.

Figure 3

Critical Friend Quality Assurance Guide: An Author's Guide to Quality Descriptions

Process steps	Questions	Tied to Trustworthiness Descriptor
Start	Why should I have critical friends?	Dependability
Introduction & Methods	What is the purpose of the CF?	Dependability
	What do I hope to gain from my CF(s) support?	Dependability
	How am I positioning my critical friend(s)? (i.e., strangers/close, insider/outsider, expert/non expert)	Dependability
	What is determined as fair participation in the study for the critical friend?	Dependability
Throughout Methods & Findings	What do critical friends do? (i.e., describe their actions and timing within the methods)	Credibility
	What should the critical friends reflect on? Is it specified or open-ended?	Credibility
	How was the CF structured and what was the process for providing feedback/alternate perspectives?	Credibility
	How was the feedback/critique received by the researchers?	Credibility
End	How did CF impact the study?	Transferability
Findings & Implications	Did the critical friends offer alternate perspectives, lead you to new insights, or help to reframe your thinking?	Transferability

Our intention is not to prescribe or dictate what (or how) authors share, or do not share, about their use of CF. Rather, we offer the revised CFTAG as a tool to guide, challenge, and encourage self-study authors as we see value in the deeper descriptions and the showing, especially when authors articulate CF experiences from *start* to *finish* in the study. Admittedly, we have missed the mark in fully describing our own CF over the years. Thus, we challenge all researchers using CF, including ourselves, to be responsible brokers of CF. That is, given our findings, we think CF can be tied to ensuring trustworthiness. However, for true trustworthiness, the quality factors must reveal more about the CF relationship so that the reader can see and understand the criteria of credibility, transferability, and dependability. In reflection, we still posit the original CFQAG (see Table 1) can serve as a tool for overtly sharing and ensuring CF quality, however, this revised version (see Table 3) seems promising for richer descriptions of CF for ourselves and the field.

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Pausing to Breathe, but Is It Possible to Pause Whiteness in Teaching and Teacher Education?

Narratives of Four Brazilian Physical Education Teacher-Researchers

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Collaboration | Critical Friendship | Narratives | Self-study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) | Physical EducationTeacher Education (PETE).

This self-study aims to analyze how white educators and liberal institutions played key roles in perpetuating racism and whiteness in the constitution of our teachers' identities and what movements we had to make to navigate through ruptures and face the discourses and practices that naturalize racial oppression in Brazil. This study explores unique elements from vignettes extracted from autobiographical narratives which relate to the experiences of four physical education teacher-researchers: a black woman, two black men, and one white man. As a theoretical framework, we discuss the concept of whiteness and how it acts in maintaining the racial privileges of whites in the country as well as its implications in teaching and teacher education. The lived experiences of each of us have led to mobilizing work with teacher education in four regions of the country. Our reflection allows us to collaboratively and intersubjectively fight for anti-racist education, navigating different and complex pathways as part of a teacher-researcher knowledge community. Our methodological choices were supported by the collaboration established by Garbett and Thomas (2020) as researchers who recognized themselves as critical friends in carrying out a self-study. The methodological approach takes the form of a collaborative self-study based on the practices of the four authors as teachers and teacher educators. We are concerned with our own well-being when we perceive everyday life and academic life in a racist country, besides the risks involved in anti-racist education and in the defense of social justice. The thematic analysis of our written narratives as primary sources was carried out in two phases. The outcomes from the narratives show the difficulties and opportunities faced by teachers. While the school routine for black teachers was configured as a space of silence, repression, punishment, and resistance, the welcoming, the well-being, and the feeling of belonging to that space only reverberate for the white teacher in the professionals' actions, notably facilitating his permanence in the school space. The dualism between body and mind for a black teacher is questioned with attempts to mask and colonize thought. We conclude that the anti-racist character of our intervention refers to the constant concern about how our students perceive the subjectivities of teachers and how they critically mirror these teachers. It is in this way that we assume our responsibility to materialize anti-racist education modes.

Introduction – Context of the Study

This self-study aims to analyze how white educators and liberal institutions played key roles in perpetuating racism and whiteness in the constitution of our teachers' identities and what movements we had to make to navigate through ruptures and face the discourses and practices that naturalize racial oppression in Brazil, where 89% of the population recognizes that racism exists, although 90% of them do not consider themselves racist. This reveals the naturalization of structurally racist and oppressive situations which make unequal relations between white and black people invisible. According to Kilomba (2019), it is necessary to incisively disassemble the normality of racism, and the violence and the trauma of being positioned as "the other", because racism episodes occur daily.

This study explores unique elements from vignettes extracted from autobiographical narratives which relate to the experiences of four physical education teacher-researchers: a black woman, two black men, and one white man. As a theoretical framework, we discuss the concept of whiteness and how it acts in maintaining the racial privileges of whites in the country as well as its implications in teaching and teacher education. The lived experiences of each of us have led to mobilizing work with teacher education in four regions of the country. Our reflection allows us to collaboratively and intersubjectively fight for anti-racist education, navigating different and complex pathways as part of a teacher-researcher community of knowledge (Sanches Neto et al., 2022). Our perspective is based on self-study methodology related to teacher education and collaboration between anti-racist teachers and critical incidents about social justice in our lived experiences (Pinnegar et al., 2020; Straubhaar, 2013).

Objective of the Study – Background

The objective of this self-study is to reveal the dilemmas faced by the four authors in our permanent process of becoming anti-racist teacher educators. Through a politicization process of the idea of race as a structuring framework, Gomes (2012, 2017) shows that the black educator movement started to occupy a *sine qua non* (condition without which) place in the constitution of Education for Ethnic-Racial Relations (ERER) in Brazil with undeniable potential for emancipation. According to Gomes (2017), the black movement has strongly contributed to both state structuring in the sense of social justice, and to the construction of less unequal daily relationships. However, the invisibility of the black population in Latin America is a persistent problem that affects schooling and teacher education (Venâncio & Sanches Neto, 2020).

This problem has been tackled through collaborative strategies such as the mobilization power of black feminisms (Venâncio & Nobrega, 2020). These confronting initiatives share the search for social justice as a common parameter. However, there are contradictions and limits of the anti-racist agenda based on the opposition of whiteness instead of the centrality of blackness (Conceição et al., 2023). According to Silva (2019), we need to decolonize and de-enslave ideas and conducts by understanding the particular and common histories of all Brazilians and Latin Americans. In addition, legislation in Brazil establishes the democratic contribution as a prerogative and supports resistance to implementing curricula subsidized by whiteness in the school space (Müller & Cardoso, 2017).

Methodological Pathway – Research Design and Questions

Our methodological choices were supported by the collaboration established by Garbett and Thomas (2020) as researchers who recognized themselves as critical friends in carrying out a self-study. The methodological approach takes the form of a collaborative self-study based on the practices of the four authors as teachers and teacher educators. We are concerned with our own well-being when we perceive everyday life and academic life in a racist country, besides the risks involved in anti-racist education and in the defense of social justice. The thematic analysis of our written narratives as primary sources was carried out in two phases.

In the first phase, we individually outlined our lived experiences and shared them in an online file format. We chatted weekly and asynchronously through a messaging application due to the demands for social distancing resulting from the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. In the second phase, we collectively analyzed our narratives looking for common and discrepant elements, convergences, and divergences in our experiences in facing the "white presence" represented by the universalization of whiteness. We also used the online platform for synchronous meetings during this phase.

In the self-critical sense, as suggested by Ham and Kane (2004), we asked: How do we act in these situated spaces? And, similarly to the reflective process proposed by Craig et al. (2020), we asked ourselves: How do we share our perplexities in the community to which we belong to and how do we collaborate with each other? During the analysis, we found that controversial assumptions about social justice emerged from the coding process as we connected our experience as teacher-researchers with the reflection of Garbett and Thomas (2020, p. 296) on "deepening the understanding of what we wanted for ourselves in our personal and professional lives had an impact on the meaning we made of our roles in academia". In our respective contexts, we also recognized the risks and difficulties related to "our norms of politeness, self-protection and our experiences with the impact of opening our way of teaching to public comments as something dangerous or uncomfortable for both the commentators and for who is being commented on regarding the work itself" (Garbett & Thomas, 2020, p. 299).

The thematic arcs we have identified are related to our educative trajectories in schooling, from early childhood education to high school, in higher education from undergraduate to post-doctorate, and in working as teacher-researchers in elementary and higher education. We organized the themes emphasizing each idiosyncratic perspective as a point of view (POV). Next, we reflected on these themes in light of the literature related to teacher education from an anti-racist perspective. Thus, we collaborated as each other's critical friends to discuss critical incidents identified in the autobiographical vignettes.

Findings – the Place of Whiteness in Our Schooling and Teacher Education Processes

The metropolitan region of São Paulo was the common space for our development during elementary education. Luiz was the only child in his family and started studying in 1979. He always identified himself as black because he did not look like the people in his father's family and knew that he was the third generation free from bondage to slavery on his mother's side. His mother is black and his father, who died in 1987, was considered white, from a Spanish family. People of Hispanic descent in Brazil are part of the white population and the country's official census (IBGE) recognizes this. This perception of who is white mainly stems from European invasions and colonization.

Luciana entered elementary education in 1977. She studied in the east side of the city of São Paulo at the same public school, from the 1st year of elementary school until completing high school in 1987, in the neighborhood of Penha. Since childhood, Luciana's black body was always involved in the challenges posed by games carried out on the street and which she and her colleagues insisted on taking to school.

Willian is white and started his education in 1991, during his childhood in Guarulhos. His older brother had the responsibility to take him and pick him up at the pre-school which was close to the house where they lived. Meanwhile, his sister, also older than him, started doing housework when she arrived home from school, while his brother was free to be with friends on the street.

Luciano was born in 1986 in Guarulhos and has a younger sister, who is white. His mother is black, born in the countryside area of São Paulo, and his maternal grandparents are from the Northeast, with African and Indigenous ancestry. Luciano's father was born in the city of São Paulo, in Penha, and his paternal grandparents are from Minas Gerais, with Italian ancestry. Luciano started school in 1994.

Luiz's POV #1 – Racism Manifests Itself in Many Ways in Everyday Life

Some events marked Luiz's vision of how his black body was seen by others. One student wanted to hold hands with him in preschool because she wanted to prove that she was not afraid of blacks. During elementary school, Luiz experienced daily cases of racism regarding his hair and remembers a priest who threw away the bible of a black student in religion class. On the way back from school, Luiz saw a black boy being burned alive in front of a bar. In the 7th grade, he started playing basketball and noticed the prejudice of social class of the white physical education teacher, who scheduled few games with public school teams. When he was in 8th grade, civilian police broke into and invaded his home at night, rummaging through his school supplies looking for drugs. A black policeman held a gun to Luiz's head. During the 1980s, the nuns' school stopped offering high school because some students smoked marijuana. This forced Luiz to move to a public and technical school with the presence of more black students but with only two black geography and mathematics teachers. It was a politically troubled period due to the first presidential

elections after the military dictatorship. There was a strike by the teachers for almost three months, so Luiz changed schools again and started studying at night. The white students from the new school asked if he would be beaten if he got low grades because they did not understand how his grades were better than theirs.

Luiz's POV #2 – The Historically Invisible Mobilization of Black Women

Racism was present in everyday situations in Luiz's university life, as well as the "white presence". For example, the small number of black university students in undergraduate courses – and at the University of São Paulo (USP) in general – is an indication of structural racism. This disparity was in fact maintained in the postgraduate course held at the State University of São Paulo (Unesp). As Luiz lived far from the USP campus (about two hours away by bus), he asked the family for whom his mother worked to stay together with her in the maid's room where she lived in the apartment, as the neighborhood was much closer (less than 1h away by bus). In Brazil, it is a common absurdity that residences in affluent neighborhoods are constructed with dependencies for domestic servants close to the kitchen and laundry so that the employees (usually black women) live in a part of the house or apartment and are at the disposal of the bosses (usually white) 24 hours a day. This is a remnant of the perpetuation of black enslavement in architecture and urbanism. Regarding invisibility, Luiz had two black professors at the undergraduate level, one of whom was a substitute, but neither of them declared themselves black, possibly because both have light skin. During a bus strike in the city, Luiz arrived late to campus because he had to walk. There was a test and the white teacher who applied the test answered him simply – "So what? Everyone else is here already" – when he justified his delay that day.

Luciana's POV #1 – Learning From Transgression

Luciana later had three black teachers, two literacy teachers, one of whom also taught math and music, and a biology teacher in high school, and she remembers their names well. Her 2nd-grade teacher influenced Luciana by the quality of that transgressive time that was established in the classroom when she patiently attended to the students and followed their difficulties with affection. The other two teachers continued the transgressions with recognition strategies that Luciana would also learn if she looked at life at school and its contradictions. The existence of the monoculture of the body and the aesthetic taste, which helps to produce the logic of whiteness, is opposed by an ecology, the ecology of the body, and the aesthetic taste. "It produces other bodily logics, built by non-hegemonic groups in their different contexts and in power relations" (Gomes, 2017, p. 81). A contradiction was to identify that the public school environment in the periphery was characterized by attempts by other teachers to control the students' desires and bodily manifestations. Luciana suffered countless attempts to regulate her existence and a 6th grade white math teacher scornfully nicknamed her, in front of the whole class, for having cut her hair very short.

Luciana's POV #2 – Woman, Poor, Black… and University Student

When Luciana entered the university in 1991 to take a degree in physical education, her father, despite all the happiness of the accomplishment, warned her: "Don't forget, you are a woman, poor and black"; a warning which reminded her that the discussion about feminism and abolitionism are fundamental theories and practices to understand the contemporary world (Davis, 2018). Her father did not read Angela Davis and was unaware of the North American context of imprisonment policies, nor of the social exclusion of women and young people considered disposable. However, his warning certainly influenced the way Luciana participated and became involved with activities and academic life. At the end of the 20th century, there were countless debates on how to define the category "woman". There were several struggles over who was included and who was excluded from that category. "In some ways, the struggle for women's rights was ideologically defined as a struggle for the rights of white middle-class women, expelling black, Latino and other ethnic minorities from the field of discourse covered by the category 'woman'" (Davis, 2018, p. 92).

Luciana knew that from that day on, as always, she would need to take advantage of all the good opportunities by explaining her resistance and existence. Her course load was full and she couldn't work. It was impossible to forget her original condition. Although she had three other black women as classmates, ethnic-racial discussions did not take place between them. They tried to insert the ERER discussion into an academic center event, but it had no impact. Discussions were limited to the discipline of capoeira, which also did not deepen the exoticism limits and racial

stereotypes which hegemonically traversed the experiences. Capoeira was the focus, decontextualized from any historicity with the resistance movements of the enslaved black population.

Willian's POV #1 – The Whitened Curriculum

Memories related to commemorative dates denounce the superficial and punctual pedagogical treatment of the "Indian day" and "Black awareness" week. These themes are extremely important in a country like Brazil, having not received due recognition in examining the school curriculum dating from the 1990s, a period in which Willian attended elementary school. He started to have a black physical education teacher in the second stage of elementary school, being the first in his entire school trajectory. He continued with him until high school because he was part of the school's volleyball team and also team captain, and his teacher assisted him in his training. He was a teacher who substantially marked his school career, as he spent more time at school than at home, and sometimes had conversations regarding topics that could easily be framed as father and son, especially due to Willian's paternal absence. The neglect of the racial agenda continued until high school. It was even worse among students who were about to enter the world of work and university.

Willian's POV #2 – The Breakdown With the Critical White

Only when Willian entered the Master's degree in Education at the Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) was when he began to carry out readings directed to the theme, mainly because professor Petronilha Beatriz Gonçalves e Silva reported on the legislation establishing the National Curriculum Guidelines for the ERER and for the Teaching of African and African History and Culture (Silva, 2018, 2019). His entry into graduate school happened concurrently with the work he was doing at the Foundation for Socio-Educational Assistance to Adolescents (CASA) with marginalized young people, mostly blacks from the outskirts. Nevertheless, it was a moment for Willian to approach researchers who investigated the universe of African-Brazilian cultural practices and the discipline of a dissertation and thesis seminar became fundamental for learning non-Eurocentric culture.

Luciano's POV #1 – The Discovery of Black Awareness in Spite of Light Skin

Luciano did not always recognize himself as black, the racial issue was never a topic for reflection in the peripheral environments he frequented. The 1st cycle of elementary education was marked by many changes in schools due to economic and government policy issues which altered the configurations of schools, harming many students who started to study far from their homes. Luciano returned to study near his residence only in the 5th grade and stayed there until he finished high school. There was a shortage of teachers during high school, and at the same time most of those who were regulars performed the traditional practice of giving a lesson on the blackboard to copy and then give a grade, without much concern in explaining and establishing greater interaction with students. In this context, there were some black teachers and a pedagogical coordinator with whom he still maintains contact with until today. The race theme appeared when he was in groups with schoolmates, but always with a negative bias, through racist offenses dressed up as jokes or games. However, perhaps due to the fact that there were many black boys in the groups, Luciano was spared for being one of those who came closest to whites with his skin tone considered brown, or brownish (pardo in Portuguese). Although he did not openly discuss this issue, it was evident that there was an established hierarchy in which black boys carried the worst place on the unequal scales of values, although Luciano was not at the bottom of the pyramid, he was still very far from the top. This was how it was until the end of high school, in 2004, the year in which higher education was still only for a few people.

Luciano's POV #2 – When Policies Reach Out to Individuals

In the third year of high school, Luciano received a form for enrolling in the National High School Exam (ENEM). Even without guidance on the relevance of this process, he decided to take the test. He remembered that he was the last to leave the classroom and in the essay question he chose to talk about racial prejudice, but the data he knew was only from what he had learned by listening to a hip-hop song by Racionais MC's, which introductory lyrics are:

> *60 percent of young people from the outskirts without a criminal record have already suffered police violence. For every four people killed by the police, three are black. At Brazilian universities, only 2 percent*

of students are black. Every four hours, a young black man dies violently in São Paulo. Primo Preto [Black Cousin] speaks here, another survivor.

Luciano's life was intertwined with the words of the song and he was able to talk about his several black friends who unfortunately had been arrested and some who even died in exchanging shots with police. The result of the evaluation arrived after a few weeks and stood out for scoring 89% correctness in the essay, for which he could participate in a program called "The University for All Program" (Prouni), created under the government of former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. So, Luciano went to his cousin's home who had a computer, and signed up for the physical education course, and a week later he was invited to enroll with a 100% scholarship. All of this even though he was never allowed to dream about Higher Education coming from a poor family, he was not encouraged to take a higher education course, and his father told him to stop wanting to be who he was not.

Outcomes

Regarding the "so what" question of this self-study, bringing together the themes from the narratives shows the difficulties and opportunities faced by us in becoming anti-racist educators. Our teaching work encompasses experiences and challenges to materialize anti-racist conducts in basic education and higher education. We shared a critical analysis of Brazil's institutionally racialized school system. While the school routine for black teachers was configured as a space of silence, repression, punishment, and resistance, the welcoming, the well-being, and the feeling of belonging to that space only reverberate for the white teacher in the professionals' actions, notably facilitating his permanence in the school space. The narratives resonate with Gomes (2017) and Hooks (2013) who consider that the black body challenges the institutionalized and orchestrated space of oppression with its presence because it causes fear. In turn, fear comes from ignorance. The ignorant body is threatened because it uses masks of a forged intellectuality to silence the power and ways of life of black bodies. It is impossible for black teachers to hide their personal characteristics in front of a multicultural group of students. The black body enters the space, extensively occupying a place prepared to prevent and silence the incarnated expressiveness of the stories lived by the subjects who became teachers. The dualism between body and mind for a black teacher is questioned with attempts to mask and colonize thought.

Concluding Thoughts

As we recognized how our experience connects to the ERER, our personal histories led us to become anti-racist teacher educators. The career trajectory of each one of us led us to mobilize working with the teacher education of other teachers in three different regions of the country. However, the teaching work conditions were aggravated by the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic in the different spaces that we currently occupy in the Northeast (Luiz and Luciana), North (Willian), and South (Luciano) regions (Venâncio et al., 2022). According to Martins-Filho et al. (2021), the Covid-19 case-fatality rate is higher for black Brazilians in all regions. As a common challenge, we consider that the "white presence", made invisible by whiteness, is a conservative perspective of maintaining the status quo. For this reason, we ask: For whom does whiteness not exist? We understand that this questioning is in the progressive field and is also opposed to the neutral view of science and teaching. More than that, in the self-critical sense, we ask: How do we act in these situated spaces? Similarly to the reflective process proposed by Craig et al. (2020), we shared our perplexities in the community to which we belong and collaborated with each other.

We believe that there are some challenges in each context. For Luiz and Luciana, there is a need to deconstruct the fallacy of benevolence in the context in which they work because, as Ceará abolished slavery in advance for the financial interests of slave traders, racism is even more invisible than in the rest of the country. Brazilian federal government paid local farmers – to free their slaves – instead of paying enslaved black people any amount of money. However, Ceará has been acknowledged as a benevolent state in relation to the slavery system because its farmers were the first to earn such a payment. For Willian, there is a confrontation of whiteness in the predominant context of black and Indigenous people, with unrestricted access for whites who are uncritical, but who say they are critical. For Luciano, there are constraints in each critical position in the predominant context of European immigrants, such as conflicts over the education of his own son.

We conclude that the anti-racist character of our intervention refers to the constant concern about how our students perceive the subjectivities of teachers and how they critically mirror these teachers. It is in this way that we assume our responsibility to materialize anti-racist education modes, navigating multiple pathways and complexities way as part of a collaborative teacher-researcher community. Engaging in critical reflection together enables us to continue to fight, as it is the collaboration that mobilizes us to persevere in the struggle for social justice. In our individual education and professional trajectories, we reinforce the importance of self-education in the field of work and to value intersubjectivities. Finally, perhaps our current research findings offer a vision of another valuable self-study in the near future, either singly or collaboratively.

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Questions of Feminist Power

A Self-Study of a Critical Incident

Kelly Lormand

Power | Social Justice | Feminist Theory

In this self-study, I examine a critical incident where I partnered with a fellow educator committed to social justice in an attempt to dialogue with three students who co-authored a sexist article in our school's newspaper. The planned dialogue was interrupted when the male students called upon a male administrator's authority to admonish our attempt to discuss their writing that was not for our individual classes. Through a feminist lens, I analyze the problems with our approach and the "threads of power" (Foucault, 1980) embedded in our well-intentioned discussion.

Introduction to a Critical Sexist Incident

"That could not have gone worse," Joan, a friend and fellow English teacher, said to me.

Joan and I were members of a professional learning community (PLC) committed to social justice at the high school where we taught in the Northeastern United States. Joan's comment was in reference to our attempt to have a non-authoritarian conversation with three students. The conversation ended before it began leaving Joan and I feeling defeated, disheartened, and confused.

The focus of this self-study is the critical incident of this attempted dialogue. In this study, I analyze our choices, mistakes, and missteps, as well as the dynamics of power involved between the three students, our administrators, Joan, and me. The incident began with a school newspaper article supporting National Football League (NFL) player Antonio Brown who was accused of sexual assault by his former trainer, Britney Taylor (Madani, 2019). In the article, the student writers— all 12th grade, South Asian, and male—defended Brown while suggesting Taylor's lawsuit was calculated and greedy. Joan and I were the current or former teachers of the three students, as well as members of the Social Justice PLC. In our commitment to justice, equity, and feminist pedagogy, we felt compelled to respond, so we planned to open a dialogue that we hoped would be restorative, feminist, and non-authoritarian. Our methods, while well-intended, were problematic across several layers of power—including gender, authority, and race.

Analyzing power is essential to the work of social justice to "reveal how power operates through normalizing relations of domination by presenting certain ideas and practices as rational and self-evident, as part of the natural order" (Bell et al., 2016, p. 18). In this self-study, I examined the problematic layers of power that arose when a feminist colleague and I attempted to enact egalitarian practices in imperfect ways and within a patriarchal institution where foundations of trust, care, and empathy were not established or valued.

A Feminist Framework

> *If we view feminism as an approach, a way to think about the world, it shifts the focus away from words, towards action. Feminist principles are not something that can be 'achieved.' They are cultivated through a reflective process that has no end. They grow, change and take shape as we do. (Olufemi, 2020, p. 19)*

In feminist pedagogy and in social justice focused teacher education, reflection and collaboration that moves toward action are key (Forrest & Rosenberg, 1997; hooks, 1989, 1994; Taylor & Diamond, 2020). Feminist theory informed my reflection and examination of gendered power dynamics at play in the critical incident. Olufemi (2020) argued, "A feminism that seeks power instead of questioning it does not care about justice. The decision to reject this way of thinking is also a decision to reject easy solutions" (p. 5). Therefore, I question my own power and commitment to justice, as I reflect on my motivations, actions, and reflections, not only of our interaction with the students but also my interactions with my colleague and partner, Joan.

Methodology

Increasingly, self-study has been employed in the pursuit of social justice in teaching and teacher education (Griffiths et al., 2004; Kitchen et al., 2022; Martin, 2020; Taylor & Coia, 2014; Taylor & Diamond, 2020). Recognized social justice research is a "daunting challenge to face," Taylor and Diamond (2020) argued in the Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices (S-STTEP) community: "we have the collective support to cultivate the courage and commitment to work through these issues" (p. 4). Several self-studies focused on gender, queer theory, and feminist theory have examined the complexity of power, emotion, and gendered perceptions in charged moments (Brubaker, 2014; Forgasz & Clemans, 2014; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014; Kitchen, 2014; Kuzmic, 2014; Martin, 2014, 2020). For example, using a feminist and epistemological approach, Forgasz and Clemans examined and reframed feelings as a "deliberate epistemological stand we took about what counts as knowledge" (p. 73). These self-studies continue to push boundaries of patriarchal and oppressive systems built into education.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data sources for this study were dialogue and my researcher's journal. Hamilton and Pinnegar (2014) noted, "dialogue is the process for coming-to-know . . . . In this way, dialogue becomes a crucible in which knowledge is shaped, becomes linked to evidence and gains authority" (p. 49). Data from dialogues included those recorded and transcribed from two PLC sessions (one before and one following the critical incident); the dialogues between Joan and me, those with our students, and those with administrators and the faculty advisor were unrecorded but paraphrased and captured in my researcher's journal reflections following each conversation. As noted by Cardetti and Orgnero (2013), the collaborative process of what they call, "cogenerative dialoguing" (p. 253) deepened their interdisciplinary reflection and moved them towards action (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). Similarly, the ongoing dialogue between Joan and me helped us process and clarify our emotions and understandings related to the critical incident.

My researcher's journal (RJ), where I reflected after each PLC meeting and after dialogues with other stakeholders that could not be recorded, provided space for iterative retrospection and preliminary analysis (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). The third data source was derived from email exchanges between Joan, the students, and me (EM). Since the design of the study is feminist, qualitative, and collaborative, I established "trustworthiness" through collaboration, transparency, and dialogue (Coia & Taylor; 2009; Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). I read through the data sources multiple times over one year to build connections and themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While initial analyses of this incident focused on the power the male students and administrators held, further rounds of analysis exposed the power I wielded, sometimes knowingly and sometimes subconsciously. To stretch and challenge my analysis, I shared my preliminary themes, my journals, and meeting transcripts with members of the PLC, including Joan, to gather their perspectives, clarification, and scrutiny (Loughran, 2007; Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Joan, who preferred not to be a co-author on this paper, did give her informed consent for me to proceed with publication, so long as I used a pseudonym to protect her identity.

The Critical Incident

On an October morning, I found a note on my desk pointing to an article in our high school's newspaper in which three student authors (SA 1, SA 2, and SA 3) questioned athletic trainer Britney Taylor's motivation for accusing NFL player,

Antonio Brown, of sexual assault. Disturbed by what she read, Joan brought the article to me as the facilitator of a newly formed PLC focused on social justice—a group of fifteen teachers who met twice monthly to dialogue about issues of sexism, racism, homophobia, and injustice we experienced or observed in our classrooms and school. I shared the article with the PLC. Then, I took three actions of my own: a) I discussed the article with the student editor of the newspaper, b) I discussed it with SA 2, who was my former student, and c) I emailed the newspaper's faculty advisor expressing a list of concerns.

"How do we make this a teachable moment?" (Author, TR 2).

At our next Social Justice PLC meeting, we discussed the article and potential ways we could respond. Our discussion centered on the question: "How do we make this a teachable moment for ourselves and our students?" (Author, TR 2). We considered writing a response to be printed in the school newspaper, contacting the faculty advisor as a collective, and speaking with the student authors and the student editors. We debated whether or not it was our place to speak with the students, whose place it was, and whether or not we could approach this as a teachable moment rather than a disciplinarian rebuke. As Joan and I were the current or former English teachers of the three students, the group decided that we were in the best position to dialogue with the students. Joan and I collaborated on an email to the students requesting a discussion about the article during a lunch meeting. The students agreed, and a date was set. On the day of the proposed meeting, one of the three students arrived. Joan, Student 2, and I sat around a square table in Joan's classroom. Students 1 and 3 arrived at the meeting later. Student 3 sat down at the table, while Student 1 remained standing near Joan. Student 1 informed us that they had spoken to the vice principal who told them they did not have to participate in the meeting and that we were abusing our power since we graded them. Joan and I submitted that they were under no obligation to dialogue with us. Joan expressed that she valued her relationship with the students, cared about them, and assured them this was not meeting was not disciplinarian. The students left.

Joan and I attempted further conversations with the vice principal, principal, and faculty advisor of the school newspaper. Our administrators took the position that we should have only spoken to their faculty advisor. Since the article was not for one of our English classes, they told us the article was out of the bounds of our authority.

Forming of a "conscious, cooperative partnership" (hooks, 2003/2019)

As a newly formed dialogic community, the Social Justice PLC discussed the Antonio Brown article at our second official meeting. One of my first lessons as a new feminist facilitator was the understanding that a feminist approach to leadership in this group meant taking issues first to the community for consensus before acting of my own accord. For Joan, the most problematic action I took on my own was talking to SA 2 in a one-on-one dialogue. Having built a relationship with him over the previous year, I felt driven to address his participation in an article I felt contradicted the version of him I knew. Unintentionally, my action of speaking with SA 2 upset Joan. In our PLC meeting, Joan expressed her frustration:

> *For the sake of justice, we need to [give] all three the chance [explain] their involvement with it. . . . So, I was hoping we would be able to talk that out as a group. It seems unfair to me that the one kid has had a chance to defend his name. . . . Writers 1 and 3 have been completely thrown under the bus. . . . So, I think it's really, really important how we handle it. And I think it's important that we reach a group decision. It's really delicate. A really delicate undertaking. And that's also the reason I brought this article to the group rather than talking to the students myself or talking to [Advisor] or [Student 1] myself. So, that's just—important to me that we talk about that. (TR 2)*

Joan valued fairness and justice. She viewed my independent actions as problematic, as it gave only one of the students an opportunity to defend himself. Joan's bus metaphor expressed to me how damaging my actions had been in Joan's eyes. Joan also communicated her concern for this process as a "really delicate undertaking." She had foregone individual action in favor of having a dialogue as a community of teachers, whereas I had leaped into action without considering the ramifications. In prioritizing my relationship with my student, I had not considered Joan or her students. I had not acted fairly. Taking a more feminist approach, I realized, meant communicating and collaborating on actions and decisions together. As hooks (2003/2019) emphasized, a key principle of solidarity is "to form a conscious,

cooperative partnership that is rooted in mutuality" (p. 63). I had missed an opportunity for cooperative partnership with Joan before taking action. Thus, I needed to build the foundations of mutuality with Joan as we moved forward.

Threads of Power (Foucault, 1980): "How do you take a feminist approach inside a patriarchal building?" (RJ, 31 Oct.)

The conversations Joan and I had with the students and our administrators centered on ideas of power and authority both explicitly and implicitly. SA 1 accused Joan and me of "abusing our power." Our vice principal scolded us about "proper channels." As Gore (1992) reminded me, power is not property nor a zero sum. Gore cited Foucault's (1980) explanation: "Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (p. 98). In our interactions with the students and the administrators, we were all "undergoing and exercising" some threads of power. These threads of power complicated the students' reception of our request to dialogue. Joan and I held power in a way the students did not: we were teachers in positions of authority, we were older, we held tenured professional positions, we graded them and held sway over their future educational pursuits, and we were white women speaking to students of color. The three students of South Asian descent did not have the racial and cultural power and privilege we held (Taylor, 2022). We could not shed or reject that power, nor could we pretend like it did not exist.

I was the former teacher of SA 2 and was writing his recommendation for college. Joan was the current teacher of SA 1 and 3. Ahead of this meeting, could Joan and I have acknowledged the power we held in ways that would have mitigated our students' fears? In an attempt to address some of the power imbalance, I submitted my student's recommendation ahead of our scheduled conversation and assured him the conversation had no bearing on my recommendation. SA 2 had to trust that I would write him a positive letter (he was later accepted into his first choice, a prestigious university). In reflection, I could have given him a copy of the recommendation I had written for him, which might have assured him that I had no intention of harming his college prospects.

Joan and I intended to model a constructive dialogue about the article the students wrote (Loughran, 2007). We initially imagined this meant inviting the students to share their concerns about being falsely accused of assault; then, helping the students understand the complexity of sexual assault, and the tendency for women not to report (Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network, 2023), and the ramifications of accusing a sexual assault victim of greed—especially in a school publication that could follow them into their college life and careers beyond school (Taylor & Klein, 2020). Instead, the way the conversation did (and did not) occur repositioned us as learners. Despite our good intentions, we misjudged the weight of our power and position as teachers and how that dynamic could potentially be received or experienced by our students. Is it possible to enact feminist pedagogy and egalitarian approaches when the community ascribes to patriarchal, authoritarian, and punitive power and justice?

Our students perceived a power struggle with their teachers that put them at a disadvantage. Interestingly, they also held threads of power that they wielded—consciously or unconsciously—to great effect. First, they used their voices to publish a piece in the school newspaper that gave them a platform to support an accused predator. Their piece ran without a counter, a trigger warning, or the label "Opinion Editorial." They were young men defending a man and flipping the narrative on a woman to position her as perpetrator rather than victim. Second, SA 1 and 2 increased their power through an administrator, a man with a higher position in the school than Joan and I held. Third, SA 1 remained standing, giving him an increased physical presence in the room (Taylor, 2022). And finally, by accusing us of abusing our power as teachers, they positioned themselves as victims of oppressive tyranny. I reflected,

Our attempt to approach this topic as a community in dialogue felt interrupted by talk of authority and power and abuse of that power and retribution. Rather than be seen as concerned people who care about you, the student felt afraid and defensive. [Student 1's] response was to go to our superior (a man). His enactment of his power was to stand during the meeting while the rest of us sat around a common table. (RJ, 31 Oct.)

I perceived SA 1's standing positioning over Joan during the brief interaction as a way to establish dominance, intimidate, and feel powerful. Of the three students, he was the most visibly agitated and vocal. His tone was accusatory and reprimanding. Seeking out the vice principal, seemed to be an attempt to go up the "chain of command." SA 1 and 3 drew on the paternalistic power of the vice principal to defend against what they perceived as an attack.

They appealed to the patriarchal hierarchy to avoid a confrontation—a successful maneuver to avoid dialogue and shift the spotlight of wrongdoing to Joan and me. We were summarily admonished by the administration. In reflection, I wrote:

There seemed to be a paradox embedded into the power conversations today: at once, Joan and I were presented as having too much authority over the students (because we grade them) and at the same time having no authority over the students (because this isn't our terrain). Do educators have the right or the duty or the ability to address issues of values, morals, ethics, and beliefs with students? When those beliefs are also part of the public discourse that we are having as a nation? If we had these conversations in the confines of our classroom spaces, would we then be within our boundaries? …Our attempt to discuss with our two male administrators also did not result in open dialogue where everyone had the opportunity to voice their concerns. Instead, we were silenced. (RJ, 31 Oct.)

Joan and I were treated in the usual authoritarian manner. We were verbally reprimanded. We were reminded of our position and lack of authority. The traditional hierarchy was reestablished. It is no wonder the students responded as they did. Our students likely assumed the conversation they would have with us would be similar to the one we experienced with the male administrators. By their senior year of high school, how many similar authoritarian conversations had they witnessed or experienced? Why would they have expected an open and honest dialogue of mutual respect when "we work in institutions where knowledge has been structured to reinforce dominator culture" (hooks, 2003/2019, p. 91)? I empathized with the students. While I know Joan and I were not seeking revenge or discipline or even their repentance, we planned an interaction that was never going to be equal or safe for all parties. Ellsworth (1992) pointed out the paradox of "emancipatory authority" as "the failure of critical educators to come to terms with the essentially paternalistic project of traditional education" (p. 99). I overestimated our feminist approach to stand against the powerful patriarchal establishment already in place.

Choosing Care Over Justice: "How do we as feminist teachers use power in a way that is not coercive, dominating?" (hooks, 1989, p. 52).

hooks' (1989) question continues to resonate. Joan and I asked ourselves this question and attempted to plan our conversation accordingly. We believed we could engage in a dialogue that would not be coercive or dominating. Joan and I approached the conversation from a feminist foundation and perspective. As Joan stated hopefully, "just given how we've been talking about it—I don't have any doubt that it will come across to them that we don't think that they're terrible" (TR, 2). We grappled with how we would conduct this conversation. Ahead of the meeting, I wrote in my journal: "Can we have this meeting without making them feel like they are being persecuted and punished? How can we do this appropriately?" (RJ, 21 Oct.). While not completely confident, we felt that our good intentions were enough to guide an open and productive dialogue. We convinced ourselves that by expressing empathy and care, we could engage them in a thought-provoking and enlightening discussion about the complexities of how and when, and why sexual assaults are reported when they are. Unfortunately, planning an interaction with feminist ideals does not translate to students feeling safe or empowered (Ellsworth, 1992).

To enact our feminist dialogue, Joan and I intentionally placed ourselves at eye level with the students by positioning ourselves around a table conducive to dialogue rather than lecture. Student 1 keenly disrupted the roundtable by remaining standing. When he announced that the vice principal told them they did not have to talk with us, we agreed the meeting was mandatory and apologized for the implication. Joan repeatedly assured them that she cared about them. In having to weigh our hopes for justice and our care for our students, Joan and I chose care over justice by choosing not to move forward with the dialogue (Gilligan, 2014; Noddings, 1999, 2012). We explicitly stated our value and care for them, our intentions not to treat this as a disciplinary meeting, and our assurance that the article would have no bearing on their grades or recommendations.

Feminist Community and Collaboration as Vital Support System

The outcome of this interaction appeared to be a missed opportunity, a bungled attempt at a teachable moment, and a mass of confusion and emotions that left no one feeling better than before. The one consolation was the budding partnership between Joan and me and the PLC community. While I began the endeavor acting on my own, I found my

way to a collaboration that was joyful and supportive. In the angst and frustration that marked the interactions with the students and administrators, my researcher's journal highlights one notable positive amidst the stress:

> *Sometimes we [met] as Joan worked through her prep periods to create the costumes for the upcoming school play. And with the marking period ending and both of us having piles of grading to do. Teachers juggle and juggle and juggle…. I have found allies and support in the group in ways that have helped me navigate difficult and stressful situations. My allies have helped me to be brave. They've helped me to clarify and articulate my positioning, my feelings, my concerns, my actions (RJ, 7 Nov.).*

The work of disrupting sexism and patriarchal hierarchy in schools is exhausting and never-ending and often filled with roadblocks, dead ends, U-turns, distractions, and obstacles (Blackburn et al., 2010). Having a partner to navigate those obstacles made the path forward more manageable and sustainable (Griffiths & Poursanidou, 2005). Joan and I could commiserate, share the tension, and plan potential responses. The PLC further provided us a space of empathy, care, solidarity, and support (Taylor et al., 2022; Taylor & Klein, 2018). Looking ahead, more self-studies can build on this critical incident and the work of Taylor and Klein (2018, 2020) to examine the power of feminist friendships over time in disrupting the patriarchal institutions.

Conclusion

The work to transform patriarchal institutions is complex and difficult. The complexity includes self-proclaimed egalitarian, critical, and feminist educators continually examining the ways in which we unintentionally reproduce the harms of the patriarchal systems we are attempting to transform. Our experience reinforced a haunting feeling: creating feminist communities inside our own classrooms seemed possible, but challenging the larger institution in which those classrooms were housed remained a fantasy. Ahmed (2012) explained,

> *To work as a feminist often means trying to transform the organizations that employ us. This rather obvious fact has some telling consequences. I have learned about how power works by the difficulties I have experienced in trying to challenge power. (pp. 89–90)*

The questions and tasks ahead for feminist teachers and teacher educators persist: how do we challenge and dismantle patriarchal institutions from within? How do we prepare teachers for a seemingly insurmountable task? Partnership, collaboration, and reflection can aid in the endeavors on individual levels, but larger webs of feminist mentorship and collaborative communities of activism will be critical.

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New Understandings of Liminality

Pausing at the Threshold of Action

Elizabeth Petroelje Stolle, Katarina Blennow, & Martin Malmström

Teacher Education | liminality | Emotions | Action | Community

This self-study reflects the work of three teacher educators from Sweden and the U.S. who aim to contribute to a widened understanding of how emotions do something in the move from reaction to action in a liminality caused by derisive discourse around teacher education. That is, when teacher educators allow themselves to dwell in their emotions instead of performing emotional labor (Hochschild, 2012), emotions play an important role at the threshold of action. We seek to answer the following research question: How does liminality offer space for us to process our emotions and move towards action as teacher educators? We used concepts of emotions, liminality, and action to frame this study. We used an iterative process to both generate data while also engaging in analysis. Data included written narratives and real-time dialogue. Three themes emerged: ambivalence, community, and transformation. Findings suggest the following narrative, which we don't share as a linear model, but rather to note chronology. We experienced ambivalence marked by sorrow and loss, caused by the intense emotions experienced from the derisive discourse around teacher education. This ambivalence moved us into a liminal space, opening us to new beginnings, but we found ourselves in need of community. To move forward and act, we needed others (i.e., each other). Now, we sit poised at the threshold of the liminal space as a community, feeling empowered to act as transformers of teacher education.

Context & Objectives

This self-study builds from previous work that explored how emotions, caused by derisive discourse around teacher education, do something to move us from reaction to action (Blennow et al., 2023.). That is, teacher education is impregnated with emotions, and much is written about the emotions of teacher educators (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2009; Cutri & Whiting 2015). Additionally, both Swedish and U.S. media emphasize negative aspects of teacher education such as insufficient teacher knowledge, lack of cognitive science, and absence of discipline in classrooms (Malmström, 2018; Edling & Liljestrand, 2020), ultimately framing university-based teacher education as a "failing enterprise" (Cuenca, 2019). This news weighs on our emotions. Thus, we, three teacher educators from Sweden and the U.S., explored how negative discourses about teacher education positioned us and made us feel genuine emotions. Instead of hiding and ignoring these emotions with surface acting, we came to see the power in embracing emotions as signals that we could move into a new space as we matured towards activism, incubating and developing our ideas/acts/repertoires. We came to see this new space as the liminal space where we found freedom and unity to approximate and try out various acts of activism, which could counter the derisive discourse in the political sphere. This use of liminality was an important outcome in relation to previous research on teacher education, where liminality is

complex, dark, and something to move through (Calderwood & D'Amico, 2008; Kofke & Morrison, 2021; Thomas, 2019). For us, with the help of emotions, we came to see liminality as a space to construct our political roles as teacher educators. For this self-study, we looked to develop a deeper understanding of the liminal space. In that, we asked the following research question: How does liminality offer space for us to process our emotions and move towards action as teacher educators?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frame

Dialogic thinking served as the theoretical perspective that informed how we structured and engaged in this self-study. Dialogic thinking acknowledges and responds to other perspectives, seeking to understand and enact a sensitivity to the differences between these perspectives in hopes of achieving richer understandings of ideas and others. We looked to Buber's (1958) work to understand true dialogue requires individuals to move beyond just experiencing each other, but rather entering into relationship. Only in relationship can individuals engage in dialogic thinking as a "shared search for understanding . . . an act of 'thinking together'" (Phillipson & Wegerif, 2019, p. 33). We also valued Bachtin's (1986) notions that dialogue is an unending process, or quest for truth, where questions are continually asked and answers are always critically explored. According to Bachtin, "[e]ach individual utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication" and echoes previous utterances as well as pointing forward to new utterances (p. 93).

Additionally, this study is informed by concepts of liminality, *communitas*, and action. In our original study (Stolle et al., 2018), to understand how both positionality and emotions impacted our work as teacher educators, we looked to liminality as an important concept that highlights the complexity of identity formation and where we seek to position ourselves. Liminality, derived from the Latin term limen, means threshold. Van Gennep (1909/2010) describes thresholds as phases individuals go through in rites of passages, the act of becoming. However, we chose to draw on Craft's (2001) work of "possibility thinking," viewing liminality as a freeing space where "nothing is fixed and anything is possible" (Bayliss, 1999, p. 81). For us, as teacher educators navigating both societal positions and managing emotions, the liminal space offered us a place to engage in the dialogic approach, which Wegerif (2017) describes using Keat's (1817) words of "negative capability", or the ability to remain in uncertainty until a creative solution emerges. We see the liminal space as a positive, freeing place that allows for immersion and incubation – a space to think, reflect, discover, and learn as one sets on a trajectory of transformation (Lorenzi & White, 2019).

Turner (1969) described liminality as the opposite of structure. In liminality, this anti-structure could feel unsettling and painful, but it can also be liberating. That is, stripped of status, roles, and specific characteristics, people find communitas in the shared experience of liminality. *Communitas* is a kind of community that is temporary and transitory; it is being *with* one another. Turner compares the "spontaneous, immediate and concrete nature of communitas, as opposed to the norm-governed, institutionalized abstract nature of social structure" (Turner 1969, p. 127). Liminality is a withdrawal from social structure. People are equal and unselfish in liminality, meeting each other as whole human beings. Communitas is existential: it is "a transformative experience that goes to the root of each person's being and finds in that root something profoundly communal and shared" (Turner, 1969, p. 138). Turner is hopeful that when we move beyond liminality, we can keep the feeling of sharing something and that despite prior differences, this shared experience might lessen the divides between us. As our study is situated during the global Covid pandemic, we see the Covid era as an overarching kind of liminal experience in itself, offering an opportunity for withdrawal, yet serving as a bonding, shared experience where individuals across the globe felt a heightened solidarity produced during the liminal moments. As members of the teacher education community, equally experiencing derisive discourse, and at the same time the impacts of the Covid pandemic, the three of us felt drawn together in the liminal space. This sense of community occurred naturally as we sought out others as a step towards action, recognizing action cannot exist in isolation.

From the communitas within the liminal space, we ultimately seek to take action, disrupting the derisive discourse in transformative ways. Thus, we took up Arendt's (2018) conceptualization of action, which articulates the difference between labor, work, and action. 'Labor' is natural and centers around consumption to survive. It is repetitive and necessary day in and day out to live. 'Work' is artificial and does not exist in nature. Rather, in work we craft and build (e.g., build a house, write a book). 'Action' is telling the story of people's lives, which involves acting, communicating, and

expressing ourselves. Action must be done in community, not in isolation. Arendt expresses concern that action is being reduced to work or mechanical behavior; humans should not just be cogs in a machine, but active storytellers - humans taking action by authoring their own stories. This resonates with Turner's work on structure and anti-structure, where communitas is needed as a recurring juxtaposition to structure: "Structural action swiftly becomes arid and mechanical if those involved in it are not periodically immersed in the regenerative abyss of communitas" (Turner, 1969, p. 139).

Methods

To answer our question, we served as critical friends who toggled between writing personal narratives - a way of "bending back on the self to look more deeply at self-other interactions" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 740) and embracing Skerrett's (2008) notions that personal biographies shape teacher educators' identities and influence the lived experiences of teaching and researching - and engaging in synchronous online discussions, thus enacting Taylor and Coia's (2009) argument that "real-time dialogue" is critical "to process and discuss meaning" (p. 177). This dialogue allowed us to enact our theoretical frame of dialogical thinking, Thus, in both writing and dialogue, we tried out ideas on each other, asked challenging questions, and facilitated reflection on events/experiences/alternate perspectives (Schuck & Russell, 2005; Wegerif, 2017). As close friends and insiders to the phenomenon of experiencing deep emotions around derisive discourse on teacher education, we sought a reciprocal relationship where we encouraged each other to dig in, feel, and explore emotions with hopes of coming out with new ways to be and act (Stolle et al., 2019). Data sources included: written narratives, an online collaborative space, and regular online meetings via Zoom.

Building on previous work (Blennow et al., 2023), we framed our written narratives as an opportunity to further explore critical incidents (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2017), individually reflecting on times when something occurred that positioned teacher education in a way that evoked a strong emotional response. By expanding and extending our narratives, we moved beyond the *who, what,* and *how* of the derisive discourse into the *what's next* in action. We shared our narratives with each other in an online collaborative space (i.e., Google folders). Using the comment feature, which served as a tool for asynchronous discussion, we formulated thoughts, questions, and connections around the critical incidents and moves toward action. Simultaneously, we met virtually twice a month to share emerging themes and persisting questions around the data in real-time. Through this iterative process, we both generated data while also engaging in ongoing analysis to uncover ways we experienced, and then moved beyond, these critical incidents in similar, yet distinct and unique ways. Ultimately, we reflected on 15 critical incidents, expanding 6 of these. We then analyzed for recurring themes, identifying the following findings: ambivalence, community, and transformation. Combining these various methods allowed us to systematically analyze our data (Samaras & Freese, 2009).

Outcomes

Findings suggest the following narrative, which we don't share as a linear model, but rather to note chronology. That is, we experienced ambivalence marked by sorrow and loss, caused by the intense emotions experienced from the derisive discourse around teacher education during a global pandemic. Data showed the pandemic caused us to pause and experience/feel our emotions, yet this time of reflection was defined by a certain ambivalence – it was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Processing our sorrow and grief signaled movement into the liminal space, which became a place of possibility toward action and an opening for us to new beginnings. Yet, we found ourselves in need of community. To move forward and act, we needed others. Now, we sit poised at the threshold of the liminal space as a community, feeling empowered to act as transformers in productive ways. Data revealed that in our "interacting with the world," we saw ourselves as transformers of teacher education (Zeichner & Pena-Sandoval, 2015). We recognized weaknesses in the current system, but liminality offered space to pursue acts of advocacy in hopes of transformation. Thus, we share 3 examples of how these themes were encountered in the critical incidents.

Example 1: Elizabeth

Elizabeth wrote about a critical incident involving a specific meeting where faculty from across her university were collaboratively revising the teacher preparation program based on new state-level requirements. Elizabeth explained the complicated relationship her teacher education faculty have with faculty of the liberal arts and sciences, remembering that "it seemed Education was being positioned with a lower status, or less valuable." She wrote:

> *I had a few moments of crisis where I felt 'less than' or 'undervalued' as a teacher educator…Initially, as I sat in the meetings, I felt shame, sadness, and insecurity, which produced anger in me…hot anger. And, at that moment, I felt alone and defensive.*

In acknowledging these feelings of being alone and in conflict with others, Elizabeth experienced ambivalence in the liminal space, which moved her to converse with colleagues and seek a path forward:

> *The notion that we never feel closer to others than when we're fighting a common enemy rang true. My colleagues in the College of Education and I rallied together in new ways to consider how we could not only reposition ourselves in light of our content-specialist colleagues, marking our own identity, but also how we could transform teacher education to be more collaborative and less hierarchical. That is, we recognized the opportunity in front of us to transform our teacher preparation program with the State of Michigan's expectations for program revisions/revamping.*

With communitas, Elizabeth could embrace the liminal space, acknowledging her emotions, yet finding ways to envision transformative acts. Specifically, she took on leadership roles within the curriculum committees, validating her work, and the work of her colleagues in teacher education, with teacher candidates. In this, her actions of self-positioning opened doors of transformation as she was able to effectively collaborate with colleagues in the development of a newly revised program.

Example 2: Katarina

Katarina shared a story with a similar plot: A negative event becomes a push into liminality, but in the dwelling on emotions, community was found. The situation unfolded when Katarina and a colleague rented a cottage:

> *Our host told me he was an upper-secondary teacher. I replied something like, 'wow that is good to hear, I work in teacher education'. I immediately felt a bond to him, connected by pride and joy. That feeling of pride and joy quickly disappeared into shame though, because our host answered 'Ah, well, you know that old saying: Those who cannot teach become teacher educators'. He then said how bad the teacher education, which he had attended, was. I felt shame and said, 'Well, surely me and my colleague are not that bad'. Both his 'old saying' and my reply could have been attempts at jokes but neither of us smiled or laughed.*

Katarina initially felt connected to this teacher but quickly felt cut off when he distanced himself from her as a teacher educator. The shame and sadness she felt signaled to her that she was in liminality. The first response from Katarina was an individual defense, where she avoided losing face by distancing herself unconsciously from teacher education. The sadness and shame stemmed from the feeling of being wrong about the supposed social bond between her and the teacher, and the vision of losing the bond to all other teachers, as well.

> *Something was not what I thought it was, the world was turned upside down, a well-known structure disappeared. What it is to be a teacher educator changed. My colleague was in the cottage but I did not immediately feel I wanted to go in there. I felt lonely.*

Katarina experienced liminality as a loss of structure. But in the liminal space, wallowing in the emotions, the sadness and shame started to change and move her forward into anger on behalf of teacher education, anger that she did not say something positive about teacher education. She formulated several things she could have said to the teacher, coming back to the community of teacher educators:

> *My feeling of community with the teacher educators grew. I could talk about what happened with my colleagues and write about it here, in my narrative, meeting with others as a whole human being, including every layer of emotion I had felt. Through that community, I started to feel hopeful again and reached out for the community of teachers, feeling like part of the web of teachers and teaching again.*

In this critical incident, Katarina first felt outside the social structures she envisioned, yet was able to reconnect with the community of teacher educators. Through liminality, she moved from a personal, defensive response to engaging with the teacher educator community in ways that offered paths towards countering the derogatory discourse and repositioning, or transforming, teacher education. The key in this situation seems to be striking a balance between communitas and structure.

Example 3: Martin

Derogatory discourses of teacher education made Martin ambivalent. He wrote about a critical incident involving a newspaper article in which an unemployed actor worked as a substitute teacher for three months. Based on her experience as a substitute teacher, the woman wrote a piece about the sorry state of Swedish education and was subsequently interviewed to give her "expert" opinion. Martin felt guilty for not finding energy to take part in the debate but was later relieved when other teachers engaged in the dialogue. He wrote:

> *At least two teachers, and a few others, gave a totally different picture of what it is to be a teacher. One of them explained how fed up she was with people who think that anyone can teach (the author/actor thought her rhetoric skills would suffice). To me, the teachers' replies were a breath of fresh air.*

Having done research on "literacy crises", Martin felt a moral obligation to speak up when ill-informed ideas about education were voiced in the media. But the oversimplifications and exaggerations made him somewhat sad and indifferent, causing him to withdraw from the debate. Within the liminal space, he felt tension as he initially experienced guilt around his lack of engagement in debates such as this. However, the liminal space offered time to reflect on these emotions and tensions. He realized his inaction was actually a form of action, as he came to use the debate as empirical material in scholarly texts, public presentations, and teaching. He came to see his role differently, positioning himself as an expert in the field critically studying the debates and using them as empirical data. In liminality, Martin reflected on how using the derogatory discourses as empirical material provided space for him to take action in other arenas by problematizing the discourses. Presenting his research to other scholars, teachers, and students, communitas was built as Martin found solace in that this community would probably gain a more nuanced view, thus producing more informed utterances in the future than those engaged in the popular discourse of student literacy. Even still, ambivalence prevailed. Martin was not certain whether his line of action was taking the easy way - would taking part in the media discussion reach far more people? This example illustrates the non-linearity of our thoughts and actions, and how our actions were not considered a final solution, but rather an effort to stand up to ourselves and attempt some sort of action.

Conclusions

Covid opened space for us to feel emotions deeply, wallow in them slightly, and then reflect on using them for good, change, and advocacy. That is, emotions signal that we are in a new liminal space as we mature towards action and, ultimately transformation, incubating and developing our ideas/acts/repertoires. And in this liminal space, we find unity and communitas to approximate and try out various acts of activism. This rhymes well with Bachtin's (1986) theory of dialogism, according to which utterances do not only answer to and echo previous utterances but also point forward to new utterances. In our case, our acts of activism could be seen as new utterances that counter the derisive discourse in the political sphere.

The critical incidents shared in this paper have been small life-crises throwing us into liminality. Turner (1969) confesses the need for negative experiences to spark communitas. The liminality we experienced has been existential in the sense that to exist is partly to "stand outside the totality of structural positions one normally occupies in a social system" (Turner, 1969, p. 139). The humbling and invigorating experience of liminality enabled us to gain and experience communitas together as researchers but also offered us communitas while entering back into the social structures of teacher education. The action that grows from the liminal experience is a work towards a balance between communitas and structure, where communitas breaks into the cracks of the structure.

We have grown a wish to rid ourselves from the clichés associated with status and to enter into vital relations as well as, in Arendt's sense, act through authoring our stories, constructing our political roles as teacher educators in hopes of

transforming teacher education. Our self-study can be seen as a small-scale withdrawal group (Turner, 1969, p. 202), and although we recognize this withdrawal can occur at any time/place, because of the impacts of Covid on our social interactions, a unique liminality emerged and our need for communitas shifted. The self-study has been a withdrawal from normal modes of social action where there is time to scrutinize the values and principles of the culture in which it occurs. Authoring our own teacher educator stories, and gaining a reality-check by sharing and discussing them in dialogue, has also been a stepping stone in the move towards action and transformation.

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What Does It Mean to Be a Teacher-Educator?

Using Self-Study to Understand Teacher to Teacher-Educator Identity Shift During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Mark Diacopoulos

Pedagogy | Critical Friendship | Self-Study | Pandemic | Teacher-Educator Identity

In institutions of teacher education, the conditions for development of a teacher-educator identity are uncertain (Dinkelman, 2011). Pinnegar et al. (2020) argues that as self-study researchers, our identities are ever emergent – always becoming. This self-study of teaching and teacher education practices examines how I, an early career tenure track teacher-educator, learned to better understand my teacher-educator identity in my COVID-19 impacted first year. Using Gee's (2001) descriptions of contextual identities, I describe how my assumptions about how my identity should develop were challenged by the pandemic response. Using self-study helped me to make sense of my pedagogy of teacher education, and finding an affinity group of critical friends was instrumental in helping me to navigate this challenging time. I encourage new tenure track faculty, mentors, and administrators to consider using self-study practices to help make sense of who we are becoming and why in these challenging times.

Theoretical perspective

The onset of the Covid-19 pandemic provided an opportunity for self-study scholars to investigate the impact of the pandemic on their practice. Berry & Kitchen (2020) called for practitioners to "consider the varying effects of change on education and how we as teacher educators can contribute to the transformation of education" (p.126). Recent editions of Studying Teacher Education reflect that call. For example, Kim et al. (2021) examined the challenges of being mothers and teacher educators during the pandemic while Moorehouse and Tiet (2021) investigated their attempts at establishing a pedagogy of care. Similar to these studies, this study describes how I used self-study to better understand my new identity as a teacher-educator in my first year as a tenure-track professor.

Gee (2001) describes how different contexts shape different identities:

> *nature-identity – the aspects of identity one cannot control such as gender;*
>
> *institution-identity – the aspects of identity set by one's role in an institution;*
>
> *discourse identity – an active trait that influences identity, such as caring;*
>
> *affinity-identity – shared experiences and allegiances which occur as part of a group.*

In teacher education, identity development is important (e.g., Britzman, 2003), however, while identity development happens, it may not always be part of an explicit plan for teacher development (Hammerness et al. 2005). Through reflection and practice, student-teachers should discover their "teacher selves" (Freese, 2006, p. 100). However, Korthagen (2004) cautions that identity change is a difficult and sometimes painful process. Furthermore, emotion plays a role in the process, expanding or limiting possibilities (Zembylas, 2003). Dinkelman (2011) asserts that how teacher-educators see themselves and their work is integral to the development of teachers who can provide powerful learning experiences for their students.

Labaree (2004) argues the transition from teacher to teacher-educator is complex, as one must shift thinking from normative to analytical. Recent research in the learning of teacher education indicates that becoming a successful teacher educator is more complex than Labaree indicates (e.g. Chang et. al, 2016; Ludlow et al., 2017). Berry & Loughran (2005) view teacher educator development as a private struggle, while Murray and Male (2005) add how teacher-educators encounter feelings of discomfort and isolation. Sometimes emerging teacher educators struggle to reconcile their new teacher educator identities with their existing pedagogical practices (Butler & Diacopoulos, 2016). As they enter their first roles as teacher educators, they must consider their "…knowledge of teaching about teaching and a knowledge of learning about teaching and how the two influence one another" (Loughran, 2008, p. 1180). Loughran's pedagogy of teacher education is a focal point for self-study inquiries. The connection between identity development and a pedagogy of teacher education resonated with me in my beginning year as a faculty member and teacher educator as I asked my students "What does it mean to be a professional educator?", while at the same time framing my own self-study inquiry: What does it mean to be a teacher-educator?

Methods

Context

This self-study of teacher education practices began in the Spring semester of 2020. This was my second semester as an assistant professor on the tenure track teaching full-time in southeast Kansas. The university is in a micropolitan city in a rural area. Since the 1980s the region experienced economic and social decline. The population is majority white with a Hispanic minority. Socially conservative values are often reflected in the community.

My first year consisted of a four-class teaching load including three Explorations in Education classes consisting of 90 students in total. Classes met for 75 minutes, twice a week, for 16 weeks. In addition, students participated in a 33-hour field experience. Because of the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we had to curtail field experiences, and we shifted instruction to an asynchronous online format, followed by a hyflex format the following semester. Since then we returned to in-person instruction in the spring of 2021 and resumed field experiences in the Fall semester of 2022. At the time of writing, we are "back to normal".

Spring 2020 was my second semester as an assistant professor; however, it was my 26th year in education. I am a white, cisgender male educator. Born and raised in the United Kingdom in a culturally mixed (Greek-Cypriot & English) family. I grew up in a lower middle to working-class neighborhood and I was a first-generation university student. My teaching experience occurred in multiple contexts. I previously served as a high school teacher in the United Kingdom for ten years, as a middle school teacher in Virginia for four years, and as a high school teacher in the same state for three years. I also served as a technology specialist, and district curriculum coordinator for the last six years of my career prior to attaining my current faculty role. This post was in a teaching-intensive regional university. Taking the position involved a personal relocation to the Midwest while the rest of my family remained in Virginia. Working at a distance from my family provided an added layer to how I would view my teacher-educator identity. The COVID-19 pandemic directly influenced my (and my students') experiences of the Spring Semester as instruction shifted to a remote learning model the week of our Spring Break. At the time I was visiting my family in Virginia when the switch to remote instruction occurred. I, therefore, remained in Virginia until the beginning of the Fall semester in August. The majority of my first year as a tenure track teacher-educator was spent away from the campus and community which I served.

Role of Critical Friends

I conducted this self-study alongside other investigations happening at the same time. I was conducting a case study about how my students learned what it meant to be a professional educator through participation in my Explorations in Education course. As they examined their changing student to student-teacher identities, I investigated my own transition from teacher to teacher-educator. At the time I was also engaged in a self-study with colleagues examining our learning of self-study (Diacopoulos et al., 2022) and our use of critical friendship to help us navigate our doctoral experiences. I was also involved in a self-study with another colleague where we examined our experiences of the pandemic through a Deweyan lens (Rice & Diacopoulos, in press.). With their permission, I was able to use our notes, transcripts, and dialogical journals to investigate my own identity transformation and pedagogy of teacher education. Loughran and Northfield (1998) stated that working with an "other" matters in self-study. As such, by working with my community of critical friends I was able to work with trusted colleagues (Branyon et al., 2022) to examine practice, unpack understanding, and gain critical feedback through personal and shared reflection.

As a self-study, this followed LaBoskey's five characteristics (LaBoskey, 2004). It was initiated by myself and although my understanding was framed through the work of my students and my discussions with critical friends, it was focused on my own development; it was improvement aimed as by understanding my evolving identity I hoped to frame and enact my pedagogy of teacher education; it was interactive in my interactions with students, coursework, the context of a pandemic, and my critical friends all helped me to develop this inquiry; it includes multiple qualitative methods and data sources; lastly it is shared with an audience, gaining validity through interaction with critical friends, peer review, and ultimately it's consumption by others.

Data Sources

I had obtained an IRB exemption to include my students (with their consent) in the study of their identity shift and this self-study. I was initially curious as to how our course experiences not only influenced their development but my own understanding of who I was becoming. I had already begun the data collection process in my first (normal) semester, and the beginning of the pandemic served to add another layer to my inquiry.

Data included recorded conversations and notes with my critical friends. These helped me to frame my experiences in relation to theirs. For example, we compared experiences of institutional reactions to the pandemic, expectations on ourselves as teachers and researchers, as well as sharing concerns and thoughts with those of an experienced other. I used recorded mentor-mentee conversations and email correspondence to track my exposure to institutional expectations and norms. Digital correspondence with students through emails or our learning management system served to provide context about their experiences of my teaching and the course, coursework, and how I enacted my role. These served as prompts for my own reflective journals where I thought "out loud" and attempted to make sense of becoming in this challenging context. In analyzing the data, I conducted an inductive analysis (Creswell, 2012), identifying and coding themes (Saldana, 2021) in the first cycle and theoretical coding in the second cycle (Charmaz, 2014).

Outcomes

After the second cycle of coding, it was noticeable how my identity shifts aligned with the contexts outlined by Gee (2001) while my actions as a teacher-educator reflected my developing pedagogy of teacher education. Therefore, I report my findings aligned to Gee's four domain descriptions and discuss the main influences on my learning through self-study in the discussion.

Nature-Identity

As a new faculty member, I was new to the institution and area, having moved from the east coast the previous summer. This micropolitan regional university was in a small town where it can take a while for newcomers to be trusted and accepted. One strength of the area was the synergy between the municipality and the university. There was an established tradition of local cooperation. Historical, institutional, and regional knowledge resided with existing, well-established senior faculty who I was yet to know professionally or personally. Furthermore, I was a secondary educator taking up a position in an elementary program. On many levels in my first semester, I felt much like a fish out of water. I

had misgivings about whether I was a good fit for my department, whether my approach to teaching, learning, and scholarship would correlate to the expectations of the college of education, and I worried about how long I would be an outsider in a department of established faculty.

I considered in my journal whether this position would be a "short term steppingstone, until something better came along" (Journal), as my doctoral advisor suggested in conversation, or whether my lack of fit could be a good thing. I noted, "Part of my brief when I accepted the position was to be someone who would speak up and ask challenging questions. But I wonder whether in the long term this might be problematic" (Journal). I did not share the same nature identity as my faculty colleagues, while my propensity to speak up at times was potentially viewed as combative or disrespectful. I described these negative feelings in my journal as "isolating."

My sense of isolation was further exacerbated because my immediate family chose to remain on the east coast. While visiting them for Spring Break, COVID-19 restrictions were enacted nationwide, forcing a switch to remote and online instruction. Being remote left me feeling less isolated from my family, but further isolated from the institution. However, with distance came a sense of safety. For example, I was able to speak up in faculty Zoom meetings about the need to be cognizant of our student's social and emotional needs, and how we would need to work harder to model the dispositions our teacher candidates needed as they would not see them in the field.

Institution-Identity

In my first semester as a teacher educator, I was able to begin to forge an institutional identity by attending sporting events, recruitment fairs, and cultural programs on campus. I noticed small shifts in my identity as I began to understand the campus and community a little better. As I taught my Explorations classes, I could focus on the dispositions of my teacher candidates, and at the same time question my own dispositions toward them. Toward the end of that first semester, I noted in my journal how I was feeling more "at home" in my office, teaching space, and the town in general, and that heading back to Virginia for Christmas would be lovely, but also disruptive to my sense of belonging. I felt like I did not fully belong anywhere anymore.

Although my relationships with the student and faculty body were positive. The onset of the pandemic severed any in-person connections. Particularly as I was working from a remote location. The uncertainty of the situation and the sense of collective trauma led me to consider if I would ever return to campus, or if I would even remain in an academic position. Sharing this with one of my critical friends who was in a comparable situation (although she was in her second year when the pandemic struck), we noted how we still did not really feel fully connected to our institutions. The physical distance made it hard to feel like we belonged.

As much as technology such as Zoom helped me to see faces and to meet "live," my belonging to the university, or the community did not feel real. I noted in my journal how, "…everything in my professional life is 1200 miles away. My only connection is through my laptop. If I did not have so much grading and so many emails from students, I wouldn't think it is real" (Journal).

Discourse Identity

Teaching the Explorations course and discussing issues associated with remote teaching during the pandemic influenced my evolving discourse identity. Explorations in Education afforded participants a chance to wrestle with their understanding about what dispositions educators should have. In teaching the class face-to-face, pre-pandemic, I noticed how my students wrestled with aspects of their transition from student to student-teacher. This led me to consider my own dispositional alignment as I reflected. I began to challenge some of the assumptions made in the course design. I offered critique and perspective on aspects of the class that needed updating, for example, issues surrounding grit and growth mindset needed replacing with discussions around equity and diversity. I worried this was perhaps at odds with traditional practices in my department.

In the second semester, the onset of the pandemic and the switch to remote learning demonstrated to me an urgent need to address these pressing issues. Not all students had access to digital devices or adequate internet for remote learning. With their field experiences curtailed, I had to adjust student reflections to draw on their own apprenticeship of

observation. Further, I had students in various stages of crises caused by the pandemic. Some were sick, or caring for sick relatives, some lost loved ones, while others were placed into financial hardship by workplace closures. I tried my best to alleviate or help these pressures with understanding and flexibility on my part.

However, in meetings with faculty, it was noticeable that not everyone appeared to understand or care about students' needs. In my journal, I wrote how colleagues who had been nothing but kind to me in my face-to-face interactions last semester, were "as much in survival mode as our students are, and as a result they are unable to cut them any slack" (Journal). I made it a point to discuss student wellbeing, both physically and emotionally, the value of accepting late work and why it was necessary, and how to help students succeed rather than create barriers to success. My discourse identity became that of a student advocate and influenced my developing pedagogy of teacher education.

Affinity-Identity

At the same time, my affinity-identity shifted too. As my discourse stance emphasized a student-centered approach based on an ethic of care, I also presented alternative perspectives to my students which were different from what they were learning from my peers. When face-to-face, it was noticeable how students who felt marginalized by others due to their ethnicity or gender identity, or those who were struggling to meet expectations of other instructors, would come to me for help, advice, or just to talk. I shared with a critical friend how my "otherness" and outsider perspective gave a safe space for students who also felt they were different in some way.

With the transition to remote and hybrid instruction, I worked to strengthen these connections. I provided opportunities for students to email or Zoom if they needed to chat. I spent more time helping and listening to students than in meetings with colleagues. I also focused on my critical friendships, conducting self-study research and scholarship. My affinity identity was less with the institution than it was to students who asked for help, and my community of critical friends and co-authors. I wrote that as far as my faculty role was concerned, I considered myself a "contributing outsider" (Journal).

Discussion

Understanding My Changing Identity With Self-Study

Berry & Kitchen (2020) situate self-study as a methodology well suited for the examination of teacher education during a pandemic. It allows us to better understand situated human activity from the perspectives of those engaged in it. My experiences described are a selective snapshot of what influenced my evolving identity in this challenging time. I contend that other first-year teacher educators may have felt similarly disconnected as I did. However, by framing my experiences within Gee's framework I was able to challenge my initial assumptions. For example, had the pandemic not struck, I assumed that transitioning to a new role, in a new institution, and in a new professional context, would mean that my affinity and institution identities would be where I would see the most change. Learning the cultural norms and expectations of my new institution should have influenced me the most. Yet formal induction was dropped in my second semester because of the pandemic. As I was physically disconnected from the institution, I was not able to acculturate to the university or the geographic area as I might have done if I was present and connected.

Crafting My Pedagogy

As colleagues were remote and undergoing their own pandemic responses, I missed opportunities to learn from their experiences. Thus, my pedagogy developed through my discourse identity. For example, I took this as an opportunity to go beyond "giving grace" and attempted to rework coursework, class delivery, and learning around students' direct needs. It is unlikely I would have taken such risks so soon. For example, I abandoned assignments which did not address teacher candidate dispositions as future teachers (which was the focus of the Explorations course). I incorporated more opportunities for collaboration and community building, and constantly asked questions about whether what we were doing in our coursework "really mattered." Not all changes were successful, yet the lack of physical connection to my institution and oversight from colleagues left me looking for guidance in other spaces. As we later navigated a return to "normal," I had to reconcile my prior decision-making with institutional expectations which I was yet to be acculturated to. This made for a confusing, "hit and miss" process.

Importance of Critical Friendship

Examining one's own identity is not something that is done in isolation. I am thankful that I was able to examine my practice within several critical friendships. The conversations, questions, and trust in these spaces allowed for me to think aloud, seek encouragement, and know that novice and experienced faculty members in other institutions were in similar situations. When I began this study, I wanted to investigate my dispositions and identity shifts as my own teacher candidates wrestled with theirs. However, as I examined the data, I noticed how our conversations were more about our practice as teacher educators and how the pandemic influenced and framed our pedagogies of teacher education. Without the opportunity to investigate and delve into these issues, I would not have asked questions about my pedagogy and practice. I could not look to mentors within my institution to provide answers. Thus, the context of the pandemic response forced me to strengthen my discourse identity. These outside perspectives still influence my decision-making today, and I sometimes still ask "Does this matter?" when making learning decisions.

Conclusion

I framed this inquiry around the question "What does it mean to be a teacher-educator?" In the context of the response to COVID-19, it meant that my identity was shaped less by my institution or physical space. Instead, it was shaped by discourse and reflection rooted in self-study. Separated physically from institutional onboarding forced an examination of my own assumptions of what it means to be a teacher-educator, alongside my assumptions of what the institution expected of me. My teacher-educator identity was formed through trial and error, then examined through reflection and discussion with colleagues not at my university. Self-study helped to provide answers to the immediate problems faced by myself and my students at the time, allowing for a more considered approach to my teaching during this emergency. At this point in time, I can attribute my decision-making, my attitude to the pandemic, and ultimately my navigation of such a stressful and confusing time to self-study practices. Thinking about my identity helped me survive during the pandemic.

Now that we are back to "normal", I have gradually developed more of an institutional identity. My exposure to institutional and local cultural norms frames my decision-making more than it did in my first year. My perspective is still influenced by self-study practices; however, my affinity identity is stronger, which grounds my decision-making in the context of the institution as well as my and my student's needs. This is probably more akin to what new teacher-educators experienced pre-pandemic and does create a more nuanced "bigger picture" understanding of what teacher-educators do. Ultimately, learning to be a teacher-educator is not easy. It is shaped by the contexts that influence our identities. Learning to be a teacher-educator during a deadly pandemic is even more complex. In terms of Gee's descriptions, the pandemic made me rely on and develop my discourse identity to navigate my first year in a tenure-track role. This was because my feelings of not belonging were strengthened by remote instruction and feelings of disconnection. My affinity identity was not fully formed. Through self-study, I was able to make some sense of the situation and develop a pedagogy that would get me through the situation as best as I could. I contend that my experiences were similar to those of other new faculty who experienced complex and confusing shifts in identity as they navigated not only a new institution but also new course loads, while remote and physically disconnected, with little idea of what was truly expected of them.

As the pandemic continues, albeit in a more manageable form, what it means to be a pandemic teacher-educator also shifts, as do our identities. Self-study is a tool that can help us make sense of our context, understand who we are, and make decisions. I ask that mentors, administrators, and those who are responsible for helping new faculty transition into teacher education consider how the ongoing pandemic challenges existing assumptions about acculturation and institutional identity. As we transition to a post-pandemic era, I encourage new teacher-education faculty to use self-study to help them better make sense of their identity and purpose as teacher educators in increasingly challenging times.

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Vulnerability, Ontological, and Epistemological Assault

Confronting Award-Winning Children's Literature

Barbara E. McNeil

children's literature | Prizing | Blackface Minstrelsy

Motivated by the desire to advance dignified representation and social justice in education via children's literature, the author draws from the rich database of S-STEP studies (Kitchen et al., 2020) in conjunction with powerful critical discourses (Feagin, 2013; St Pierre, 2000), to illustrate how children's texts are used as part of whiteness as a technology affect (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2016). Such technology is deployed via literary texts used in reading programs of schools in sites of settler colonialism, to ideologically conscript children and youth in maintaining domination and subordination of minorities through the promulgation of white supremacy and its psychosocial consequences. Drawing on the work of Serafini (2010), this study calls for greater pedagogical focus on "visual images and visual systems of meaning" in engagements with children's texts given the growing importance of images (p. 86) and visual culture in the lives of children. Also, this study signals urgent need for harm repair; democratization, informed participation, inclusion, diversity, transparency, and greater polyvocality on adjudication committees and in prizing and reviewing institutions of children's literature.

Context

Having recently completed Michelle Obama's (2018) racially nurturing memoir, *Becoming,* and a subscriber to poststructural feminist theories (St. Pierre, 2000) where the subject is "agentic," not fixed but opened to "possibilities of continual reconstruction and reconfiguration" (p. 502)—always on thresholds of becoming—I was drawn to the 2023 Self-Study in Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) conference. It is an opportunity to pause-reflect on the contributions of this research community to my practices as a teacher-educator through their enabling of: courage to name and tease out vexations (Samaras, 2011), to be humble and vulnerable (Berry & Russel, 2016; Knowles, 2014), puzzle and wrestle with complexities associated with being a racialized educator in a settler colonial state (McNeil, 2011; Taylor & Diamond, 2020); in pursuit of social justice education (Sowa & Schmidt, 2020) therein. Canada for instance, is on thresholds of inclusive, sociological, and political change, as citizens, due especially to Indigenous activism, begin acknowledging the enormous suffering colonial schools and education (e.g., Residential Schools), (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015), misrepresentation of the colonized, and colonialism itself have caused its victims. Such acts are now being acknowledged, through the inaugural, National Truth and Reconciliation Day (September 30, 2021). One, that "honours the lost children and survivors of residential schools, their families and communities" (Government of Canada, 2021).

In view of the foregoing, self-study (Mena & Russel, 2017) is the research methodology I embrace, to understand my teaching practices and effectuate change. As a Black teacher educator, whose body, spirit, and mind socio-historically, carry lacerations of suffering, I am committed to naming social injustices in the interest of working for humane, nuanced, and textured social justice in my intersecting worlds (parent, teacher educator, and citizen-subject). For example, in my roles as selector, evaluator, and mediator of children's literature, I am accountable for the literature I use and recommend to teacher-candidates for diverse children in a society where oppressed and subordinated groups call for justice, insist on dignified inclusion, truth, and reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). This is a substantial responsibility because research by children's literature scholars (Broderick, 1973; Bishop, 2007; Bradford, 2007; Brown 1933; Harris, 1990, 1999, 2012; Leu, 2001; Stivers, 2015) documents the corrosive, toxic marks, and sting white supremacy—colonialism—have left on cultural production in which, racialized peoples (e.g., Asians, Blacks, Indigenous peoples) have been dehumanized, stereotyped, ridiculed, mocked, belittled and misrepresented by dominant White groups in locations of colonial domination through its racialized ontologies and epistemologies.

I witnessed such misrepresentation when I read an award-winning Canadian picture book—The Red Scarf (2010)/L'écharpe Rouge (Villeneuve, 1999) which, produced in me, feelings of vulnerability, ontological, and epistemological assault (Mdingi, 2016). Hence, I reached for self-study—a methodology ideal for one interested in underlining that "it is essential that prospective teachers (and teacher educators too) be sensitized to, and challenged by, the demands of teaching for social justice if the hope for schooling as truly an educative experience for all is to be seriously pursued" (Kitchen et al., vii, 2020). Therefore, this is a self-study of my engagement, critical response, and activism provoked by an award-winning picture book (Canada and Belgium (2000, Prix Québec/Wallonie-Bruxelles de littérature de jeunesse (ricochet-jeunes.org)) despite its flagrant deployment of black-face minstrelsy, conflating Blacks with simians—monkeys.

Aims and Objectives

Colonial ideologies are dangerous to harmonious social relations in settler societies and are with us still. As concerns children's literature, Bradford (2001) posits, that "to read children's books of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is to read texts produced within a pattern of imperial culture" and "[w]orks of the past, such as Tom Brown's Schooldays, The Water-Babies, and The Secret Garden, readily disclose the imperial ideologies that inform them" (p. 196). Such ideologies for instance, rank(ed) and ordered humanity in self-serving ways beneficial to maintaining the influence, power, and prestige of those atop the ladder of humanity in settler colonial states like Canada, and are carried into the twenty-first century in spite of international legislation (Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations (1948); the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1995) and national human rights charters and codes (e. g., Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Government of Canada, 1982) and related discourses.

Influenced by Bradford's (2007) Unsettling Narratives: Postcolonial Readings of Children's Literature, the purpose of this self-study is to make visible and challenge the ongoing impact of colonial ideologies related to caste (Wilkerson, 2020)—to race—in a children's book –L'écharpe rouge. First published in 1999 and nationally prized in 2000, in Canada, I draw attention to the book's actual and potential harm to children and the development of harmonious social relations in and out of classroom spaces because of its use of simians in blackface minstrelsy as surrogates for Black people. I seek nothing less than to challenge the prizing of this flawed book in light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1995) and to, as Capshaw (2018) suggests, interrogate "the lack of concrete aesthetic criteria determining many of the awards that grant a long life to texts (both in libraries and academia) ... [and] to also make plain the invisible but formative influence of whiteness in determining legitimacy…" (p. 391) through social positionalities and rankings of worth.

Through this action-research self-study (Shivers, Disney & Porath, 2020; Samaras, 2011), I investigate my reader responses (Rosenblatt, 1978) to a specific text at a particular moment in time. Thus, my self-study is, as Czarniawska (2011) suggested of some "close readings" of narrative texts, an "explicative" (what the text/picture book says), "interpretive" (what the picture book means) and "interruptive" (limiting damage of a White female-authored visual narrative engaging in racial mockery at the expense of Blacks) for the delight of her assumed White readers—illustrating that close readings cannot be "devoid of history and contemporary realities" (Harris, 1999, p. 152). Through this self-study, I represent myself as a "self-interpreting" (Taylor, 1985, cited in Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2016, p. 210) reader engaged in critical acts of meaning-making of the lived social world via use of self-selected complementary theoretical frameworks. I am interested in pursuing dignified, non-oppressive, non-demeaning representation of Black people in children's literature by explicitly naming and exposing powerful colonial relations of power and their concomitant and endemic racial hierarchies, that enable untroubled prizing of an explicitly racializing text aimed at children in contemporary Canada by one of its institutions: The Canada Council for the Arts, through the Governor General's Literary Awards (Canada Council, 2000).

Method(s): Data Collection

Data for this self-study comprised repeated close-readings (Brookman & Horn, 2016) of the text, content analysis (Shivers, Disney & Porath, 2020) of visual narrative, and critical analysis of the images (Cotton & Daly, 2015), visual meaning-making systems (Serafini, 2010)— in this mostly wordless book (there are only eight words). I also consulted reviews (e.g., Donaldson, 2010). Furthermore, to capture my emotions/ feelings, reactions, reflections, and ideas, I wrote in a research journal (Makaiau, Leung & Fukui, 2019). Additionally, as "researcher and participant," in the study, it was incumbent to operationalize a key practice of self-study—enlisting the support of a critical friend (Hamilton, Hutchinson & Pinnegar, 2020; Samaras, 2011, Smith & Bradbury, 2019) to establish trustworthiness. Hence, I asked a knowledgeable White colleague, a critical friend, to closely examine L'écharpe Rouge/The Red Scarf to ascertain the reasonableness and credibility of my hypothesis and critical assertions about its shameless deployment of blackface minstrelsy in this Governor General award-winning monograph for children.

Analysis

Citing Mishler (1990), Tidwell, Heston, and Fitzgerald (2009), argue that "[s]elf-study as inquiry-guided research, must be trustworthy enough for "others to be able to find that research both meaningful and potentially generative in relationship to the readers' own teacher education practices" (p. xiii). With commitments to trustworthiness and visibility, data analysis for this study was recursive and iterative— spanning over a year, while I lived in it via use of Iterative Categorization (IC), (Neale, 2020). IC "is a systematic and transparent technique for analysing qualitative textual data" (p. 668) because it can be used with "studies of any size" such as mine Typically, IC involves the following stages: 'transcription', 'familiarisation', 'anonymisation', 'logging', 'coding, 'analyses preparation', 'descriptive analyses' and 'interpretive analyses' (Neale). For this study, I chiefly utilized IC for the "interpretative stage." According to Neale, "interpretation is essential because it raises the findings of a qualitative study from a simple, local 'story' to an account that has potential relevance to other settings and audience" (p. 668). Also, essential, was communication with and from my critical friend (Samaras, 2011) who, referencing L'echarpe Rouge, explained: "And it isn't "offense" that we're talking about, it is the harmful and reductive stereotypical representation of Black folx that has led to their dehumanization and threatens the lives of Black people in Canada, the US, and around the world" (S. S. personal communication, April 11, 2021).

Hence, during the 'interpretative stage', I repeatedly returned to the monograph of focus, and deeply personal and reflective notes recorded in my research journal, and communication with my critical friend to sift through observations, emotions, feelings, ideas, interpretations, and responses to its visual images in light of my identities: Black citizen, mother, and teacher educator with strong affinities for Critical Race Theory (CRT), Ladson-Billings (); Gillborn, 2006), the Black Lives Movement surging around me (Holt & Sweitzer, 2020; Oborne & Miller, 2020), and the theoretical frameworks selected for the study (e. g. Fanon, 1963, Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013). Data analysis also involved percolation (Romano, 1987)—lots of thinking as I went about my daily activities. Additionally, I engaged in self-talk and dialogues with family and colleagues (Coia & Taylor, 2009) while grappling with data. This is because the "aim of the final interpretive process is to identify patterns, associations, and explanations within the data" to question them and "…finally, ascertaining how the findings complement or contradict previously published literature, theories, policies or practices" (Neale, 2020, p. 670) and also to highlight fresh insights and contributions offered by the study—thereby "externalizing" my findings as indicated in Neale's model of IC and as exhibited herein.

Outcomes

The presence of blackface minstrelsy in a picture book (L'Echarpe Rouge/The Red Scarf) that attracted the most, prestigious prize for illustration in Canada ($10,000, Canada Council, 2000), highlights the power and entrenchment of white racial framing (Feagin, 2013) in national and other institutions that prize children's literature. The study reveals that whiteness, as a technology of affect (Leonardo & Zembylas, 2013) if left untroubled, works to recruit and conscript children perceptually and ideologically in the promulgation of white supremacy through children's literature in states marked by settler colonialism. This menaces national goals for harmonious/equitable social relations of power. Additionally, the study reveals that adjudication boards/bodies responsible for prizing, should not be solely entrusted to dominant groups. Rather, they should be positioned to operate democratically, polyvocally, and transparently; comprising of knowledgeable, critical, heterogenous individuals, committed to dignified representation for all populations given the damaging, ideological power of multimodal texts for children, youth, and adults. Also, this self-study illuminates Kress' (2003) view (cited in Serafini) that the "world shown is different from the world told" (p. 86), and self-study's nimbleness to make this known to those in and outside the community of such researchers. Finally, the study suggests we can move beyond thresholds of calling out injustices toward engaging authors and illustrators of picturebooks, in harm repair through epistemologies of restorative justice (Asadullah & Morrison, 2021; Minifie, 2017), and truth and reconciliation.

Implications for Practice

This self-study has significant implications for the evaluation and selection of children's literature in culturally and racially diverse, but White-controlled societies in post-colonial settings because children's literature is an aperture for understanding cultures and societies—the universe of our teaching practices and has lessons to share about ethical book selection. English (2005) for instance, in The Economy of Prestige, underlines the intersection of market and cultural forces in prizing, stating that, "prizes obviously are bound up in varying degree with the business end of art, with the actual funding of cultural production and the traffic in cultural products …" (p. 3). He further argues that prizing is also associated "…with the specifically cultural economics of prizes and awards—with what may be called the economics of cultural prestige" (p. 3).

Therefore, I assert that in postcolonial settler states such as Canada, literary prizing such as the Governor General's Literary Awards, a state-sponsored prize (English (2005), cited in Kidd (p. 202)), (e. g., awarded to L'écharpe rouge for illustration), can be construed as an important aspect of the prestige of nation building. That is, of nurturing/developing/promoting homegrown, post-colonial literature—nationally, regionally, and locally. As Kidd (2007), a notable scholar on prizing posits, to "prize a book ostensibly is to value it, to mark it out as distinguished…" (p. 197), and is aimed at shoring "up the fortunes of a given text, author, or genre…" (p. 4).

Given the economic value of prizing, librarians, educators, and parents, for instance, need to be thoughtful/careful, and ethical in their selection. Though a book has attracted an important national and international prize, this distinction should not guarantee it a place in our libraries if it enlists racist tropes such as blackface minstrelsy in its storytelling—comedic or not. Therefore, selectors need to pay attention to the potential harm to Black and other children's self-worth and positive identity formation when selecting children's literature. Black and other children need to be shielded from suffering ignited by toxic—racist—literature such as the lauded (Publisher's Weekly, 2010) and prized L'écharpe Rouge (Canada Council).

Often entrusted to elites, prizing becomes institutionalized as part of the national and regional purview of dominant White groups. It can trigger intense emotions (e.g., pride, esteem, accomplishment; loyalty, reverence to the nation state). Hence prizing is partisan. State prizing often promotes the ideologies, proclivities, and interests (conscious and unconscious) of dominant White groups—especially for the juries/committees/boards selected to do so. Hence prizing can be framed as part of the "white racial frame" (Feagin, 2013) on which the Americas is built. It becomes a part of whiteness as a technology of affect (Leonardo & Zembylas)—mirroring/reflecting, enacting, and perpetuating dominant and still pervasive ideologies, epistemologies, and ontologies of colonialism which, was and is built on racial hierarchy, the superiority of the white race over all others, and contributes to maintaining that legacy.

The nationally, and internationally prized L'écharpe Rouge (Prix Québec-Wallonie-Bruxelles de littérature de jeunesse, Belgium, 2000), illustrates that it is still possible to behold in a children's book, a visual representation of black inferiority on the anthropological ladder engineered by colonial expansionism (albeit through anthropomorphism). As metaphorical fantasy (Connor, 2014), this monograph reproduces and serves up unconscionably, past racist tropes (blackface minstrelsy on monkeys) and the unashamed ridiculing of Black physical features to young people for enjoyment, adoption, and future circulation and reproduction.

Hence, in schools, it is necessary to contemplate the history of oppression, current and future needs of Black readers, and other groups scarred by colonialism in the selection of, and their transactions with children's literature in settler states because of the ideologies, signals, and messages they send to children about their worth, value and overall framing and positioning in society. In particular, this study informs practice by drawing attention to possible impacts of visual-narrative representation in toxic-racist literature on the emotional, and affective domains of children's lives.

L'écharpe Rouge is no benign monograph and "no accident" (S. S. personal communication, April 11, 2021). Sadly, it subtly offers up for consumption on the national and international stages, images that are morally and ethically questionable—indicating some global appetite/affect for this literature. Also, the book leaves untroubled ownership of the circus animals, depicting them, including the monkeys in blackface, as contented, satisfied property of their White human masters/employers/owners. With regard to its affective reach in pedagogical sites and influencing pedagogical relations (Forster-Roy-Morrison, 2014, p. 169), here is a Canadian literary text, globally contributing to racist cultural enculturation and ideological socialization (Moruzi, Smith, & Bullen 2019) in children.

Thus, teacher-educators and teacher-candidates engaged in "literary vetting" (Kidd, 2007, p. 202) need to be aware of the possibilities of still encountering (via images/illustrations and text), storytelling informed by colonial legacies of racialization, harmful to all—children, teachers, and the socially just society we wish to build—and are further encouraged to reject such literary production as quality children's literature for all, whether prized or not. Prizing is not always a guarantor of quality. Rather it is a set of geopolitical, sociopolitical, cultural, and economic (English, 2005) acts reflecting the particular aesthetics of the people/groups responsible for the awards/prizes, criteria established and used, and the juries responsible for decision-making. They are fallible and so while treading lightly, I argue for parents, teachers, teacher-candidates, and librarians to employ the (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) to guide their selections based on the best interest of s child. As well, I ask selectors of children's literature to consider using what Kidd identifies as "progressive censorship, the censorship of materials that are racist, sexist, homophobic, or otherwise out of line with contemporary social and ethical mores" (p. 200) to limit children's exposure to such texts and finally to adopt "critical approaches" such as critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970; McLaren, 2017), critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings; Solorzano), postcolonial theory (Fanon, 1963) Black feminist theories (Hill Collins (1999); hooks; (2000) to "see" as Jones (2006) suggests, "what they reveal about the genre and its body of criticism" (p. 288). Employment of the preceding theories can equip librarians, parents, teachers, and other selectors to make careful and well-reasoned decisions about the children's literature they select and use and strengthen their resolve to agentically refuse that which is culturally and politically prized. In effect withholding their cultural capital from cultural texts sanctioned by the prizing economy.

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Section II: What inspires you to pause, deliberate, consider, or take a mindful stance to determine new or enduring practices?

A Course That Explores Indigenous Perspectives of Assessment
A Self-Study of Whiteness and Teaching About Teaching Race in a Social Studies Methods Course
Building the Boat, Growing the Tree
Articulating a Pedagogy of Discussion
Navigating the Thresholds and Crossing Boundaries Into Academic Leadership
Interrogating Grading Practices in Mathematics Methods
Trials and Tribulations of Transitioning Into Leadership
Voices in Debriefing Mathematics Methods Teaching
Learning How to Be a Better Teacher Educator Online
Parallel Performance
Teaching As Orchestration
Uncovering Care in My Pedagogy and Collaborative Self-Study
“It is a bit like cooperating as teachers”
Reflecting on Supervision During Emergency Remote Teaching
Building and Modeling Warm Demander Teaching Identities
Perspectives on Trauma-Informed Practice During Pandemic Zoom Teaching
Navigating Leadership With an Eye Toward Equity
Listening Pedagogies
Discovering the Value of Ticket Out of Class as Critical Reflection and Formative Assessment
In Pursuit of Quality Teaching and Learning

Pedagogy in Progress
Threshold Inertia
Pedagogical Care
Implementing Standards-Based Grading in the University Classroom
Ungrading as Turning Point in “Forever on the Way” to Becoming Critical Educators

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A Course That Explores Indigenous Perspectives of Assessment

Designing Syllabi That Consider Differing Ontologies/Worldviews for Nurturing Children's Intellectual Development

M. Shaun Murphy, Trudy Cardinal, Janice Huber, & Stefinee E. Pinnegar

Teacher Education | Assessment | Indigenous Children | Two-Row Wampum

This paper explores the authors' self study into their experiences of developing courses attentive to Indigenous and relational understandings of assessment. Now offered in three different teacher education programs at two institutions, central in the courses has been Dr. Mary Young's teachings of Pimosayta (Learning to Walk Together in a Good Way) (Young, 2005). In the development of this chapter we drew on the work of Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) and LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for a self-study of practice. This helped us shape the paper in terms of self study to examine our practices in designing the courses. The findings explore questions such as: : What do we think teachers need to know?; What are Indigenous ways of building knowledge?; and, What are some key principles teachers need (or we think they need) to know as they come alongside Indigenous children/youth? These findings drew our attention to the identity vulnerability of children, youth, adult learners, teachers, and teacher educators in relation with the colonial narratives of assessment that dominate in schools and in teacher education.

Introduction

Shaun first developed the course, Assessment as Pimosayta: Attending to experience in relational ways. This course was designed as a graduate offering and has now been offered three times as an online course. Trudy and Janice created the course, Assessment as Pimosayta: Honouring children: Indigenous and relational approaches. This course has been offered once as a blended in-person graduate and undergraduate course and twice as an undergraduate course; one was fully online and another that began online and transitioned to hybrid. Trudy is Cree Métis and Shaun and Janice are of mixed European descent. Stefinee, the critical friend in this self-study, is also of European descent. The courses were developed to create space for pre and in-service teachers and teacher educators to consider the complexity (and harm) of assessment that is typically based on colonial practices of assessment, as well as to (continue to) grow[1] ways of thinking about and practising assessment that attends to and honours Indigenous and relational ways of learning, being, and doing. Assessment is considered alongside attentiveness to the lives of children and youth in diverse contexts (Bissell & Korteweg, 2016; Bouvier & Karlenzig, 2006; Clandinin et al, 2006; Claypool & Preston, 2011; Hodkinson, 2005; Huber et al., 2005; Kitson & Bowes, 2010). The main text for Shaun's course is

"Trickster Chases the Tale of Education" (Moore, 2017), which opens space for teachers to design alternative ways of assessing within their own professional contexts and for Shaun, as a teacher educator, to do the same. In Trudy and Janice's course, assessment is explored and practised as a process needing to centre children's intellectual development as they journey toward wisdom, as taught to Trudy and Janice by diverse Indigenous Elders and Knowledge and Language Keepers who either participated in the course in person or shared their knowledge via scholarship or community created videos.

The purpose of this paper, and the study that preceded it, is to uncover how we (teacher educators) take up Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing as we design courses that reposition teachers to do the same in their own contexts. The ways we take up Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing opens potential for re-imagining assessment both within the context of the course and in schools. By examining the syllabi of the two courses we inquire into: What do we think teachers need to know? What are Indigenous ways of building knowledge? What are some key principles teachers need (or we think they need) to know as they come alongside Indigenous children/youth? These questions sit on the threshold of our teaching, and we desire to have better senses of what we are doing. By inquiring into these questions, we have deepened our understanding. We understand that part of teaching, in any context, is being willing to live in a liminal space (Heilbrun, 1999), which has been key during every offering of our courses and in our self-study. As we show, key too has also been our deepening understanding of vulnerability.

Method

This self-study of practice focuses on our designing course syllabi that offer space for teachers to explore Indigenous knowledge and ways it shapes practices of assessment. Therefore, the main examination was of the respective syllabi, assignments, and our experiences teaching the courses, including our review of anonymous student feedback (i.e. provided by anonymous student course evaluation surveys). We also recorded conversations among all of us. As Stefinee was alongside us as a critical friend, therefore becoming a co-author of our inquiry, she is also a co-author of this paper. As our inquiry unfolded we used memos to capture our thoughts about the courses, the conversations, and our understandings of Indigenous knowledges. The teacher educators (Shaun, Trudy, and Janice) have been revisiting and (re)developing the courses over many offerings; each time, this collaborative inquiry process has deepened our understandings through dialogue with one other.

The adjustments to our practice that resulted represent the living educational theory we create each time we teach the course and dialogue about it. This recursive process of development is part of our method, along with Stefinee's ongoing questions and conversations with us. This process (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), and LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for a self-study of practice, guide us in that our inquiry is self-initiated and improvement aimed, and guided by qualitative research (largely narrative inquiry). It is interactive in that we engaged in dialogue in uncovering findings and worked as critical friends critiquing our thinking and assumptions. As noted, we drew on a variety of field texts and engaged in multiple cycles of interpretation. This process allowed us to develop exemplar validation in support of our findings.

Findings

In these courses, it has been difficult to step away from common assessment practices in post-secondary places, but as made visible in the upcoming sections, different forms of assessment were used. Postings and conversations by the adult learners and the articles we read suggested alternative ways of assessment in grade schools and ways this process could be utilised in grade school classrooms. Developing each syllabi attentive to diverse Indigenous and relational ways of knowing made us consider the importance of ontologies with which we were not as familiar. In order for the courses to be successful, we recognized our need to make visible to the students our learning and thinking with these ontologies both in the course designs and our practices in the courses. Revisiting the syllabi with the questions noted in the introduction highlighted our need to develop deeper understandings of what we were intending to do. Assessment has a reified place in school and post-secondary systems. Our answers to these questions framed our inquiry and our findings. Our hope is that by coming alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers in a course focused on assessment as understood from Indigenous worldviews, which centers ways of knowing the whole person,

we will be supporting all of us to shift how assessment is understood and practised in grade school and post-secondary places.

What Do We Think Teachers Need to Know?

In our courses, a common conversation has been the need to shape assessment in terms of diverse learners. Shaun, Trudy, and Janice live in western Canadian provinces where the highest populations of Indigenous people live. They are conscious that the teachers they come alongside will come alongside Indigenous children and youth. Typically, their teacher education classes are composed of teachers whose ancestors came to these lands as settlers. They know that teachers are constrained by the dominant colonial assessment practices and understandings of curriculum as government-mandated subject matter outcomes. In reviewing their syllabi we noted that as Shaun shaped his first offering of his course he did so around readings and assignments that were largely acceptable in the colonial narratives that shape the institutional norms of his university. As Trudy and Janice have begun their first and successive course offerings with the participation and teachings of Elders, Knowledge and Language Keepers, and members of diverse Indigenous communities, these relationships and knowledge create important ongoing touchstones as their course unfolds. In conversation with Trudy and Janice, Shaun noted that should he teach the course again he would change the assignments to reflect more of what the content was suggesting,

> *The final assignment by one of the teachers who is of Nehiyaw ancestry was based on the inland delta situated in our treaty territory. This assignment has stayed in my head. I need to reread her paper and think about that work more carefully. I consider the tensions I felt as a settler man. I think about how her paper made me think "perhaps I should be doing assessment in another way" and the tensions I felt. Wouldn't it have been nice if I could have met her on the delta and walked with her through it as she talked about her assessment process. There should be more genuine assessment in relation to the course, much more Indigenous perspective. (Shaun's memo from conversation)*

As we thought with and engaged in dialogue around this memo, Shaun noted that he does not know how he would have done this. Perhaps he actually would have driven to the location and walked with her, perhaps he would have made a space for an oral presentation (augmented by pictures, even a video) although he wonders are these just further ways of colonial assessment? The best way would have been to ask the student how she would have liked to present her thoughts about assessment. We also discussed how these ways of engaging in/living out assessment require something more of us as teacher educators, including our also bringing forward the wholeness of ourselves, as well as additional energy and time than is typically associated with colonial forms of assessment. We wondered where the spaces are on our institutional landscapes to share these stories and practices of trying to live wholistic assessment, particularly given the colonial ways that we, as faculty members, are yearly assessed by faculty evaluation committees that are also grounded in colonial narratives of what counts as teaching, research, and service.

What Are Indigenous Ways of Building Knowledge?

We are conscious that many of our assessment practices are shaped by colonial perspectives. We were all elementary teachers before we became professors in teacher education. During our experiences as teachers, our assessment practices evolved. We brought these understandings and practices with us to the university. Since becoming teacher educators our assessment practices have continued to evolve; so too have our concerns and tensions. When we analysed Trudy and Janice's most recent syllabi we saw that spaces had been made for alternative ways of knowing through assessment. For example, when Janice shared a visual representation of experiences with assessment across her life, Carmen (pseudonym), a pre-service teacher, had responded:

> *I wonder what has happened in your life, because your visual shows that when you were in grade 10 you were told you should leave school, and now, you're a professor teaching this course. (Janice's notes from class, January 12, 2022).*

Janice's sharing and inviting the teachers to think with her stories, which continued each week, is one way she and Trudy try to support each teacher's term-long inquiry, which is a key process that unfolds during their course. As described in their course documents, this unfolding process was designed:

> *To continue to grow…[teacher's] capacities to centre children and their diverse and unique ways of knowing, being, doing, feeling, and relating through term-long inquiry into…[their] personal experience… [alongside their growing knowledge and thinking with] Indigenous and relational understandings of children, families, education, experience, story, and knowledge. (Description of term-long inquiry, winter term 2022)*

In the winter term of 2019, when Trudy and Janice first offered their course, the COVID-19 pandemic was unknown – together with the 56 undergraduate and graduate teachers in the course, they spent time each week in small groups where everyone supported one another's term-long inquiry by sharing and thinking with one another's stories. By their second and third offerings of the course, COVID-19 required an online learning environment. It was in the second online class of the winter 2022 course that Carmen's wonder supported Janice to begin her term-long inquiry:

> *As Carmen's wonder spans many experiences in my life across time, places, situations, and relationships, the story I have chosen to tell is of an experience somewhere in this midst: David (pseudonym) - first year of teaching (1988-1989: grade 3: small town school in northwest Alberta) (Janice's term-long inquiry, January 12, 2022)*

Trudy and Janice subsequently created a memo of their thinking following a collective dialogue with this data:

> *This dialogue was important for the ways it turned us back to the significant place of story as a key pedagogy in our course. As the term-long inquiry process unfolded in this most recent course, we had drawn the teacher's attention to Jo-ann Archibald's video where she shares stories of her learning alongside Elders about story as pedagogy:*
>
> *"I think we've been in a revitalization moment in our history where we're looking towards ensuring that our storytelling becomes vibrant as it once was. I do see that happening; we have more opportunities for stories to be told and I think that's really important for educators to become involved in that process so that they can use storytelling in their classroom and have children start to tell stories…children do anyway, people do tell stories, but I think we haven't really paid attention to those stories and put them into our form of pedagogy, especially in schools. I think that if we take that principle that…we live storied lives…we had them in our everyday living, we should have them in our everyday living in the schools. …I think the other important concern is not only to tell the stories but to learn to make meaning with and through the stories." (Archibald, n.d., counter 4.12-7.57) (Trudy and Janice's memo from conversation)*

What we collectively turned our attention toward as Trudy and Janice shared this subsequent memo was that as this term-long inquiry began and some of the teachers expressed that they felt they lacked abilities to tell and to 'make meaning with and through stories', Trudy and Janice realized the significance of ensuring there were spaces in the course where each teacher could experience colleagues' or Trudy and Janice's thinking with their own and one another's stories.

What Are Some Key Principles Teachers Need (or We Think They Need) to Know as They Come Alongside Indigenous Children/Youth?

A key principle that has continued to encourage us to examine our assessment practices and our teaching is the Wampum belt. Indigenous people's knowledge of the Wampum belt shapes our understanding of the treaties that were signed (and then ignored) on these lands that through colonization became known as North America. The wampum belt's design shows two beaded lines on a beaded background. The lines represent two ways of knowing, Indigenous and colonial (or Eurocentric). No one line on the belt is privileged over the other, they exist in harmony alongside each other. These understandings, however, have yet to become translated into practice. In practice, the line representing colonial thinking has taken dominance:

> *The Gus-Wen-Tah, or "Two-Row Wampum," was first negotiated between Dutch settlers and the nations of the Haudenosaunee confederacy. It served as a model for subsequent treaties with the British, including the one executed at Niagara in 1764, following the Royal Proclamation of 1763. The purple rows of the*

> *wampum symbolize the two distinct people, each traveling in their own vessels and not attempting to steer or impede the other. The three white rows symbolize the shared river and peace, respect and friendship.*
>
> *The Two-Row Wampum represents an understanding of the first and subsequent treaties on the part of Indigenous people that is starkly different from their modern interpretation by non-indigenous Canada. It does not represent a surrender of sovereignty to the Crown, the extinguishment of land title or an agreement to abide by the laws of another nation. It envisions two separate and independent people on a shared journey, each respecting the sovereignty and independence of the other and a shared commitment to peace, friendship and non-interference. (Mercer, 2019, p. 21)*

Our syllabi tend to be constrained by a colonised gaze, as earlier mentioned, and we are trying to interrupt the standard colonial narrative of assessment by opening it up to make spaces, shaped by the knowledge of Indigenous peoples alongside the experiences of teachers and ourselves. In doing this, we are cognizant of shared spaces and by establishing a place (course) for respect and friendship, a place of honouring Indigenous ways of knowing. In this way we are trying to create a liminal space, an in-between space, so teachers can unlearn colonial assessment and consider assessment that supports and prepares the next generation, as practiced by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. In reviewing our syllabi we are aware that our courses offer a transitional space. While the wampum belt may act as a metaphor we take it to be a literal concrete symbol of peaceful coexistence and honour….in this way the wampum belt guides us as teacher educators aware that universities and grade schools are shaped by colonial structures.

As we thought with this knowledge alongside our inquiry question of "What are some of the key principles teachers need (or we think they need) to know as they come alongside Indigenous children/youth?" alongside our data, we were drawn back to Trudy and Janice's most recent term-long inquiry process. In a memo created by them, they had earlier noted how as Janice continued to share her term-long inquiry with the teachers, following her earlier sharing of her memories of David, a young boy of Indigenous ancestry whom she had come alongside during her first year of teaching she had noted:

> How I felt/feel as I told this story:
>
> - tension / dis-ease
> - growth, including mistakes
> - other forms of assessment in schools
> - struggle
> - regret (Janice's term-long inquiry, January 19, 2022)

As we returned to Trudy and Janice's course documents, we saw their structuring of the term-long inquiry as an inter-relational narrative inquiry that invited the teachers to begin and continue their inquiry process by (re)connecting with the land where they were situated. As the teachers thought with their stories alongside their (re)connecting with land, they had created a visual representation of assessment experiences across their lives as well as attended to what they felt as they told stories of some of their experiences; this was followed by their either writing or orally recording one story that served as an initial anchor for their term-long inquiry. Week by week, Trudy and Janice guided the teachers through a process of attending to the temporal, sociality, place, and inter-relational dimensions of their written or orally recorded story. Three land visits, to slow down and to attend to what the land was showing them, and to then think with this knowledge alongside their term-long inquiry alongside the Elder and Knowledge and Language Keeper teachings or videos or readings in the course to that point, gradually supported the teachers' movements toward two ways of showing their growth. One of these ways encouraged them to focus on what this inquiry process had shown them about the concepts and ways of knowing, being, doing, seeing, feeling, and relating that grounds their assessment philosophy. Another way came through their creation of a visual synthesis that they imagined sharing with a child, youth, parent/family, community member, or colleague, showing the key aspects they planned to attend to as they come alongside children to engage with them in assessment that centres and shows each child's wholeness and growth.

As part of our self-study, we reviewed and reflected individually and collectively on the course outlines and assignment descriptions, and processes that shape Trudy and Janice's course, in which this term-long inquiry is one layer. This layer has been present although continuously revised across their three offerings of the course. In their second and third offerings, in part due to COVID-19 and the online learning environment, Trudy and Janice invited the teachers to each create and share with them a Google doc where they weekly added to their term-long inquiry. Thinking with each teacher's stories in this way, which happened via comment boxes in the margins of their Google doc, is different from sitting together in a small group and engaging in thinking in person with one another's stories. At the close of the winter 2022 course, Trudy and Janice noted that in their next offering of the "Assessment as Pimosayta" course, they would invite the teachers to consider sharing their term-long inquiry Google docs with one another and not only with Trudy and Janice. While Trudy and Janice's coming alongside the teachers on their individual Google docs continued to open space for co-creating inquiry through thinking with stories, as well as deepening everyone's knowledge of thinking with stories as pedagogy, this practice also brought each teacher's across-the-term growth more clearly into view. As we now think about how this growth became more visible, we wonder if teachers too might see one another's growth if they too were to think alongside each other on each other's Google docs. How might the teachers experience this seeing of one another's growth? Might the teacher's experiences in this process of thinking with one another's stories over time as a way of seeing growth contribute to the ways they come alongside children and youth to engage with them?

Conclusion

As we lingered with the self-study we show above in our three inquiry questions, we grew in understanding more about the centrality of vulnerability shaped by the harm to identity that happens through colonial forms of assessment in schools and in post-secondary places. Shaun highlighted a sense of this through the following memo:

> *You know, if I am honest, I initially designed this course thinking about all children. I knew that I could open a door and it might stay open if I thought about assessment from Indigenous' people's perspectives as a starting point. Was assessment harming Indigenous children? Yes. Was it harming most children? Yes. Assessment comes from such a settler/Eurocentric way of thinking and an Indigenous worldview does not take up assessment in the same way. That's it for me…assessment has such potential for harm, and I wanted teachers to think about this in their practice. In my classes I even made that point. (Shaun's memo from conversation)*

Shaun initially designed his course to help teachers think about their assessment practices and how these might affect all children. In the province where he teaches there is a large Indigenous population, and he had a sense that many if not all the children/youth were being negatively shaped by assessment practices. He wondered how we, as teachers and teacher educators, can open a space for different assessment practices that honour children/youth's diverse identities. Earlier he and others had shown how they came to see children's identities as their stories to live by:

> *We came to know Aaron's stories to live by, one way of understanding identity as shaped by "narrative understandings of knowledge and context" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p. 4) as Marni walked alongside him both on and off the school landscape. Young (2005) helps us to consider how the concept stories to live by can be helpful in understanding the experiences of Aboriginal children. (Murray-Orr et al., 2007, p. 276)*

Further on they wrote,

> *Let us not allow others to decide our identity for us," states Restoule (2000, p. 112). As we positioned ourselves alongside the children in our research, we worked toward becoming vulnerable observers (Behar, 1996), toward a relational inquiry with each child. Sideways looking opened up an ethical space that allowed us to attend closely to the children's stories to live by and to lay our own unfolding stories alongside theirs. As we attended in this way, we recognized tensions for each of the children in relation with their school experiences. (p. 279)*

This understanding of learners–young children, youth, and adults–as people in an ongoing process of composing their identities, their stories to live by, highlights that as we come alongside as teachers and teacher educators it is never our place to give a child, a youth, or an adult learner an identity. As teachers and teacher educators, it is important that we understand how colonial forms of assessment require us to do this. As the Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing that grounds our courses have supported the teachers and us to come to think with, we have a relational ethical responsibility to attend to the wholeness and ongoingness of the identities of the children, youth, and adult learners whom we come alongside.

As our self-study grew our attentiveness to the identity vulnerability of children, youth, and adult learners we also grew more awake to our need, as teachers and teacher educators, to live humbly, vulnerably, and carefully as we come alongside children, youth, and adult learners. Presently, in the systems that shape grade schools and post-secondary places, Indigenous ways of knowing, being, doing, and relating are overpowered by colonial ways of assessing. We have many wonders about whether or not our courses honour the Two-Row Wampum Treaty. Might our living more humbly, vulnerably, and carefully alongside the teachers whom we come alongside in the courses, many of whom are of Indigenous ancestry, continue to grow ways of engaging in assessment that lift and center Indigenous people's knowledge of children, youth, and adult learners and our long-term relational ethical responsibilities to the wholeness and ongoingness of their identities? How might such continuing growth in our courses also grow conversations and processes in and beyond our two post-secondary places in which teacher educators' long-term relational ethical responsibilities to the wholeness and ongoingness of the identities of the teachers we come alongside open up? We imagine our next self-studies will take up questions such as these.

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[1] We note here that some of the teachers who have participated in these courses are of Indigenous ancestry and already hold knowledge of Indigenous perspectives of assessment.

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A Self-Study of Whiteness and Teaching About Teaching Race in a Social Studies Methods Course

Derek Anderson

Anti-racist Whiteness Social Studies

Current tensions between parents, legislators, and school leaders over race-related issues, heightened by social and mass media, are creating problems teachers have never before had to face. Teacher candidates need to be prepared to teach about race, not only because it is important to their students' and their own personal development, but because unlike their predecessors who typically avoided controversies, today's teachers cannot. Precipitating this self-study was my admitted aversion to and discomfort with teaching deeply about race in my elementary social studies methods course. Using multiple data sources including class assignments and discussions, my teaching materials, and reflection journals, as well as documentation of numerous conversations with critical friends, I examined how I prepared for, taught, and reflected on race-related topics integrated into my social studies methods class. Embracing my discomfort, witnessing student disinclination and conservatism, and learning from mistakes, I acknowledge that by engaging my students in surface-level explorations of topics like bias and prejudice but avoiding issues like structural racism and the role of Whites in perpetuating racism by inaction, I have not been doing enough and need to continue to work on my efficacy, particularly the specific skills effective teachers use in anti-racist teaching.

Context

Over the past year or so, laws restricting the teaching of racism have been passed in 14 states, and similar bills have been introduced in more than 25 other states (Pendharker, 2022). Specifically mentioned in all the bills is Critical Race Theory, and most mention the 1619 Project, a curriculum supplement from the New York Times that "places the consequences of slavery and the contributions of Black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country" (2019, para. 3). Conversely, advocates of critical race pedagogy and critical Whiteness studies suggest it is imperative that teachers disrupt the "single story curriculum" that continues to pervade social studies classrooms (Roy, 2018) and fight to make race and race history an indispensable part of the social studies curriculum (Howard & Navarro, 2016). Today's classrooms serve as battlefields for the latest culture war, as teachers are barraged from multiple flanks, despite their lack of preparation for such a battle.

Exacerbating the ubiquitous divide over teaching about race in our public schools is the fact that our teacher demographics do not match student demographics. U.S. elementary teachers are 79% White and 77% female (Merlin, 2002; Schaeffer, 2021), while our country's students are 47% White, 27% Hispanic, and 15% Black (de Brey et al., 2021). The teacher candidates at my university are overwhelmingly female, White, and from rural areas without a diverse population. The student body at my university is 88% White, 4.4% Hispanic/Latino, 1.6% African American, 1.3% Native

American, .7% Asian, and 4% multiracial. The county in which my university resides is 92% White and voted for Biden in the last election, though all of the surrounding counties in a 100+ mile radius voted for Trump.

In short, my students are essentially all-White, come from White K-12 schools, attend a university with White classmates and professors, and participate in field experiences and student teaching practicum in White schools. What's more, our university does not require teacher candidates to take a course in multicultural education and anything related.

In the Fall of 2021, entering my 16th year as a social studies teacher educator, I felt an intense obligation to do a better job of preparing my students, most of whom would have classrooms of their own within the next 12 months, for teaching positions that will require them to reconcile the vociferous polarity of the public's opinions on which social studies events and topics they should teach and how. I acknowledged that I would have to move beyond my typical focus on the state and national standards and cursory race-based lessons, to toward more race-forward teaching.

Theoretical Frames

Social studies teaching should be evolving and adapting to societal needs at the time (Shor, 1980). Brubaker (1977) in foundational conceptualizing of modern social studies education suggested that controversy in the classroom is not merely a goal, but is "clearly in our democratic heritage" (p. 204). Swalwell and Schweber (2016) asserted, "The inclusion of controversial issues in social studies curricula is widely considered to be an essential element of a quality democratic civic education" (p. 283). One cannot teach social studies effectively devoid of controversy (Hess, 2010; Nelson & Hahn, 2010).

To properly prepare my students for today's social studies classrooms, I would have to address controversial topics of critical race theory and critical race pedagogy explicitly. If I were to lead my White students in the discomforting process of scrutinizing their own privileges and advantages (Zembylas, 2018), I would have to engage with them in difficult conversations about race, as well as reflect critically on my own racial identity. The pedagogy of discomfort framework (Boler, 1999) would guide the examination of my students' and my values and beliefs, while recognizing that scrutiny of our white privilege and white hegemony might evoke shame (Crowley, 2019), guilt (Leonardo, 2004) or anger (Bhattacharya et al., 2019). The pedagogy of discomfort requires students and teachers to be open to questioning their perspectives and assumptions, intellectually and emotionally. At its core, the pedagogy of discomfort is a tool for self-examination, which made it a fit for my self-study.

Aims

The core problem I explore in this self-study is my aversion to and discomfort with teaching deeply about race and race-based controversies in my elementary social studies methods course. While I have routinely addressed race and its importance to social studies lessons in a cursory manner, I had not done so in a way that pushed myself and my students to examine our own racial identities and perspectives on addressing race in K-12 classrooms. Disparate philosophies on teaching race have always evoked controversies over social studies methods; however, current tensions between parents, legislators, and school leaders, heightened by social and mass media, are creating problems teachers have never before had to face. My students would need to be prepared to teach about race, not only because it is important to their students' and their own personal development, but because unlike their predecessors who typically avoided controversies (Cross & Price, 1996; Evans, 2011; Ho et al., 2014; Nelson & Ochoa, 1987; Oulton et al., 2004; Ross, 2001), today's teachers will not be able to.

Research Questions

This study sought to examine and reflect on my race-related choices and practices as the instructor of elementary social studies methods. I studied my thoughts and decisions so that my students and I might better understand our identities, as well as better prepare our lessons to represent anti-racist ideals. The following questions guided this study:

1. How do I negotiate my lack of knowledge of, and confidence in, teaching about CRT and critical race pedagogy?
2. How do I engage my students in pedagogies of discomfort around these difficult topics?

Methodology

Precipitating my study was my attempt at “making the tacit explicit” (Loughran, 2002, p. 34). I identified several problems with my teacher education practice, including my discomfort with and lack of knowledge about teaching about race, as well as the conspicuous absence of race-related course objectives in our teacher education program. My department generally, and I specifically, justified the safe, status quo approach to teacher education that avoided difficult conversations around race. Before I could begin the reflective self-study process, I first needed to begin to acknowledge, learn about, and frame the problem.

Situated in my context of practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), I treated the Fall 2021 semester as a case study to examine the students and me in our normal teacher and student roles for a methods course – me selecting materials, planning lessons, facilitating discussions, and commenting on student work in my K-8 social studies methods course; and the 15 students participating in class discussions and activities, and completing assignments – in order to gain an intensive, holistic perspective (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2011) of my practice from the inside (Samaras, 2011).

My study met the five predominant characteristics of LaBoskey’s (2004) definition of self-study methodology. I initiated the study of my practice and focused on my practice as a teacher educator, particularly on planning and teaching of race-based topics in social studies methods. My inquiry was personal and intended to help me improve my practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Unlike traditional research, which is designed to describe, explain, or predict, self-study can alter how teachers think and act (Cameron-Standerford et al., 2016). The process was highly interactive, as I met with colleagues as critical friends throughout the semester. Finally, I continually consulted literature on best practices for talking about race in teacher education, culturally responsive teaching, and whiteness. As part of my commitment to transparency, I shared with my students what I was reading and researching, along with what I was thinking about and reflecting on. My open, honest, and reflective process consisted of “questioning, discovering, framing, reframing, and revisiting” (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011, p. 847). Ultimately, by making the connections between teaching and research more visible, self-study can promote equity and justice (Edge, 2020, 2021), which was my ultimate goal of the study.

Methods

Prior to the Semester

Consistent with best practices for case study research using self-study methodology (Loughran, 2004), I included data from multiple sources. I began my self-study by reading several books, such as "White Fragility" by Robin DiAngelo, "How to be Antiracist" by Ibram Kendi, and "So You Want to Talk About Race" by Ijeoma Oluo, as well as websites like teachingwhilewhite.org and learningforjustice.org. I also listened to several podcasts and persistently consumed current events on the topic, particularly the debate over critical race theory in schools. Despite my self-attributed “wokeness” and previous attempts to “grapple honestly with the reality of race, racism, and racial politics in the United States,” I had not fully reflected on my own role in “perpetuating systems of oppression” (Richert et al., 2008, p. 648). These texts helped me to examine the “real, less-than conscious, and less comfortable cultural scripts that influence our practice” (Lea, 2004, p. 116). During this phase, I took notes and kept a reflection journal. My journals and notes provided a record of my intention to challenge my thinking and teaching through the “delicate and often difficult process of deconstruction” (Bergh, 2020, p. 511).

Additionally, I discussed race and whiteness along with current controversies related to curriculum, as well as my plans for implementing these topics in my methods course with four different colleagues, three females and one male, all White. Though I asked each of them to meet with me to offer feedback on my plans for the course and my self-study, I did not ask them to serve as critical friends officially. My decision not to formalize their critical friend roles was based on a couple of factors. First, my colleagues, like seemingly everyone in academia, were overstretched. Most had their own research projects underway, and I felt that if I asked them to join my study, they might say no. Second, I knew I would be traveling multiple days with two of my colleagues over the semester and would have ample opportunities to discuss my questions and ponderings with them extempore.

Prior to the start of the semester, I had intentional conversations with each of my four colleagues, as well as numerous other unscheduled conversations. I recorded notes after each of the scheduled meetings and some of the informal conversations.

Throughout the Semester

As a foundational component of self-study, collegial dialogue allows researchers to examine and uncover that which they would not be able to if working alone (Baskerville & Goldblatt, 2009; Loughran & Brubaker, 2015). Trust is essential to critical friendships (Schuck & Segal, 2002; Samaras, 2011). Self-studies nearly always contain some level of vulnerability of the researcher and critical friends, but for my study, it was particularly essential that I have critical friends I could trust. As a White professor discussing race with White colleagues as my critical friends, I needed critical friends to help me reframe my teaching, to challenge me, not merely help me to rationalize my existing practice (Loughran, 2002). Due to my discomfort with being vulnerable, coupled with my decision not to formalize the critical friend arrangements, I limited my conversations during the semester to two colleagues. Particularly, these colleagues felt comfortable asking me difficult questions and challenging me. I spent countless hours traveling with two female colleagues, with whom I discussed my self-study ten times explicitly, of which I recorded notes afterward, in an attempt to capture our comments and their advice.

Additionally, I collected data from my teaching throughout the semester. Most weeks in class I had the students read and discuss articles, some of which were scholarly, while others pertained to current events. I documented their discussions as best I could. Weekly, students were required to submit a reflection on what from class had them pondering most. Often their reflections related to our discussions of race, so I included those in my data set. I also included student assignments when issues of race were discussed. Furthermore, a question from their final exam was a race-related case study they had to analyze and recommend solutions. I also incorporated comments from students' anonymous end-of-course evaluations when they addressed my teaching about race.

After the Semester

Following the semester, I emailed eight students with whom I felt I had built trust during the semester asking if they were interested in a Zoom conversation about my self-study, and four replied with their willingness to participate. After explaining that I was asking them to serve as critical friends and then receiving their consent, I conducted 20-40 minute individual informal interviews with each of the four students, during which I asked them to share their experiences with my lessons on CRT and critical race pedagogy, and to give feedback on my teaching. I recorded each of the Zoom conversations.

Data Analysis

The data for this self-study fell into four categories: (1) my notes on learning more about CRT and critical race pedagogy through my research, (2) student work from my elementary social studies methods course, (3) notes from my conversations with critical friends, before and throughout the semester, and (4) transcripts from the Zoom interviews with my students.

It is important to note that much of the data consisted of my written recollections of conversations rather than actual transcripts. Accordingly, I recognize the threats to reliability and validity this poses, particularly my confirmation and desirability biases (Kahneman & Tversky, 1977). While attribution errors are inevitable, my initial aim of this study was to increase my knowledge of, and skills and confidence in, teaching about CRT and critical race pedagogy. I set out with an intentionally non-defensive heuristic.

I first analyzed data from before the semester started, which included my journal, my notes from the four scheduled meetings with critical friends, and notes from informal conversations. Next, I analyzed the data from during and after the semester collectively. In both cases, I created initial *in vivo* codes from the data sets and then combined codes into broader categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Finally, I combined the categories into broader conceptual themes (Charmaz, 2006). The first data set from prior to the semester yielded one theme, 'Embracing Discomfort'. The second data, which included student work, notes from critical friend conversations, and transcripts from student interviews, revealed three themes related to my research questions: 'Student Disinclination', 'Conservative Students', and 'Tokenism'.

Outcomes

Embracing Discomfort

Before the semester started, I was both excited and apprehensive about tackling race in my social studies methods course. One of my course objectives was “Understand how race, gender, class, and sexual orientation shape students’ identities and influence their perceptions of schools and approaches to learning.” Despite that clear course objective, I had to acknowledge that I had been doing a rather anemic job of teaching it. I had always prided myself on teaching my students to include instruction and materials representing multiple perspectives in their lesson plans, even being accused in my course evaluations over the years of pushing a liberal agenda and America-bashing. Yet, I had never explicitly helped my students to see how their orientation and identities influenced their perceptions of schools and learning.

The hysteria surrounding critical race theory and subsequent policy-making compelled me to more purposefully and intentionally address race in my classroom. In conversations with a colleague prior to the semester, they asked, “Has anyone ever complained that you haven’t done enough teaching about race in your class?” To which I replied, “No. never.” They then asked, “What do you think will happen if you ‘go all in’ on teaching about race?” Clearly, the safe thing would be to continue teaching about race like I had done in the past, yet I could not allow myself to evade the difficult work of examining my whiteness and prompting my students to do so as well.

Nonetheless, I was scared. But why? I was a tenured full professor. Could I get fired? Historically, Michigan has been a strong union state, but workers’ rights have been declining over the past decade, and recently several professors in Michigan have been fired over race-related incidents in their classrooms. And nationally, there has been a burgeoning pushback against professors and CRT. In February 2022, Texas Lieutenant Governor Dan Patrick vowed to eliminate tenure for any professor teaching CRT: "The law will change to say that teaching critical race theory is prima facie evidence for good cause for tenure revocation" (Rabb, 2022, para 12).

I had written in my journal, “Is this worth the potential fallout?”, but I was not really worried about being fired, though I was feeling vulnerable in leading a pedagogy of discomfort with my students around race. Vulnerability, as both an emotional and cognitive construct (Kelchtermans, 1996), stems from unpredictability and the possibility of failing (Bullough, 2005). As a White, male, middle-aged professor with minimal training in this area, coupled with my decision to share freely, the process would be unpredictable, and there was a realistic chance that I would fail. I asked to one critical friend, “What if I ‘F’ this up and get horrible evaluations?” Almost certainly, I would say something that would offend someone, and I would face questions to which I did not have a good answer. Used to exhibiting expert power (French et al., 1959), I lacked expertise and confidence. Intellectually it seemed absurd that I would have to muster the courage to teach à la Palmer (1998), but for the first time in many years, I was genuinely nervous. My colleagues, however, were overwhelmingly positive and supportive, which vitalized me to continue.

Student Disinclination

At the onset, it was clear that the majority of my students had not heard of critical race theory. In their reflection journals following a discussion on some articles I had my students read on the first day of the semester, one student wrote: “Critical Race Theory has been around since the '80s, and yet I had never heard of it directly. How has a theory been around for forty years and it is just now becoming more well-known and controversial?!”

Despite my fears of bringing up critical race theory in class, the conversations went much better than I had expected, with students embracing my acknowledgment that I am not an expert on the subject. One student wrote in their weekly reflection journal:

> *As a teacher, I want my class to be able to have conversations like what we experienced. One method that we used in class on Monday and have been talking about in other classes is the idea of hands down. The hands-down approach to conversation is an effort to eliminate the idea that the teacher is all-knowing. The first step is for the teacher to get on the same level as their students which was demonstrated. A hands-down conversation allows for "productive disagreement and sharing of honest ideas" (Thompson, 2020), which is exactly how our class conversation went.*

While planning for each week's class I debated with myself about how much time to spend on race. It seemed that every time I would read in a student's reflection about how I was "overdoing the race stuff," I would read something in another student's reflection that suggested they still were not showing the level of understanding or making the connections I was hoping they would. Asking my critical friends for advice was helpful, as they encouraged me not to feel guilty about forgoing other lessons that had been standard in previous interactions of the course. One colleague remarked, "They get all that other basic methods stuff in other courses, but they aren't going to get lessons on teaching about race in any other course."

Conversations with my critical friends also uncovered that I was being unrealistic in thinking my students would be as excited about the topic as I was. I had assumed they would "really get into it," but many were annoyed by my passion and approach. For example, one student in their end-of-course comments wrote, "At times Dr. Anderson would get preachy, especially with the CRT stuff. I get that it's important, but I don't think we needed to talk about it every week." Another student wrote, "I can tell that Dr. Anderson believes strongly that we need to think about race when planning lessons, but maybe not in every lesson." I tend to take student comments seriously, perhaps too much so; however, Brubaker (1977) suggested I view those positively: "Students are encouraged to disagree with each other and with the teacher, but the highest compliment they can pay their teacher is that he acted in behalf of his professed beliefs" (p. 204).

Conservative Students

Not unexpectedly, I had at least two students who expressed right-leaning perspectives. Of note, however, they only expressed their perspectives in anonymous formats. Both because I wanted to increase the face validity of their responses and because I wanted to decrease students' discomfort in sharing personal thoughts on such a contentious topic, I asked students to complete a few anonymous questionnaires throughout the semester. For example, when asked to define white fragility before I gave them some articles to read, one student responded, "A made-up concept propagated by people like Robin DiAngelo." Another student wrote:

> *Just don't perpetuate this whole "white guilt" narrative because it's harmful to white people who had nothing to do with slavery, the trail of tears, or WW2 anti-semitism. I shouldn't feel guilty because other white people throughout history were trash human beings.*

The fact that students shared these thoughts anonymously but not during class discussions suggests a strong social desirability bias (Gordon, 1987) or fear of reprisal from me. These two students did not write anything remotely similar in their public discussion posts, nor did they say anything of the sort in class.

Admittedly, I was very curious about which of my students wrote those statements and speculated with a colleague, who was as curious as I was. I felt a little guilty and unprofessional for trying to guess who the students were, but I justified my conjecture as part of my knowledge-seeking process and ultimately my desire to help them to become more race-conscious in their thinking and teaching.

Having several conservative family members and countless conservative acquaintances, I was not surprised by the two students, but I was saddened. I told naively a colleague, "You'd think after being in college for four years they wouldn't think this way." Nonetheless, these students motivated me to explain more about how understanding our nation's past actions impact life today, not as a means of fostering guilt but in order to advocate for policies that help historically disenfranchised groups.

Tokenism

While typically the vast majority of my students are White and female, the semester of this study, and for the first time in years, I had two students of color – one African American female and one Indian American female. I was both excited and nervous, and it turns out, both emotions were valid. The other classmates and I certainly had a richer learning experience as a result of the perspectives they brought. My nervousness was justifiable as well, since I made a couple of mistakes, from which I learned valuable lessons for my future teaching.

For example, one day in class, a student asked for help creating an assessment for a standard about cultural practices. In my explanation of how she might have students connect rituals from their culture to a related ritual from another culture, I described how most cultures have coming-of-age rituals and provided examples such as Jewish Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, as well as Hispanic Quinceañeras. As I looked up at my student who was Indian-American, I panicked. Should I ask her about coming-of-age rituals in Indian culture? Would I be honoring her and respecting her culture by asking? Or, would I be putting her on the spot, making her uncomfortable? I chose not to ask and instead moved on quickly. After telling one colleague about this incident, she suggested the next time I teach this lesson to ask any minority students ahead of time if they would be interested in sharing. I liked the idea, but anxiously wrote in my journal, "That's a lot of pressure – to remember, to do so deftly."

I mishandled another incident, this time not by avoiding the question altogether, but rather by exerting unintended pressure on students to share their results from McIntosh's (1995) White privilege checklist. After giving the students time in class to complete the 20-question checklist, I asked, "How many of you had 16 or more? How many of you had 10-15? How many of you had fewer than 10?" After discussing these incidents with two of my colleagues, they helped me understand what I should have done. Their advice was embarrassingly simple and respectful, yet it did not come to me in the moment. During the conversation on rituals, I should have asked, "Does anyone have an example of a coming-of-age ritual from your culture or another culture that you'd like to share?" Likewise, after having my students take the White privilege checklist, I simply should have asked, "Does anyone want to share or discuss their results?"

Lensmire et al. (2013) warned that "demands for confession end up undermining rich conversations about race and racism, as well as forestalling antiracist action" (p. 426). My eagerness to get my students talking about these important issues may have resulted in the opposite effect from what I intended. The four students with whom I had critical friends conversations over Zoom after the semester included one student of color. I asked each of them if they remembered either of those incidents. Only one did, a White girl who said she remembered feeling bad for the two students of color during the White privilege conversation. She said, "It felt like you were calling out Tasha (pseudonym) because she's previously talked about how different it is for her at Northern." When I shared with her what I learned from my colleagues and would do next time, she expressed approval.

Discussion

Not unlike other White teacher educators (Andrews et al., 2019; Galman et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2017), I had evaded teaching my methods course in a race-intentional or anti-racist manner. My race evasiveness (Jupp et al. 2019) was particularly problematic since "teacher education has been positioned as a potential space to disrupt racism in schools and broader society" (Chang-Bacon, 2022, p. 8). What's more, teachers entering the profession are often "underprepared to address the racism they will encounter in classrooms and school curricula," and "teachers may be more likely to perpetuate inequities than disrupt them" (p. 8).

Through this self-study, I sought to take purposeful and earnest steps toward more race-intentional practices in my elementary social studies methods course. First, however, I needed to reckon with why had avoided doing so in the past. At risk of making excuses rather than constructing explanations, I learned that White teachers exhibit race-evasive teaching for a variety of reasons, including personal discomfort and pressure to cover material (Chang-Bacon, 2022).

I also learned that despite my good intentions alone, I have a lot to learn about the specific actions I should take to make my classroom more anti-racist. Britzman (2012) asserted that much of learning how to teach is learning what not to do rather than what to do; however, I am not convinced that if I continued to teach in a race-evasive manner my students would register my actions as what not to do. My students were largely clueless about topics like Critical Race Theory and White privilege, as well as social studies curriculum controversies such as those surrounding the 1619 Project. They were comfortable with not being challenged on racial issues, which is problematic because racialized silence perpetuates White privilege (Mazzei, 2011).

Through this self-study, I have come to accept that though I felt I was doing my part nobly to prepare anti-racist teachers, I merely engaged my students in surface-level explorations of race such as discussing bias and prejudice, but I avoided exploring issues like structural racism and the role of Whites in perpetuating racism by inaction (Bell, 2002).

Without collaborative dialogue with critical friends, I would not have processed the dissonant tensions involved or formed new perspectives and goals from my teaching experiences (Bodone et al., 2004; Cameron-Standerford et al., 2016). Moving forward, I am going to continue asking colleagues for discourse through which to inform and challenge me. Though not vulnerable in the sense of my position, power, and privilege, I own up to my inefficacy and am committed to doing better. I recognize that effective anti-racist teaching requires specific skills and actions that can and should be learned.

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Building the Boat, Growing the Tree

Exploring the Development of Self-study Analytic Methods

Megumi Nishida & Deborah Tidwell

Metaphor | Narrative | Retrospective Analysis | Haiku | Literary Arts-based Methods

The purpose of this retrospective self-study was to investigate why and how my analytic methods in self-study have developed and transformed over time (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2017; Tidwell & Edwards, 2020). With a support of a critical friend, I aimed to identify how the development of data analytic methods enhanced my understanding of my professional learning experiences, through these two questions: How did the data analysis methods in my self-study research develop over time? and, How does this development inform the transformation of my practice? My first attempt at analysis (self-study #1) focused solely on the narrative data and coding. My next two self-studies (self-study #2, and #3) were analyzed through metaphor. My fourth self-study used Haiku to analyze the narrative data, examining my teaching of Japanese students. Based on our retrospective analysis, we observed the following: the more experiences I gained professionally, the more complex my data analysis became in making sense of my professional learning, and arts-based methods expanded the boundary of my analyses. Crafting Haiku served as a culturally respectful way to represent my professional learning.

Introduction

> *Standing at the thresholds of every door of my new experience, I used to just open them and entered inside without hesitation. I was never afraid of a change. In another word, I was naïve. However, when I opened the door of early childhood education in Iceland, I stumbled at the threshold. I hit my head hard. I didn't know how to stand up again until I encountered self-study. (Meg's journal, 01/08/2022)*

I (Meg) am a Japanese doctoral student and preschool educator in Iceland. The first visible threshold of my professional life experience was when the education-related cultural differences between Japan and Iceland confused me in my first year of working at an Icelandic preschool in October 2014. It initiated my self-study of practice as my doctoral project.

Exploring what was happening in my professional life, I began with a traditional data analysis method of coding the narrative of my reflective journal. Narrative has always been a part of my data, but it took me some time to understand that I needed creativity and inventiveness in my research process for making a better meaning of my own practice in a different cultural context (Pithouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2020; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). I realized that a simple

analytic method did not express my deeper understanding of my professional learning experiences to accommodate my "so what?" in my practices. Thus, I began to use more creative methods to illuminate a characteristic of each study with different methods. However, my "so what" had to be investigated to capture a whole picture of my self-study to go beyond my personal challenge (Zeichner, 2007). I was curious about exploring why and how my methods had to be evolved (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015).

To begin my investigation, I asked Deb to become my critical friend in the summer of 2021. Deb often includes arts-based or other unique methods. She has also explored the transformation of her own self-study over time (Tidwell & Edwards, 2020). I believed that she would give me great inspiration through collaborative dialogue. Her participation in my inquiry motivated me to put my focus on the methodological aspects of my four self-studies and to explore why and how my self-study methods developed. In this study, the first person *I* refers to Meg, and *we* refer to Meg's and Deb's mutual understanding through collaborative analysis.

The purpose of this retrospective self-study was to investigate why and how my analytic methods in self-study have developed and transformed over time (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2017; Tidwell & Edwards, 2020). I aimed to identify how the development of data analytic methods enhanced my understanding of my professional learning experiences, through these two questions: *How did the data analysis methods in my self-study research develop over time?* and, *How does this development inform the transformation of my practice?*

Context of the study

As a Japanese immigrant educator working in the Icelandic education system, my self-study opportunities have been diverse. Since my current full-time position is as an early childhood educator at an Icelandic preschool, my main self-study focuses on my practice there. However, my cultural hybridity between Japan and Iceland began to influence my research interest. As a part of my doctoral studies in Iceland, I started an international research collaboration with teacher educators and student teachers who study inclusive education at Moshiriya Teachers' Training College (pseudonym) in Japan. I visited their college in 2016 and 2019. Teaching Japanese student teachers has been a new experience for me. Self-study helped me bridge different teaching fields to make sense of my practice as a hybrid educator between Japan and Iceland.

From 2014 through 2021, I have been involved in various self-studies of my practice. For this study, I choose four major self-studies which were shared publicly through presentation or publication. My data analytic methods transformed over time to keep exploring my "so what" in practice. The first self-study incorporated coding narratives. In my second and third self-studies, I included metaphors in my methods as a literary arts-based approach. The fourth self-study employed Haiku as my pedagogical approach and for data analysis. While looking at all these self-study research experiences as the focus of my doctoral dissertation, I began to wonder about the transformation of my methods to more arts-based forms.

Literature Review

As there is no one correct answer to self-study (Loughran, 2004), the methodological strategy should not be limited. It has been a natural phenomenon for me that my self-study methods keep transforming "by taking them into a new context and using them in ways that often depart from the traditional" (Tidwell et al., 2009, p. xiii). Arts-based methods, especially literary arts such as metaphors and poems enabled me to present education-related stories to uncover hidden meanings from data (Samaras, 2011).

Metaphors are always around us, and we naturally use them to express our thoughts and actions (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Lakoff and Johnson described metaphors as conceptual in nature, where "metaphors we use determine a great deal about how we live our lives" (p. 244). When metaphors emerge from education-related life stories, they capture the essence of teaching which provides a new look at practice (Bullough, 1994; East, 2009). These metaphors could be powerfully incorporated into narrative stories and give an impact on other researchers. Dyson (2007) explained that the power of metaphor "bring(s) new things into consciousness leading to initially unperceived understandings and knowledge," arguing metaphors bring us as humans to a new stage of "consciousness and perception as the various parts of a journey story unravel, are investigated and pondered" (p. 41).

When researchers use metaphors, they try to shed light on invisible or intangible feelings they experience (East, 2009; Knowles, 1994). Metaphors support researchers to verbalize their experiences. For example, a novice teacher expressed her feeling of vulnerability with a rolling coaster ride metaphor (Knowles, 1994). East (2009) explored the transformation of her metaphors in eight years of her practice. Her metaphors enabled her to capture the development of her practice and a way of thinking. For novice teachers, teaching could be unstable, it is always having highs and lows. Using metaphors enables novice teachers to stand at the threshold to reflect on their own practice, to develop a better understanding of their teaching experiences (Nishida, 2021).

Similar to metaphors, poems allow us to explore our hidden emotions and develop our professional knowledge. Pithouse-Morgan (2021) combined vignettes, poetry, and dialogue for the purpose of inquiring about her professional learning moments. She discovered the benefits of using poems for professional learning. Samaras (2011) argued that Japanese Haiku summarizes our thoughts in a poetic manner. For me as a Japanese native, Haiku is a culturally responsive method to express my thoughts and experiences in my mother tongue (Nishida, 2022). Beginning in Japanese elementary school, Haiku has often been integrated into my life not only as a part of the school curriculum but also to inspire me to frame my inner voice through 5-7-5 syllables. Samaras (2011) emphasized that Haiku is a way for researchers "to be concise, parsimonious, and articulate in a very short space" (p. 122). Haiku enabled me to discover the power of poetry. Therefore, using Haiku in my fourth self-study made sense to me culturally and experientially.

Methods

While reflecting on my four self-studies during my doctoral studies between 2014 to 2021, I had various questions. I needed to use different strategies to answer my questions. It seemed to be a natural procedure for me to employ respective methods to answer every "so what".

Retrospective analysis (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2017) was necessary when comparing present and past data to investigate the development of my analytic methods. According to Dalmau and Guðjónsdóttir, a retrospective self-study uses existing data that have been collected over time. I used narrative across all four self-studies that were first developed as short stories based on journaling. My first attempt at analysis (self-study #1) focused solely on the narrative data and coding, but it provided a fundamental source to initiate other self-studies related to my practice at the Icelandic preschool. My next two self-studies (self-study #2, and #3) were analyzed through metaphor. Self-study #3 was inspired by self-study #2's metaphoric story, but it has developed into a visual metaphor. My fourth self-study (self-study #4) employed Haiku as my post-metaphor literary arts-based method. Haiku took multiple roles in self-study #4 as my culturally responsive pedagogical approach to teaching Japanese students, analyzing the narrative data, and examining my teaching.

Initially, narrative stories were written to underpin the meanings of metaphors and Haiku. Creating a matrix of data from the first four studies, I began the retrospective analysis by using the previous data/results. Deb kept asking me provocative questions to help me explore my uncovered intention of why my methods to answer my questions transformed over time. Deb's inquiry also clarified the trustworthiness of the study through developing our dialogue (Samaras, 2011). Our collaborative analysis enabled us (myself and my critical friend) to see an initial level in the development of my analytic method into a poetic form of a "way of knowing" (Edge & Olan, 2021, p. 3). We then engaged in a more in-depth analysis of my self-studies by examining (through reading and rereading, discussion, and shared meaning-making) the short stories, the metaphors, and the Haiku to better understand my development of methods used over time.

Outcomes

Based on our retrospective analysis, we observed how my analytic methods developed over time in these four self-studies. The more experiences I gained professionally, the more complex my data analysis became in making sense of my professional learning. In this section, a metaphor of threshold bridges my exploration of the transformation of analytic methods. All proper nouns are pseudonyms.

Self-study #1 (2015): Coding Data

My Japanese teaching habit of controlling children hindered my practice at an Icelandic preschool. Icelandic early childhood education respects children's freedom in play. I knew it in theory but could not deliver my theoretical understanding in my practice. In October 2014, I experienced a professional identity crisis. It was as though I stumbled at the threshold of the new door of my professional challenge. I encountered the self-study methodology through my doctoral supervisor. However, entering the inside of the self-study world was not smooth. My research experience has been limited to my master's project by using traditional qualitative methods such as interviewing and participant observation. Without knowing what to do, I was stuck at the threshold. My data focus became my continuous post-teaching writing in my teaching journal.

A year later, I began editing stories from my journal. My analytic method focused on a color-coding process of my journal between 2014 to 2015. At the beginning of my professional identity crisis, I wrote in my journal about my reflection on the importance of respecting my Japanese cultural resources. After writing ten short stories reflecting each of the ten themes that emerged from my data coding, I found the core theme to be Japanese cultural resources. These ten short stories became valuable data sources for further self-studies of my practice. Yet, the short stories seemed insufficient in capturing the complexity of my professional experiences. I did not see a clear connection between my short stories and the more complex dynamics within my practice. I needed a different method beyond narratives to express the complex meaning of my work and thoughts. I spent a few more years crossing the threshold to enter the self-study world.

Self-study #2 (2018-2019): Finding metaphor

My ten short stories helped me identify what was happening, but I wanted to capture a more in-depth meaning of my practice. Around that time, I was struggling with my self-contradiction while teaching a university course. I encouraged students' creativity, using arts-based assignments, but I felt helpless and inadequate when it came to assessing them. The AERA conference in 2018 was my first major threshold into the self-study world. Many unique self-study methods were presented. The most significant learning from listening to other self-studies was that I also should become creative to answer my "so what" questions. I knew that my resources could be key to improving my practice, but I was still stuck at the threshold. I was not sure how I could be creative. Using my cultural resources, I began to seek alternative ways to explicate my professional learning.

A few weeks after my second participation in AERA in 2019, I was at Moshiriya College in Japan for my second research visit. I often walked along the river which is connected to the Pacific Ocean. Local fishermen docked their small boats by the riverbank. My walk there reminded me of the view of the sea from my preschool in Iceland. Something sparked. When I became aware of the common geographical and cultural resources between Japan and Iceland, an inspiration of using metaphors in my self-study emerged. I discovered that I was the sailor of the boat, and my boat was built with my resources. I learned that metaphors enabled me to think about and to reflect better on my understanding of my professional learning. The power of metaphors struck me. Through this metaphoric perspective, I was able to open a new door, and jumped over the threshold to go inside my unfamiliar form of analysis.

Self-study #3 (2020): Visual Metaphor

Having realized the power of metaphors, I continued to explore my meaning-making process through metaphors. Creating narrative stories with metaphors enabled me to express my professional learning experiences. I was excited about my new strategy. I used metaphors as a key to open the door to discovering a new meaning of my practice at an Icelandic preschool, but the complexity of my self-studies has challenged me. My view has become more inclusive of different experiences outside of my working context.

When I needed to explain my comprehension of self-study as a doctoral project to the public, I was stuck at a new threshold. Until then, I simply enjoyed my self-studies with metaphors, but my attention was not on the connection across all four as a holistic piece; I was not making connections across the different methods in my self-studies. This created a new threshold and I seemed stuck at the door; I could not enter.

Walking daily in Iceland is my opportunity to reflect on my practice. Things I see during the walk prompt my reflection. One autumn afternoon, during a walk a metaphoric image of a tree sparked my connections between the visual representation of a tree and my practice. At home, I drew a doodle of the tree to begin with while thinking about the children at my preschool. They never criticize the quality of my drawing. Their criticism raises when I am not responsive to their interest. While I draw pictures with children, I ask children what they can imagine in the picture. In the end, there is a story we create collaboratively. Those stories may not make any sense to adults, but for children, the process of creating a story together is important. Like my story drawing with children, the meaning within the tree drawing was what became important. Prompted by the tree picture, my reflection was going deeper and deeper. I kept adding small details and stories to my drawing. Notes were also taken at the same time.

In the tree picture, the roots represent concepts, and they are hidden under the soil of theory. Tree branches are small self-studies with different methods. Fruits are my new findings and knowledge. Sometimes fruits may be too sour to eat, but birds of critical friends are always willing to examine the taste of the tree fruits and show their support in waiting until fruits get ripe enough to share with everyone.

The story of my self-study tree has developed through my discussion with critical friends who would help me develop my reflection. In my journal in November 2020, I wrote “my self-study is organic as a tree…It (self-study) will be passed down to posterity.” My imagination of the self-study tree kept growing to represent my doctoral project about the self-study of my becoming a hybrid educator. I learned that the tree drawing as a visual metaphor made my reflection visible to discover my learning and challenges.

Self-study #4 (2021): Haiku

Since I opened the door of the world of using literary arts in my self-study, my confidence in creativity grew much more. Without stumbling, I began crossing thresholds to enter the world of new methodological experiences. The influence of my encounter with creative methods began to be visible in my practice, but it took me some years to acknowledge its influence on my self-study.

During my research visit to Moshiriya College in 2019, I was asked to teach self-study to Japanese student teachers. My concern was how I could introduce self-study in a 90-minute workshop. In my first teaching experience there in 2016, my Icelandic active learning approach intimidated student teachers who were not familiar with student-centered (rather than teacher-directed) teaching. While I was trying to introduce a new approach for their learning, I realized I had not included respect for their teacher-directed learning culture. From this experience, I knew that my teaching in Japan, especially introducing self-study, had to be carefully planned. Considering our cultural resources, I decided to use Japanese Haiku for my teaching about critical reflection to motivate Japanese students’ first step toward their self-study experience.

Haiku’s role was diverse in my teaching. Reflecting on my teaching later, I realized that Haiku could also be my strategy for expressing and analyzing my learning. As Japanese, Haiku is a great cultural resource that we take for granted. Using Haiku in my teaching and research allowed me to stand at the threshold to explore my practice as a hybrid educator. Once I crossed the threshold, there was a hidden door of poetic inquiry. By creating my own Haiku to reflect my professional learning, my understanding of the importance of culturally responsive teaching has grown.

Discussion

Through our retrospective analysis, I realized that the improvement of my practice over time bridges my four self-studies. As the methods used within my self-studies changes, so did my pedagogical approaches. But it is not a cause-effect dynamic. The give-and-take between my change in method and my change in pedagogy seemed to influence each other. This method- and pedagogy-change dynamic reflected my growth as a self-study researcher over time. In this section, I explore each self-study in depth to make better meanings with my critical friend of the connection between the transformation of my methods and my pedagogy.

Between self-study #1 and #2, I needed three years to move forward. I read self-study literature and early childhood theories, but they did not ring a bell for me. I felt my practice at preschool was getting better, but the focus seemed to

be more on taking care of the children rather than improving my actual teaching practice. I felt like I was spending my days trying to get by. Upon retrospective analysis, I began to see that this time with the children in the classroom was necessary for me to accumulate experiences, and to get a sense of the dynamics of the children and the preschool classroom. I was struggling, but journaling kept me motivated as I collected my thoughts and experiences. One of the accumulations over time was the image of the sea.

Until the view of the boat and sea sparked my imagination, I did not appreciate the value of metaphor as a method, as I used metaphors often in my thinking and talking (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Nishida, 2021). My hybrid cultural resources between Japan and Iceland allowed me to make a connection and empowered me to become more creative in my teaching at an Icelandic preschool. When I experienced the power of metaphor through writing, my teaching at preschool became more responsive to children's interests rather than pushing them with my own teacher-centered plan. I came to realize my approach may have ignored children's daily input and growth. Finding myself struggling in my teaching, I learned how to stop at the threshold with my own agency by writing a story. I put my struggles in metaphors and tried to analyze what was happening around me and how to solve them. My new habit of understanding my practice through metaphors opened a new door to the visual metaphor in my self-study #3.

Before I came across the idea of a visual metaphor to express my thinking and understanding, I was still looking at my self-studies as different pieces of my work, such as my self-study #1 and #2. My self-study #3 does not seem to be directly connected to my practice, but my experience in drawing with children for storytelling enabled me to use visuals as metaphors in my own research. The visual metaphor of the tree enabled me to tell a story of my practice. I began by labeling part of the tree as representative of aspects of my teaching practice and self-study research. The individual elements within the tree became a larger visual of the complexity of my practice. This visual lent itself to the development of a story of practice reflecting the nature and relationship of those elements to my professional work. I feel the Icelandic children set me free from my old self. Working with them in a preschool setting helped me transform my pedagogy and my self-study methods of research.

My use of Haiku was my challenge to the post-metaphoric literary arts-based method of poetic inquiry to my students and myself. Through my teaching with Japanese students, I learned that students could become more critical to their own learning if they could take a familiar approach such as Haiku. I found the culturally responsive nature of Haiku not only helped me teach and understand Japanese students' learning about critical reflection but also to better express my understanding of my practice in a new teaching context outside of Iceland. I re-discovered that mutual respect is the ultimate keyword of my teaching.

Conclusion

As Hamilton and Pinnegar (2015) assert that a good self-study "evolves, reforms, and resharpens as the study progresses" (p. 187), my self-study methods keep evolving. Arts-based methods expanded the boundary of my analyses. Through short stories, the complexity of my experiences and thoughts became visible as metaphors (East, 2009; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). Metaphors provided a forum to expand my thinking to visual metaphors that provided a rich context for thinking about the complexity of my practice. The visual metaphor allowed me to connect across my self-studies in thinking about and visually representing my practice. As the fourth self-study, it provided a broader examination of my practice that enabled me to think more deeply about how elements of my work are connected and how I engage with those elements. My evolving use of methods across my self-studies addressed the Zeichner Paradox (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015) calling for the need for self-study to show the expansion of personally gained knowledge to the larger research community. Through my interest in expanding my knowledge about practice, and my curiosity in exploring different methods in self-study, my change of methods over time showed my development of flexibility, creativity, and collaboration (with critical friends). This is not just a change in my thinking about my practice over time, but rather this is a change in my process for study. This process requires a thoughtful selection of method choices. It is the willingness to be flexible and creative in that thoughtful approach that allows the research design to evolve and change to better answer evolving research questions. This can be in the overall method used, the data choice, and/or the analysis process used with that data. This study proposes that other self-study researchers be thoughtfully creative in their data analytic methods to help further their understanding of their professional learning experiences.

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Articulating a Pedagogy of Discussion

Re-Imagining Our Discussion Practice in Mathematics Methods

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Discussion | Mathematics Methods | Scaffolding | Relational Practice

Research in mathematics education has focused on the use of discussion to teach mathematics with less attention to teacher educators' discussion practice in the context of teaching about teaching. However, practices used to discuss mathematical ideas do not necessarily transfer to discussions of pedagogical ideas where sociopedagogical norms may differ from sociomathematical norms. Discussion, a core practice in teaching, focuses on student development of ideas. Calls for research on development of teacher educators' practices motivated our desire to understand teacher educators' development of discussion practices. As mathematics teacher educators who focus on the pedagogical preparation of mathematics teachers, we developed a description of our pedagogy of discussion by analyzing our own discussion practices in mathematics methods courses. Within self-study methodology, we used three qualitative analytic methods (analytical dialogues, evidentiary maps, and descriptive coding) to analyze evidence of pedagogy of discussion practice drawn from our experiences and associated artifacts of teaching gathered during fall 2020. Through this study, we developed consciousness of characteristics of whole-class scaffolding which revealed our pedagogy of discussion practice as anticipating and interpreting prospective teachers' understanding, responding to current understanding, and supporting movement toward independence through layering of activities.

Introduction

Discussion, a core teaching practice (Grossman & Dean, 2019), focuses on student development of ideas. Research in mathematics education has focused on the use of discussion to teach mathematics (Smith & Stein, 2011; Walshaw & Anthony, 2008), with less attention to teacher educators' discussion practice in the context of teaching about teaching (Loughran, 2006; Schuck & Brandenburg, 2020). However, practices used to discuss mathematical ideas do not necessarily transfer to discussions of pedagogical ideas (Steele, 2005) where sociopedagogical norms (Dick et al., 2018) may differ from sociomathematical norms (Yackel & Cobb, 1996). Calls for research on development of teacher educators' practices (Krainer et al., 2021; Schuck & Brandenburg, 2020; Vanassche & Berry, 2020) motivated our desire to understand teacher educators' development of discussion practices. As mathematics teacher educators (MTEs) focused on the pedagogical preparation of mathematics teachers, we uncover our pedagogy of discussion through exploration of our own discussion practices in mathematics methods courses. We unpack research that revealed our pedagogy of discussion about teaching with prospective teachers (PTs), allowing us to identify areas for growth in our discussion practices and articulate a pedagogy for discussion practice useful to the broader MTE community.

Context

We are white critical friends (Schuck & Russell, 2005) from three different U. S. universities who draw from constructivist teaching epistemology (Steffe & D'Ambrosio, 1995). We apply a perspective of relational teacher education (Kitchen, 2005) in mathematics methods courses as we collaboratively examine our practices to improve them and contribute to literature on mathematics teacher educator practice. Authors of this paper teach mathematics methods with this common theoretical perspective yet are situated in different institutional contexts. Signe teaches in an elementary teacher certification program at a research-intensive university, Alyson teaches secondary PTs at a research-focused university, and Susan teaches elementary PTs at a teaching-focused university.

The authors draw from constructivist epistemology in their pedagogy (Steffe & D'Ambrosio, 1995) of teaching about teaching. Our common view of learning about teaching includes creating and using models of PTs' knowledge of mathematics teaching to inform our instructional decisions, such as the development of discussion questions. We position PTs as corroborators for knowledge about mathematics teaching and its development. Our reliance on PTs requires that we build models of our practice and identify any "living contradictions" (Whitehead, 1989, p. 41) between our pedagogy and evidence of our practice. Although our institutional contexts vary, we each gathered and collaboratively analyzed our data to become conscious of our pedagogy of discussion practice in mathematics methods courses.

Our teaching practices are undergirded by a relational teacher education perspective (Kitchen, 2005) which implies we take up PTs' ideas and experiences and are receptive "to growing in relation" (Kitchen, 2005, p. 18) with our PTs. Regarding pedagogy of discussion, our perspective means we create space to learn about and use models of PTs' thinking to plan discussions that support their understanding of the significance of discussion topics (Dillon, 1994) as related to their own teaching practices.

Following Loughran (2006), we recognize pedagogy as a theory of teaching and learning that results in knowledge growth through practice. Teacher education pedagogy maintains a complementary connection between teaching about teaching and learning about teaching (Loughran, 2014). According to Loughran, modeling of practices is an important component of pedagogy, but also requires that decisions involved in such practices be communicated. Development and analysis of MTE's pedagogy begins with practices they use to teach about teaching. Grossman et al. (2009) cautioned that instructors' "planning, modeling, and feedback" (p. 2090) mediate "learning potential" (p. 2089) of professional practice, raising questions about how MTE's pedagogies inform practices. We focus on MTEs' pedagogy of discussion practice with the question: What is our pedagogy of discussion practice in mathematics methods?

Discussion is defined as human interaction to address "a question of common concern" (Dillon, 1994, p. 8) through an exchange of ideas (Alexander, 2019) and an examination of differing viewpoints (Kim & Wilkinson, 2019). We differentiate discussion from recitation, in that interactions in the two forms of talk are distinct from the point of view of observers, and note that our interest is in developing discussions as opposed to recitations. In discussions, participants explore differing views of the common concern "to form their answer" (Dillon, 1994, p. 8). The result of such discussions is enhanced knowledge, understanding, appreciation, and judgements that inform actions. Recitation instead focuses on questions of concern to the issues at stake, but perhaps not of common concern to those addressing the question. We define discussion as a talk strategy MTEs use to support PTs' development of knowledge and perspectives of concepts relevant to mathematics teaching practice. Teacher educators' use of discussion practice is informed by their efforts to develop "knowledge from practice" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 17) as a way of "knowing to" (p. 18) engage PTs in discussion. Discussion is used by MTEs to support PTs' development of teaching, yet research points to the difficulty of enacting discussions that embody our definition (e.g., Reynolds, 2016). We have investigated the role of questions in building discussions, creating imbalance in practice, and in initiating discussion (Kastberg et al., 2019, 2020), resulting in identification of characteristics necessary but not sufficient for discussions to occur. These results suggested that our discussion practice was guided by more than questions, and thus initiated our investigation into our pedagogy of discussion practice.

Further informing exploration of our pedagogy of discussion, is the context within mathematics and phenomenological factors (e.g., social groups' ways of operating; Dillon, 1994) that influence discussions. MTEs' practices draw from PTs'

mathematics experiences and MTEs' teaching of mathematics. PTs' mathematics learning experiences inform their practices (Drake, 2006; Mewborn, 1999; Mewborn & Tyminski, 2006; Towers et al., 2017). MTEs assume PTs' experiences shape responses to discussion questions. MTEs' experiences facilitating mathematics discussions inform tacit knowledge of productive discussions (Munby & Russell, 1994) in mathematics education. Yet Steele's (2005) finding that mathematics teachers draw from values and experience to support pedagogical claims suggests that MTEs' experience facilitating mathematics discussions is of limited use in facilitating pedagogical discussions. The search for pedagogy of discussion in the teaching of teaching mathematics could not rely solely on our experiences as facilitators of discussions of mathematics. Phenomenological factors (Dillon 1994) inform MTEs' facilitation of pedagogical discussions (Kastberg et al., 2020, 2021). PTs' sense of community and relevant common experiences ground pedagogical discussions. MTEs' facilitation of discussions, including structuring discussion questions, supporting interpretation of the question, and constraining evidence PTs use to address the question, impacts the form (i.e., IRE, recitation, discussion) and content of PTs' talk (Lischka et al., 2021).

Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) asserted "knowledge, theories, and understandings" (p. 16) inform teacher educator practices. One theory relevant to planning for and facilitating discussions is whole-class scaffolding. Whole-class scaffolding is used to support students' concept development. Bakker et al. (2015) asserted whole-class scaffolding can ground instructor practice. Smit et al. (2013) described whole-class scaffolding as involving diagnosing and responding to student understandings and needs, while fostering independence (Visnovska & Cobb, 2015). Whole-class scaffolding is "layered, distributed and cumulative" (Smit et al., 2013, p. 829) and takes place before, during, and after whole-class interactions. Through this study, we developed consciousness of characteristics of whole-class scaffolding (Bakker et al., 2015; Smit et al., 2013; Visnovska & Cobb, 2015) which revealed our pedagogy of discussion practice as interpreting PTs' understanding, responding to current understanding, and supporting movement toward independence in PTs' teaching practice.

Aim

Our perspective on pedagogy requires maintenance of the connection between teaching about teaching and learning about teaching (Loughran, 2014). Although our prior research identified characteristics of discussion practice (Kastberg et al., 2019, 2020), we lacked articulation of the underlying pedagogy where teaching and learning are connected through that discussion practice. Whereas we seek more than "fixing" our practice (Vanassche & Berry, 2020, p. 207), we strive to become conscious of our pedagogy of discussion practice and therefore aimed to address the question: What is our pedagogy of discussion practice in mathematics methods? We seek to understand connections between teaching about teaching and learning about teaching (Loughran, 2014) so that we might better enact practice that maintains this connection. Using in-time and retrospective investigation of our practices, we build understanding of our pedagogy to inform our future work and provide a vehicle for engaging others in developing their practice of discussions of teaching.

Methods

Self-study methodology, a form of practitioner research (Borko et al., 2007), supports inquiry into pedagogy of practice. Self-study is self-initiated, improvement-aimed, interactive, uses qualitative methods, and defines validity as based in trustworthiness (LaBoskey, 2004). In this work, we "conceptualiz[e] what is actually happening in practice" (Vanassche & Berry, 2020, p. 188) as we enact our pedagogy of discussion, recognizing that our pedagogy is "constantly evolving and developing from experience" (p. 188).

We are three female MTEs who have engaged in self-study since 2013. We collaborate as critical friends to interrogate our pedagogy of discussion practice. Each of us taught mathematics before becoming MTEs and during this study we all taught mathematics methods courses. At our respective U.S. institutions, we have autonomy to improve our practice as we find appropriate. Structures that support research into one's teaching differ at each institution. For example, institutional expectations related to faculty engagement in research and teaching responsibilities vary. Class sizes in each of our courses make engaging in whole-class discussions possible, yet we acknowledge that social structures developed in each program that support discussion vary (Dillon, 1994). For example, Alyson's institution supports PTs' to develop community across courses by engaging PTs in informal events while Susan and Signe's institutions do not.

Susan had 26 years of experience as a MTE, teaching primarily elementary mathematics methods courses to PTs who are majority white female and commute from rural areas to the small (enrollment < 9000) midwestern teaching-focused state university. Susan's discussion topic for this study was: How does cognitive demand of tasks and knowledge of children's mathematical thinking inform planning instruction? Signe had 20 years of experience as a MTE, most recently teaching elementary mathematics methods courses at a large (enrollment >40,000) midwestern research-intensive university to PTs who are primarily white females from a variety of rural and urban backgrounds. Signe's study of discussion practice focused on PTs' views of learners' mathematics guided by the question: How do children learn mathematics? Alyson had 12 years of experience as a MTE, teaching secondary mathematics methods within a teacher certification program at a large (enrollment > 22,000) southeastern state research-focused university where PTs are majority white with a variety of rural and urban backgrounds and take courses as a cohort with structures to purposefully create a learning community. Alyson's program was intentionally increasing attention on issues of equity and diversity. In alignment with this initiative, her discussion for this study was guided by the question: What is the role of mathematics teachers related to social justice and equity?

Our institutional contexts and teaching responsibilities vary, yet we draw from a common theoretical perspective and desire to improve our feedback, questioning, and discussion practices. Although we view our teacher education practice holistically, exploration of each practice led to new questions about related practices. The exploration of our feedback practice (Kastberg et al., 2018) led to interrogating our questioning practices (Kastberg et al., 2019, 2020) that evolved into studying the pedagogy of our discussion practices (Kastberg et al, 2021).

Within self-study methodology, we used three qualitative analytic methods: analytical dialogues (Guilfoyle et al., 2004), evidentiary maps (Jordan & Henderson, 1995), and descriptive coding (Saldana, 2016). Evidence of pedagogy of discussion practice includes our experiences and associated artifacts of teaching gathered during August-December 2020. Our data is drawn from a variety of sources including transcripts of weekly critical friend conversations (analytical dialogues; Guilfoyle et al., 2004) and artifacts from our teaching (e.g., interactive slides, transcripts of class discussions, submitted work from PTs). Data was analyzed in three ways: (1) dialogic analysis of events in our discussion practice during seven August-December 2020 critical friend meetings leading to themes informing our practice; (2) creation and analysis of evidentiary maps (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) that captured the temporal nature of our discussion practice and revealed supporting or contradictory evidence for themes from the dialogic analysis; and (3) descriptive coding (Saldana, 2016) of transcripts using themes identified during the dialogic analysis while looking for evidence of other themes. Weekly analytical dialogues (Guilfoyle et al., 2004) about facilitating discussions in mathematics methods supported awareness of our discussion practice and perspective taking as we questioned working models of our practice. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) have described dialogues in communities as a mechanism of "coming to know" (p. 81) that affords practitioners with opportunities to gain perspective on their practice. During August-December 2020 our analytical dialogues of discussion practice supported coming to know that served as the basis for "action" (Guilfoyle et al., 2004, p. 1111) in our ongoing discussion practices. Ideas shared during dialogues were unpacked, analyzed, and critiqued resulting in the identification of two recurring themes in our planning for and implementation of discussion practice.

In January-May 2021 we created evidentiary maps of the "structure of events" (Jordan & Henderson, 1995, p, 57) in our discussion practice from course artifacts. Trustworthiness is addressed through the use of course artifacts from teaching and the insights we gained into our discussion practice that demonstrate emerging ideas and knowledge (Grant & Lincoln, 2021). Evidence confirming or contradicting initial findings from the dialogic analysis was identified.

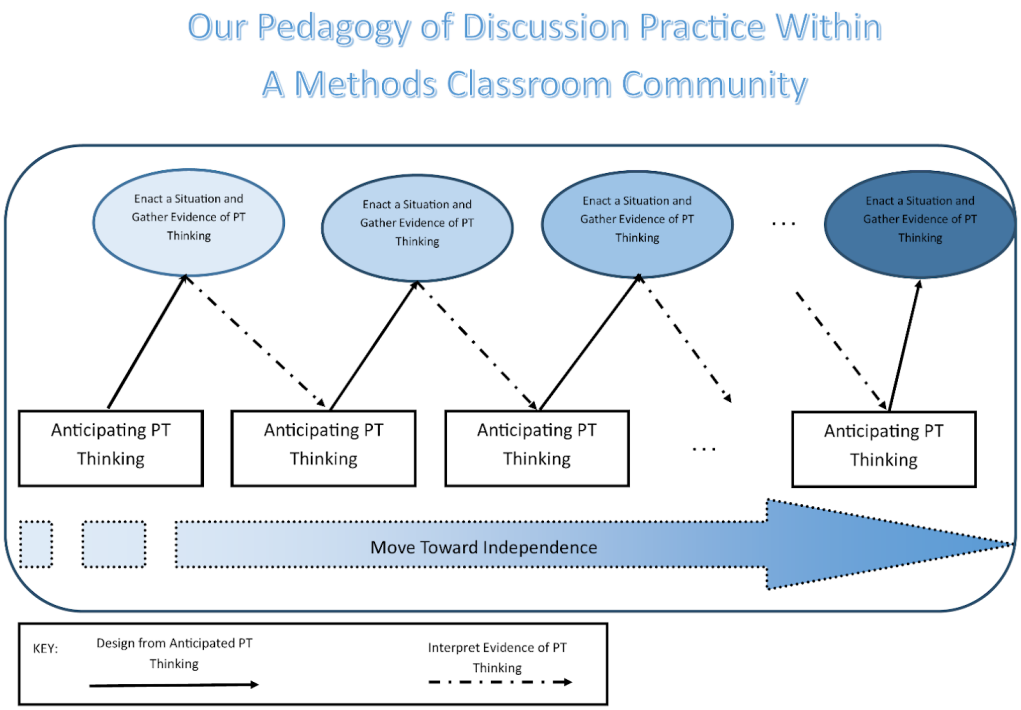
Descriptive coding (Saldana, 2016) of transcripts from the August-December 2020 analytical dialogues was used to triangulate results from analytic dialogues and evidentiary maps. By combining data from in-time examination of our practice (i.e., the analytical dialogues that took place as we enacted our discussion practice) with retrospective analysis of those dialogues alongside evidentiary maps we developed an image of our pedagogy of discussion. Although our institutional contexts, past experiences as mathematics teachers and MTEs, and teaching responsibilities vary, analysis revealed evidence of commonalities across our pedagogies of discussion practice. Though there are unique elements in our discussion practices, the congruences illustrated a common pedagogy of discussion practice.

Outcomes

Our pedagogy of discussion is supported by two processes of whole-class scaffolding: anticipating and layering (Smit et al., 2013) as depicted in Figure 1. We consider anticipating a two-step action of gathering information about PTs' knowledge, experiences, and feelings and using this evidence to predict ways PTs might respond in discussion. Anticipating informs MTEs' planned interactions with PTs and spontaneous talk moves as MTEs engage with PTs during class. Layering occurs when instructors use anticipating in conjunction with the design of instructional activities. Instructional activities provide multiple opportunities to anticipate PTs' thinking, with each occurrence adding more information to MTEs' knowledge to inform discussion facilitation, as if creating a spiral moving toward the goal of independence in PTs' teaching practice. In Figure 1, anticipating is depicted in the rectangles, solid and dashed arrows, and the blue enactment bubbles, as anticipating is an act that is not limited by time or space. Layering is depicted by the darkening of the bubbles from left to right, as additional activities produce more evidence of PTs' thoughts and feelings for the MTE. Although analysis of each authors' data contributed to findings, we demonstrate the emergence of our understanding of these whole-class scaffolding processes using excerpts from our critical friend conversations and descriptions of Alyson's discussion practice.

Figure 1

A Model of Our Pedagogy of Discussion Practice in Mathematics Methods



In Summer 2020 Alyson planned to facilitate discussions of social justice and equity in teaching secondary mathematics with PTs, a theme elevated in prominence in her August-December 2020 methods course due to program initiatives at her institution. In critical friend meetings during August-December 2020, we helped each other negotiate changes due to Covid-19 while keeping focus on goals around discussions of teaching in methods. We each described plans for discussions for August-December 2020, where Signe focused on discussion around what constitutes learning and Susan focused on ideas about cognitive demand.

Alyson planned a sequence of instructional activities related to equity and social justice including surveys of dispositions, readings and related discussion boards, and rehearsals of social justice lessons. As we returned to Dillon's phenomenological characteristics for discussion communities (see Kastberg et al., 2019), new questions arose for us. Susan reacted to one of our early turns toward anticipating as we discussed the difficulties of gathering information to use when facilitating discussions at the moment:

> *This has me thinking back to Signe, when you came to see my lesson, and you were asking me these questions like, what do you anticipate? And how's it going to go? And I don't know. I honestly don't know, and I felt really stuck. (Critical Conversation, 8/31/20).*

This dialogue helped Alyson realize how she could draw information from PTs' experiences and then better leverage that information in discussions:

> *I need to go read those [PTs' posts] and really think about what are the different things that they're saying? And how do I think about what's good about what they're saying, and what's bad about what they're saying? So that I have ways to draw on that conversation. (Critical Conversation, 08/31/20)*

Alyson could use PTs' individual assignments to anticipate contributions PTs might offer and plan how to facilitate discussion with PTs' ideas in mind. Later in the same conversation, Alyson pushed us to consider how evidence to inform anticipation can be collected by intentionally designing layers of activities:

> *So what are some of the exit tickets or short, reflective responses that you might ask your students to turn in to you and help you with that anticipating process? Because I think before we've just said, 'Well, I don't know what they're going to come up with!' (Critical Conversation, 08/31/20)*

Following this conversation, each author inserted additional instructional activities to gather evidence to support our anticipation of PTs' thinking as we planned for discussions. Alyson included additional exit ticket questions for her PTs such as "What do you wonder about "school mathematics" after reading the Spencer and Hand chapter?" (Day 6 Exit Question) and "Thinking back over all of our equity readings so far, what do you notice? What do you wonder? What do you think about mathematics teachers' roles in equity?" (Day 14 Exit Question). Similarly, Signe inserted questions to gauge insights about learning: "Finish the sentence: Conceptual knowledge for subtracting is different from procedural knowledge because…." Susan selected examples from PTs' responses to use in subsequent class sessions.

Throughout August-December 2020 our ideas about the iterative and unbounded nature of planning for and facilitating discussions of teaching developed. Alyson's ideas generated a critical friend conversation about the temporal boundaries of a pedagogical discussion. Alyson, while puzzling about where learning resides in a discussion, drew from her constructivist epistemology. Alyson reflected on dissonance as a trigger for PTs' opportunities to learn.

> *I think I've been so focused on where the learning is in the discussion, that I haven't been paying attention to other things that are causing them to hit a point of dissonance in their understanding? (Critical Conversation, 11/10/2020)*

We identified the unbounded nature of discussions of teaching that do not happen in a single class but instead evolve across layers of activities that produce opportunities for learning through discussion.

> *Alyson: We had a picture in our heads of something [a discussion] that would happen within a class period. And I think we're shifting that and now say it's not quite where it is. Think about the feedback discussion that my students have. That's something that goes on all semester long, it gets visited at different points.*
>
> *...*
>
> *Signe: So, you know, this, going iteratively, the way that we did over the course of the semester, shows me that PTs' seemingly divergent points of view, actually are convergent, with many PTs talking about it*

[learning]. (Critical Conversation, 11/10/2020)

Critical friend conversations continued into January-May 2021 after the in-class August-December 2020 data collection ended. Early in January we mapped out instructional activities related to each discussion topic and brought those to our meetings for further discussion. These maps, later termed evidentiary maps (Jordan & Henderson, 1995), provided focus for reflective conversations that continued in January-May 2021. Retrospective examination of August-December 2020 conversation transcripts alongside evidentiary maps revealed that anticipating PTs' thinking and experiences and layering activities allowed MTEs to further anticipate PTs' thinking. These processes were central in our pedagogy of discussion practice in mathematics methods.

Discussion

We employed collaborative self-study to move beyond identifying characteristics of our discussion practice to address the question: What is our pedagogy of discussion practice? Grossman et al. (2009) identified practices teacher educators use to inform opportunities PTs have for learning. Our outcomes illustrate how scaffolding whole-class discussions as a pedagogy of discussion practice informs such decisions. Across class sessions and outside of class, MTEs use PTs' responses to make sense of PTs' thinking. Additional evidence of PTs' thinking allows MTEs to further anticipate PTs' responses to new instructional activities. Layering and anticipating are two processes we tacitly used to plan for and facilitate whole class discussions. Class discussions involve whole-class scaffolding, a pedagogy made up of a collection of thoughts and actions (Smit et al., 2013). Typically scaffolding is described as actions that support learning, but the work of Bakker et al. (2015) identified whole-class scaffolding as informing teacher pedagogy and including layering activities, analysis, and response to student understanding. Because scaffolding involves maintaining a connection between MTEs' actions of teaching about teaching and evidence of PTs' learning about teaching, we claim that the processes we identified in our discussion practice are part of whole-class scaffolding as a pedagogy of discussion practice. Further, this element of our pedagogy points to the ways in which we can maintain a connection between teaching and learning about teaching.

By conducting this research through in-time and retrospective investigation, we acknowledge that MTE "knowledge is not a fixed state that can be achieved, but something that constantly develops from and through experience, and that is enacted – and only becomes "real" or "visible" – in practice" (Vanassche & Berry, 2020, p. 188). Articulating our pedagogy of discussion practice allows us to continue to develop that pedagogy and practices within it in more deliberate ways. Dialogue with co-authors supported Alyson to reassess the timing of whole-class discussions. Discussions were shifted to later in the course after PTs had developed shared experiences with social justice and equity and had understandings of the significance of social justice and equity for mathematics teaching. Anticipating PTs' experiences informed layering of instructional activities relevant to discussion of teaching, with each layer providing new opportunities for MTE's anticipating and support for PTs' independent teaching practices.

Consciousness of our pedagogy of discussion practice allows us to describe discussion practice and move beyond providing models of discussion practice (Loughran, 2014). We focus on PTs' understanding of terminology used in discussion questions and the significance of such questions for their teaching. In discussions of mathematics, we attended primarily to terms used in our questions and prior knowledge as we planned instructional activities. In planning for discussions of teaching, we attended to terminology, but also to the relevance of our discussion questions to teachers' evolving views of teaching and the significance of discussion questions to those views. Although anticipating responses is a prominent practice in the teaching of mathematics concepts (Smith & Stein, 2011), we found that anticipation takes a different form when teaching about teaching. For our goal of engaging in discussions of teaching, anticipating requires the layering of multiple activities that allow anticipating to occur over time, so that we understand better the experiences and beliefs PTs might draw on in discussions of teaching. This extension of Steele's (2005) finding points to the nuanced differences between discussions for learning mathematical content and discussions for learning about teaching mathematics. The knowledge gained through anticipation included a wider variety of aspects of PTs' knowledge. Through this articulation, we address calls for research into teacher educator practice (Krainer et al., 2021) and Reynolds' (2016) query regarding nuances in teacher-student discussion exchanges that support PTs' practices.

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Navigating the Thresholds and Crossing Boundaries Into Academic Leadership

Kevin Patton, Maura Coulter, & Chris North

Collaboration | Reflection | Professional Learning | Leadership | Transformation | Identification | Coordination

This study examines our (three teacher educators) learning through navigating thresholds and crossing boundaries as academic leaders. When boundaries between different professional roles are crossed, new in-between spaces of practice are created that provide rich personal and professional learning. Akkerman and Bakker (2011) identify four mechanisms for learning in boundary crossings; 'identification', 'coordination', 'reflection' and 'transformation'. This collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) draws on online conversations and reflections with the findings framed through the four mechanisms. First, leadership roles required a different identification or 'presence and presentation'. Clothing choices were a visible delineation of our former and current roles and how we were becoming more strategic as academic leaders. Second, we sought opportunities for coordination in that we asked people (whom we recognized as effective leaders) for conversations about our professional and personal struggles. Navigating boundaries requires acknowledging the appropriate voice and delivering the appropriate message at meetings and represents a form of transformation. There is a strong alignment between 'reflection' and the S-STEP methodology as both involve learning about one's own and others' practices. Understanding these aspects does not ensure success but increases the likelihood of positive outcomes. We have come to understand that boundaries are permeable and we can choose to traverse them with greater confidence because we have acquired a growing repertoire of strategies. Collaborative S-STEP has served as a powerful tool to navigate these boundaries.

Introduction

Universities are dynamic institutions currently under pressure to readjust their strategies due to the rising influence of technology and globalization, competition for tuition dollars, the pace of change in the economy (Gonaim, 2016; Ransdell et al., 2018), and the Covid-19 pandemic (Zhao & Watterston, 2021). Consequently, leaders in higher education face dynamic, complex, and challenging demands. Many institutions are dealing with perceived administrative bloat, and faculty frequently feel that resources are misaligned with institutional goals. In this paper, we take a reflective look at the process of transitioning into leadership roles from that of educator/faculty to offer different perspectives on the neoliberal corporate governance models that guide so many institutions of higher education.

We examine our growth and responses to the challenge of the transitionary period into leadership roles, and present our learning as we crossed boundaries as academic leaders. We view boundaries and thresholds similarly; they are spaces where the rules are ambiguous and there is uncertainty (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Berry, 2020). We are three physical

education teacher educators (PETE), across different continents who (like Allison and Ramirez (2020)) viewed an administrative role, including managerial and leadership aspects, as a way to help shape and support our field more broadly. After 13-19 years as teacher educators, we took on the leadership roles of the department chair, associate head of school, and associate dean for research, respectively. S-STEP research is guided by a 'desire to be more, to improve, to better understand' (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p. 7), and this collaborative S-STEP provided us with the opportunity to pause and reflect using insights from across organizational and geographical boundaries.

Moving from teacher educator to academic leader represents a significant shift (Allison & Ramirez, 2020). Leaders can no longer be aligned with a single specialized faculty group and are instead responsible for interacting with a wider faculty constituency. There is also a personal growth process that must take place as leaders come to understand themselves and their developing identities (White, 2014). Little is known, however, about how academic administrators "ultimately reconcile their often conflicting identities as faculty members and as administrative leaders" (Del Favero, 2006, p. 278). Teacher education administrative leaders experiencing this type of transition receive little if any, formal preparation in assuming administrative roles. Studies examining teacher educator identity development are on the rise, however, only a handful of studies of teacher educators who have taken on leadership roles have been reported (e.g., Clift, 2015; Kitchen, 2016; Loughran, 2015; North et al., 2021). These authors provided accounts that often describe the demands, and accentuate the highs and lows associated with being a leader. Further compounding this transition is a lack of clarity regarding role expectations, the uncertainty about outcomes of one's performance, and blurred boundaries with the faculty (Jackson & Gmelch, 2003).

Loughran (2015) described how his identity as a teacher educator shaped his actions as a Dean, concluding that his transition to leadership was unpredictable, dynamic, and changeable. Also examining the shift from teacher educator to academic leader, Clift (2015) identified a number of lessons including the importance of managing one's own time, the public nature of the position which is often shaped by others' expectations of the role, and found that self-study can be useful in developing academic leadership skills and actions. Clift also raises several important questions, including what challenges do teacher educators face during induction to their new leadership role? and what facilitates their transition from teacher educators to leaders? These questions continue to be relevant (Allison & Ramirez, 2020; MacPhail, 2017).

The concept of boundary crossing is a useful concept with which to explore role transitions. Williams & Berry (2016) utilized boundary crossings as a theoretical and analytical framework, identifying a boundary-related critical incident or experience that occurred during their work as teacher educators in international contexts. Working in these boundary spaces involved learning how to negotiate new kinds of relationships with colleagues and students, manage changed roles and responsibilities and, ultimately, a search for a renewed sense of self, as each sought to understand themselves differently within a new professional context. Similarly, we embarked on a collaborative S-STEP to help better navigate the boundaries and crossing thresholds into new situations and experiences. Faculty teaching and administrative roles presented a series of boundary crossings from what we knew and were familiar with, to what we encountered in the new social, cultural, and educational contexts of academic leadership.

Mechanisms and processes of learning in boundary spaces have been identified by Akkerman and Bakker (2011), who argued that when boundaries between different professional roles are crossed, new in-between spaces of practice are created that provide potential for rich personal and professional learning. Within S-STEP research, Hamilton et al. (2020) suggest that threshold crossing enriches personal understandings of practice and raises new possibilities and perspectives. According to Akkerman and Bakker (2011) the term 'boundary' does not necessarily involve a physical or geographic border, but may involve "a sociocultural difference leading to discontinuity in action or interaction. Boundaries simultaneously suggest a sameness and continuity in the sense that within discontinuity two or more sites are relevant to one another in a particular way" (p. 133). They define learning broadly, as involving "new understandings, identity development, change of practices and institutional development" (p. 142) and assert that all learning involves the crossing of boundaries of one sort or another, whether it is from one learning community to another or one distinct role to another. Boundary crossing, therefore, involves identity work, and "a key question is the distinction between what is part of me versus what is not (yet) part of me" (p. 132).

Akkerman and Bakker (2011) discovered four main learning mechanisms, and all are relevant when examining a boundary crossing; 'identification', 'coordination', 'transformation', and 'reflection'. Within each mechanism, particular processes either support or constrain the learning of participants in these boundary spaces. The first mechanism is *identification* where boundary crossing leads to the identification of the intersecting practices and common purposes, including the opportunity to redefine practices in light of newly discovered ones derived from studying and crossing boundaries. For example, how the professional clothing of PETEs differs from academic leaders and resistance to dressing more formally similar to other academic leaders may reduce effectiveness in high-stakes meetings. This example is also salient to the second kind of boundary-related learning: *Coordination*, which requires a "communicative connection" (p. 143) or dialogue that attempts to overcome the inherent nebulousness in boundary spaces. It also involved opportunities to better orchestrate and harmonize once-separate policies and practices (Lawson, 2016). *Transformation* occurs when engaging with ideas or issues results in changes in practices, resulting in "a new construction of identity that informs future practice" (p. 146). Finally, *reflection* involves learning to look differently at one practice by taking on the perspective of other people and their practices. For example, a teacher educator may view challenges and opportunities dramatically differently than a chair or dean, and vice versa. This type of work has the potential to facilitate boundary-related reflections that bring about new awareness and facilitate reform (Lawson, 2016). Importantly, these mechanisms and processes are not intended as discrete, sequential, or hierarchical. Boundary spaces inherently hold tensions and create challenges and opportunities. As a consequence, people working in these spaces "enact the boundary by addressing and articulating meanings and perspectives of various intersecting worlds" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, pp. 141–142).

Aim

We used self-study to examine our growth as leaders and our responses to the challenges of boundary crossing in academic leadership; more specifically, the mechanisms and processes by which we crossed these boundaries.

Methodology

Collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (Ritter et al., 2018) guided the research design. This process enabled us to consider the ways we each experienced new learning and practice around leadership as PETE faculty, and came to gain insights into teacher educators' experiences of leadership roles. S-STEP research is improvement-aimed, interactive, and includes multiple, mainly qualitative methods (LaBoskey, 2004). This research was: improvement-aimed because we sought to better understand the mechanisms and processes of becoming leaders; interactive through our collaboration; and used multiple qualitative data sources (online conversations, reflections, and responses to reflections). We demonstrated trustworthiness by collaboratively and critically examining our growth as leaders and how we crossed boundaries, relating back to the literature, and making our analysis transparent (Mena & Russell, 2017).

Data Sources

This collaborative self-study group has been in existence for almost four years. We meet at regular intervals usually about once a month with a focused agenda. As each of us lives on a different continent, all of our self-study work has occurred online. The third anniversary of our collaboration prompted us to reflect on our practice throughout this time and to examine if we had come to understand our practice more fully, if we felt we had improved as leaders, and if our leadership values had changed. We each reviewed the transcribed conversations we had completed together over the previous year (n=8). Following this 'taking stock' we each wrote a meta-reflection using the prompts: Do we hold true to our original leadership values? What implications of how and what we did as leaders during this time? Each of us then commented on the meta-reflection of the others. Two further discussions ensued, a month apart, where we discussed these reflections. Each of us had an opportunity to share our thoughts and the other two collaborators had an opportunity to question, probe, advise, or empathise. The style was conversational throughout. These reflections with comments (n=3) and transcribed discussions using the transcription feature within Zoom (n=10) comprised the data analyzed for this paper.

Data Analysis

Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2019) was utilized to guide us in systematically and robustly exploring, interpreting, and reporting a pattern-based analysis. Initially, we became familiar with the data by making notes on

observations and insights in each individual piece of data and the overall data set as we read through them. After multiple reviews of the data, we inductively coded through the lens of mechanisms and processes used to cross boundaries; identification; coordination; reflection; and transformation. Using these as themes we began to develop broader patterns of meaning for each, which we refined and agreed upon with the intended outcome of the process to create the key aspects of the themes in the raw data, and which are assessed to be the most important given the research objectives (Thomas, 2003). Trustworthiness was addressed through consistency checks whereby we each checked the theme descriptions against the text and came to an agreement. It is also evident in the open and transparent acknowledgment of contexts and the existence of self in tension through "managing competing selves" (Farrant, 2019, p.75). Finally, appropriate quotes were selected to weave together the analytic narrative and data extracts and contextualising the analysis in relation to existing literature (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

Findings

Findings are presented as the four mechanisms with examples drawn from our S-STEP to unpack each mechanism in our context of crossing thresholds between PETE and academic leadership.

Identification

Leadership roles required a different 'presence and presentation' from our former selves. This presence reflects that different power exists in leadership and that there are rules to how it can best be brought to bear to get the results we desire. How we identified ourselves became particularly visible in our clothing choices. PETE requires educators to participate and demonstrate in movement contexts and our clothing choices reflected the practical nature of our work: "the first eight years of my career I was in PETE, I would wear active clothes" (Kevin). Clothing also signalled the nature of our work and became an important part of our identities as Chris noted "As an outdoor educator I needed to wear practical clothing for those types of activities. I wore them as a badge of honor." The transition to leadership required a different identity and at times our clothing choices created dissonance: "I hardly slept Monday night because I was looking back at the Zoom meeting and I'm in a hoodie…should have dressed up" (Maura). In a similar vein, Kevin commented:

> *when I have a meeting with the President or the provost or someone else I think dress is incredibly important if I'm wearing my T shirt that conveys a message…I have a jacket in my office that I put on for meetings such as that that also conveys a certain level of professionalism and, in some way, I want to change people's minds and their perceptions of what we do.*

Here Kevin's comment indicates that we felt the active clothing used in PETE sometimes undermined the status of our PETE work. Clothing choices are a tangible and visible delineation of our former and current roles and how we chose to cross this threshold by becoming more strategic as academic leaders.

Coordination

To navigate how best to cross thresholds, we sought out people within our institutions who could help us with the boundary spaces between PETE and leadership. Kevin noted: "I have another...chair that I respect on campus … though she doesn't know the personnel in my department, she understands the institutional history and she understands how things work on campus. So, she's a really good sounding board." The benefits of these exchanges were that we felt less isolated in our struggles in this space. Maura had a similar experience when talking to a colleague in leadership and from another institution: "We chatted with each other for about an hour and it was funny we both are having the same issues both having the same problems. And I was so relieved. ...I should have done this earlier." Maura indicates that the benefits of coordination and connecting with others go beyond the practical and strategic to providing emotional solace because many challenges are shared.

We also learned that it is best to seek these connections early, particularly in the online context, as the incidental conversations, meeting introductions, and networking opportunities that we would normally have on campus have not existed for the previous 24 months due to Covid-19. We each experienced a personal vulnerability in seeking and making these connections. It was a little like crossing a threshold and not knowing whether we would be welcome on

the other side or indeed whether a return was possible. Interestingly, it seemed that the permeability of boundaries increased the more we crossed them as we gained confidence.

Transformation

A central part of the (at times turbulent) process of navigating boundaries in leadership is acknowledging the appropriate voice and delivering the appropriate message at both formal and informal meetings. This can mean working at the intersection of institutional expectations, faculty demands, and ideals of quality learning. We have come to learn the stark differences between having the authority to make decisions and being accountable for the implementation of initiatives assigned by others. Chris shared: "I feel that tension… because we're mediating between the organization and our staff." It was particularly powerful when it came to upholding institutional expectations about finances with staff whose sole focus was on high-quality learning for students:

> *In terms of managerial decisions, budget matters. Unfortunately, sometimes the budget is at odds with what I know about effective teaching. Specifically, class size has an impact on pedagogical approach. So, while budget is telling me one thing, what I know about good teaching is telling me another (Kevin).*

Next, we learned that whether you are talking to your faculty, updating your dean, or discussing with your peers, an effective communication style is critical. Chris shared "It's speaking for the organization and those contexts and speaking for our staff to that organization, so it's being a voice for both." Maura added, "We're trying to mediate up, mediate down, and report up so we are very much stuck at that crossroads." Being 'stuck at the crossroads' gives some insight into the challenges we experienced transforming from PETE to an academic leader and needing to speak to multiple levels of our institutions.

This understanding has not ensured success but means we are better prepared and increases the likelihood of positive outcomes. The findings do not reveal a radical transformation, but a deepening of our understanding of our roles which requires us to be the voice of both institution and our staff in meetings which are often difficult and create anxiety and discomfort for us.

Reflection

There is a strong alignment between the boundary-crossing mechanism of 'reflection' and the S-STEP methodology as both involve learning 'something new about [one's] own and others' practices" (Akkerman & Baker, 2011, p. 144– 145). In essence, we used our collaborative self-study as a means of navigating boundaries. In our collaboration we bridged thousands of kilometers around the globe, diverse institutions, and yet our collective lived experiences in our academic careers revealed many similarities. What became clear after reviewing our meta-reflections, was that our changes were not revolutionary but more evolutionary:

> *…what I believe in, and my vision of leadership hasn't changed much. What has solidified, is my understanding that a leader cannot really only be committed to any 'one' approach. While I often see myself as a servant leader, I also see instances where being visionary, transformational, and even autocratic have their places. (Kevin Meta-Reflection)*

> *While I still hold true to my values as a leader I don't think there have been the opportunities to lead. I have found myself for the past two (Covid) years managing/administrating more than leading…Perhaps I need to focus less on the people and more on the faculty research agenda. People are always to the fore of my mind – I'm beginning to think I'm using people and their exhaustion due to Covid as an excuse not to lead and push the research agenda! (Maura Meta-Reflection)*

> *Teaching was "the reason I got up in the morning and worked late nights and weekends preparing my classes" [quote from an early reflection]. OK I still really enjoy teaching. My horizons have expanded and it is not the center of my world anymore. (Chris Meta-Reflection)*

Often the insights of others served to enrich our understanding of our own evolving roles, while other times it was incredibly comforting to realize that we were not alone in our struggles. Tracking our reflective journeys revealed a

growing sense of confidence in who we are and what we stand for, and critically also what we will not stand for. This meta-reflection re-affirms our core values but also highlights changes that otherwise may have seeped into our practices and understandings unnoticed.

Implications

This study examined our growth as leaders and our responses to the challenges of boundary crossing in academic leadership; more specifically, the mechanisms and processes by which we crossed these boundaries. Lessons we have taken from crossing boundaries in academic leadership will serve us well as we continue to cross further boundaries, both into new or into more familiar spaces. When people journey beyond established boundaries, they explore new frontiers which can be career and life-changing--all are ripe with novelty, uncertainty, and complexity (Lawson, 2021). We have also come to understand that boundaries are permeable and we can choose to traverse them with greater confidence because we have acquired a repertoire of strategies.

Results indicated several tangible outward-facing shifts in our roles. These changes have varied from the highly visible changes of our clothing choices, to the more nuanced changes of our roles and which 'voices' or 'identities' we should use in what contexts as we began to interact with different, often influential people in the university. In essence, we used our new positions to speak for teacher education and, while initially uncomfortable, with time we began to settle into our new roles. More difficult to pinpoint are the changes that were wrought on the inside. We have crossed the threshold and joined what some deem 'the dark side' of academia, a circle of knowing where we have assumed power (perceived or real). In some instances, we have transitioned from interacting daily with students as a teacher to dealing with them from a distance. The opportunity to reflect has revealed a significant shift in roles but continuity in our values. Our titles have changed but our non-negotiable principles endure, often in opposition to managerial mandates. We are still exploring how that has impacted our relationships with them and our own satisfaction and thoughts about ourselves as academics. Future collaborative work will explore the extent to which our perception of our institutions and the academy changed as a result of dealing with a wider range of colleagues in roles that had previously been hidden to us.

The work of teacher educators is critical in supporting the educational experiences of students in schools. Teacher education is impacted by policy decisions at the levels of programme, faculty, institutional, regional, national, and even global scales. Therefore, Allison and Ramirez (2020) note the value of exploring the "leverage teacher education and its leaders may have in shaping the education landscape versus simply being reactive/responsive" (p.1220). Attempting to cross the threshold into academic leadership was a way we felt we could contribute more broadly to the field of education. We experienced tensions, we made mistakes and learnt more about what we could influence, and how we might achieve this effectively. We also learnt the limitations of our influence. As S-STEP researchers we are "ever emergent and always becoming" (Pinnegar et al. 2020, p.97), and as such we are continually crossing boundaries and thresholds in the process of becoming. Having spent time in the boundaries surrounding academic leadership, we find we are better able to navigate these zones and cross them with more confidence. The tensions and challenges for teacher educators in moving into academic leadership persist (North et al., 2021), however, we find that the journey remains largely worthwhile. Our achievements in supporting teacher education are perhaps modest, but we have seen the educational landscape from a different perspective and have deepened our understandings. We have found our work fraught with tensions and just as importantly, ripe with opportunities.

Having experienced the benefits of S-STEP as teacher educators, it was natural for us to apply these same methods and approaches to our work as academic leaders. We have been asked if what we are truly doing is S-STEP because of the shift in context. According to a strict definition, we are no longer using S-STEP but we are now embracing our career shifts and bringing our powerful research methods to bear on new questions, communities, and audiences. The principles remain the same- finding deeper understandings of the self in our new roles and discovering this together with others. It is conversations with our collaborators in this S-STEP which provide us with crucial insights, impel us to pause and reflect and which allows us to be more intentional about our roles.

We conclude by asking, "So, what has the self-study of our transitions into leadership taught us that may be useful or significant to others?" The first lesson, for us, is don't be afraid to be vulnerable. Uncertainty can be scary but also

signifies an opportunity for learning. The unknown associated with a boundary crossing can be a productive place, a space of tension, and also of potential and opportunity (Berry, 2020). We shared how our S-STEP provided invaluable opportunities to learn from others and address role ambiguity. Second, becoming a leader requires us to think about the role as dynamic and variable, not fixed and static. The unpredictable circumstances faced on a daily basis were heightened due to Covid and shaped our actions as leaders, and our actions similarly impacted situations (Loughran, 2015). Reflection highlighted how our enduring values provided valuable guiding principles in the midst of this unpredictability. Finally, becoming a leader doesn't happen overnight. While you may assume a title or role, crossing thresholds/boundaries is not instantaneous. Instead, growing into that role, and becoming a leader takes time and there is distinct value in investigating the space between who you were, who you are, and who you are yet to become. S-STEP was a robust way to examine our learning experiences and make sense of our boundary crossings. Similarly, teacher educators involved in S-STEP are well positioned to add to the body of literature to help others to thrive as they assume leadership roles to help shape the future of teacher education.

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Interrogating Grading Practices in Mathematics Methods

Creating Threshold Opportunities for Examining Institutional Norms

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Assessment | Mathematics Methods | Relational Teacher Education

Calls for interrogation of practice urge educators to consider ways to dismantle traditional assessment systems. Additionally, leaders in teacher preparation research urge investigations that build understanding of knowledge and practices of teacher educators, including knowledge of how teacher educators develop practices such as grading and assessment to support the learning of prospective teachers. As mathematics teacher educators, we responded to these calls by engaging in long-term self-study of grading practices in a mathematics methods course where prospective teachers are encouraged to build autonomy for their own pedagogical growth. Data (including journals, class audio recordings, final evaluation conference transcripts, and the transcript of a whole group interview with 10 PTs focused on grading practices) were drawn from the second term of ungrading along with research documentation. In addition, the authors recorded every research team meeting and kept collaborative meeting notes. We describe how exploring impacts of this revised assessment system presented a threshold opportunity to rethink the use of traditional institutional structures such as grading rubrics. Results of this study reveal that removing one institutional structure produced an unintentional focus on a different structure and point to the need for close consideration of institutional structures that impact the work of teacher educators.

Introduction

Calls for interrogation of practice urge educators to consider ways to disassemble traditional assessment systems (Brubaker, 2010; Buhagiar, 2007; Rojstaczer & Healy, 2012). Additionally, leaders in teacher preparation research urge investigations that build an understanding of knowledge and practices of teacher educators (e.g., Beswick & Goos, 2018; Krainer et al., 2021; Vanassche & Berry, 2020), including knowledge of how teacher educators develop practices such as grading and assessment to support the learning of prospective teachers (PTs). As mathematics teacher educators, we responded to these calls by engaging in long-term self-study of grading practices in a mathematics methods course where prospective teachers are encouraged to build autonomy for their own pedagogical growth. We describe how exploring impacts of this revised assessment system presented a threshold opportunity to rethink the use of traditional institutional structures such as grading rubrics. Results of this study point to the need for close consideration of institutional structures to inform the work of teacher educators.

Context

This self-study of teacher education practices took place in a mathematics methods course taught at a four-year institution in the southeastern United States. Alyson, the course instructor and first author, engaged in relational teacher education (Kitchen, 2005) from a constructivist teaching paradigm (Steffe & D'Ambrosio, 1995) and actively worked toward creating mathematics methods courses in which PTs' experiences and reflections played a vital role in the development of PTs' pedagogical practices.

Background Literature

Despite discontent with traditional grading systems (e.g., Blum, 2020), there is little scholarly inquiry (Lee & Mewborn, 2009) into course grading systems. Two studies specifically focused on methods for determining course grades and impacts of alternative approaches to this process. McClam and Sevier's (2010) self-study reported on efforts to change to a student-assigned grading system in a multi-section methods course and the resistance met among faculty and students as power relations changed. Brubaker (2010, 2012, 2015) reported on his implementation of individualized grading contracts developed by students in an effort to shape a democratic classroom environment. He reported this practice shifted the focus "from grading to learning" (p. 264) and changed the "intellectual atmosphere of the class" (p. 265) to one of collaboration and problem-solving around relevant ideas.

Experiencing a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) between her assessment practices and theoretical perspective, Alyson investigated how assessment practice changes could help resolve this misalignment (Lischka et al., 2020). Her initial research led to questions about interactions between grades and PTs' ability to take up authority for their pedagogical growth. Authority in classrooms is situated in and informed by constructs such as "values, norms; school ethos and policy; . . . [and] institutional features of schooling" (Pace & Hemmings, 2006, p. 1) where one such feature is the grading system. Scholars have argued that grading is often used to maintain authority or control (Kohn, 1993; Pace & Hemmings, 2006) rather than to inform teaching and learning. In mathematics education, alternatives to traditional grading have been emphasized in the form of performance assessments evaluated by rubrics (e.g., Bush & Greer, 1999; Thompson & Senk, 1998), including recent efforts that urged involvement of learners in helping to create rubrics (e.g., Liljedahl, 2020). Rubrics have traditionally been used in grading to support efficiency and consistency (Perlman, 2003; Tierney & Simon, 2004), often touted as a way to "justify to parents and others the grades that they assign to students" (Andrade, 2000, p. 13). Though rubrics can be confining and limit the ways feedback is given to learners (Andrade, 2000; Wolf & Stevens, 2007), they also serve as supports to make explicit the cultural assumptions and expectations that may be hidden from students of color, multilingual/multicultural students, and first-generation learners (Delpit, 1988; Wolf & Stevens, 2007). As such, assessment systems and constructs such as rubrics provide structure to courses that support learners lacking fluency in the dominant culture of learning environments. Concerns over alternative assessment cited possible ways in which removing grading structures might disadvantage some learners and increase equity gaps (Talbert, 2022; Supiano, 2022).

Classroom Context of the Study

The methods course in which this study occurred was the second of two mathematics-specific methods courses in an undergraduate teacher preparation program. This course occured at the penultimate term of the program, with only the full-time practicum experience following. The overall program model included classroom-based experiences and exposure to inquiry-based teaching methods throughout the four-year sequence of courses. By the time PTs took this course, they had developed understandings of how learners should engage in inquiry-based mathematics classrooms and had examined mathematical tasks that allow for inquiry-based instruction. In this course, PTs focused on the mathematics teaching practices (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], 2014) required to engage learners in inquiry-based learning. Major products of the course included two multi-day unit plans, teaching rehearsals, and a letter-writing exchange with secondary mathematics learners. The primary goal of this course was for PTs to develop personal pedagogical practices that encompass research-based teaching practices. Because of the placement of this course in the program of study, PTs were not under any grade point average requirements to gain entry to the education program, although they had to maintain a C average in coursework to graduate.

This teacher preparation program served all PTs at this institution seeking secondary teaching licensure in agriculture, science, and mathematics. As a step toward retention of PTs in these critical areas, program faculty regularly implemented community-building activities that resulted in strong peer relationships that were both supportive and critical. PTs in this program learned from and with each other as they grew their pedagogical practices.

Over the two years prior to this study, Alyson transitioned this methods course from one in which grades were determined by the instructor through numbered scores assigned using rubrics to a course where PTs assigned their own grade through reflection on their work individually and through peer review. For all course assignments, Alyson provided rubrics that describe the intended product and then gave feedback on all submitted work either in writing or during in-person conferences. At the midpoint and end of the course, PTs assigned themselves a course grade based on a rubric description that emphasized reflection, improvement, and growth. During in-person evaluation conferences at the end of the course, PTs assigned a grade and produced evidence of meeting the grade criteria using submitted work from the course. Alyson recorded the course grade PTs stated at the end of these conferences.

Positionality of the Researcher

Alyson transitioned to instruction in teacher preparation at the university level during her doctoral program after completing 15 years of teaching secondary mathematics. Prior to this, she served as a mathematics department chair and system-level professional development leader. Having taken up constructivist teaching practices (Steffe & D'Ambrosio, 1995) in her classrooms, Alyson transferred these practices and structures to her work with PTs. Alyson's perspective led her to develop instructional activities in which she could build models of PTs' practices and "study the mathematics teaching and learning constructions of teacher-learners [PTs] and interact with teacher-learners in a learning space whose design is based, at least in part, on a working knowledge of teacher-learners' concepts of mathematics teaching and learning" (Kastberg, 2014, p. 352). Alyson's methods practice, therefore, focused on valuing PTs' autonomy and viewing PTs' existing models of teaching as rationally developed from their own experiences.

Taking up constructivist teaching practices requires that instructors come to know the PTs with whom they work. Alyson drew from Kitchen's (2005) relational teacher education, described as "a reciprocal approach to enabling teacher growth that builds from the realization that we know in relationship to others" (p. 17), to make sense of what it meant to know PTs. Blending ideas from constructivist teaching and relational teacher education, Alyson's methods course activities provided opportunities for reflection and interactive communication among PTs and for the class to corroborate ideas about teaching and learning, thus building PTs' knowledge of teaching. With this perspective, Alyson engaged in self-study of her teacher education practice with a goal of aligning her practice with her theoretical perspective.

Aim

Alyson has engaged in collaborative self-study of her methods practice since 2013. That collaboration (with colleagues who are not authors on this study) has supported Alyson in examining her feedback (e.g., Kastberg et al., 2018, 2020) and discussion practices (e.g., Kastberg et al., 2019) in methods, while also unearthing other living contradictions (Whitehead, 1989) within her practice. Through investigation of her feedback practices, Alyson was challenged by the mismatch between her theoretical perspective and assessment practices. In 2018, Alyson began the process of restructuring her methods course evaluation system to better align with constructivist and relational perspectives. From 2018 to 2020, Alyson changed her course evaluation system and gathered data to support inspection of impacts of the change on her PTs and her own practice. Results of analysis during these years pointed toward potential impacts on PTs' autonomy for their pedagogical growth (Lischka et al., 2020) but left Alyson with questions regarding her own assessment practices. In this study, Alyson and her critical friends retrospectively examined research documentation from analysis of data focused on Alyson and her interactions with PTs gathered from 2018 to 2022 in order to answer the question: In what ways does changing a course evaluation system through ungrading (Blum, 2020) impact the instructor's other assessment practices in a constructivist and relational mathematics methods course?

Methods

Alyson, the course instructor, collaborated with Natasha and Jennifer, second and third authors, as critical friends (Schuck & Russell, 2005). Natasha, formerly a graduate student of Alyson's, has collaborated with Alyson on a multi-year professional development project that produced several co-authored research and practitioner publications. Jennifer, a graduate student of Alyson's and a high school mathematics teacher, was an observer in Alyson's fall 2019 methods course as well as an active participant in research meetings. All three authors have grown to trust each other and openly share struggles and successes in teaching with each other. We engaged in self-study of teacher education practice that is improvement aimed (LaBoskey, 2007) and characterized by openness, collaboration, and reframing (Samaras & Freese, 2009). Through examination of artifacts of teaching and research documents, we aimed to build understanding of teacher-educator practices.

Data for this study were drawn from the second term (Fall 2019) in which Alyson engaged in an alternative assessment structure along with research documentation beginning in summer 2019. During Fall 2019, ten PTs participated in regular journaling exchanges with Alyson as part of course assignments, engaged in peer- and self-evaluations related to course assignments, and defended their final course grade in an evaluation conference. Data included: PT journals, class audio recordings, final evaluation conference transcripts, instructor journal, and the transcript of a whole group interview with PTs focused on grading practices (conducted by Jennifer). In addition, the authors recorded every research team meeting and kept collaborative meeting notes. Research progress on this data was disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in data from three years of research team analytical discussions and notes.

The researchers analyzed data in multiple phases that moved from examination of PT artifacts to coding research team meeting notes and transcripts. From January 2020 through early Fall 2021 (with Covid-19 interruptions) analysis began with qualitative coding of PTs' artifacts during which Natasha openly coded selected PT data, identifying initial themes of interest. Codes were reviewed by Alyson and Jennifer with any disagreements resolved. Next, all authors participated in analytical dialogues (Guilfoyle et al., 2004) to determine emerging themes the team wished to explore, which produced an interest in understanding authority roles related to assessment. Next, Natasha applied emergent codes related to authority to multiple data sources including: each PT's journal and final conference transcript, selected class recordings, the instructor journal, and the whole group interview. Alyson and Jennifer reviewed this layer of coding with discussion to reconcile any disagreements and then sorted within codes to determine emergent themes (Saldana, 2016). During this phase of analysis, we recorded all analytical conversations.

In Fall 2021, the research team was prompted by external reviewers of a manuscript in progress to revisit conversations around the use of rubrics in assessment. From December 2021 through Spring 2022, the team reviewed collaborative research notes to find evidence of discussion related to rubrics across the entire study. We transcribed meetings in which these discussions were found and coded them for the ways rubrics were discussed. This retrospective analysis, compiled in chronological order, offered an opportunity for "the researcher – me, now, investigating the archives and artifacts left by the informant – me, then" (Ham & Kane, 2004, p. 114) in order to gain perspective on how Alyson's practice had changed after implementing an alternative approach to assessment.

Trustworthiness of this study was supported by the use of multiple forms of data and through multiple authenticities (Grant & Lincoln, 2021). Ontological authenticity, or knowledge of self revealed, was developed by the sharing of story that demonstrated how Alyson had "come to understand their own tacit positions and recognize how they "own" them" (Grant & Lincoln, 2021, p. 5). Throughout the following findings section, we tell the story of how Alyson uncovered her tacit understandings about the role of rubrics in course assessment and confronted the way in which those understandings conflicted with her theoretical perspective on methods instruction. Educative authenticity, which "connects strongly to the premise of qualitative inquiry that information, data, and interpretations do not belong solely to those who hold power and/or money but rather are the right of the stakeholders to have and to work with" (Grant & Lincoln, 2021, p. 5), was evidenced by the foundational data representing conversations among Alyson and her PTs as found in course artifacts. In the next section, we provide a chronological narrative using evidence from data sources to describe how self-study provided opportunities for Alyson to both align her assessment practice more fully with her theoretical perspective and to come to understand the role of rubrics in her practice more fully.

Outcomes

In fall of 2018, Alyson first initiated changes to her course assessment system in mathematics methods and gathered data for a previous study. Her syllabus from 2018 shows that each major assignment was accompanied by a rubric, and the overall course grade was determined by Alyson based on the number of assignments on which PTs met expectations according to the rubric. Through a prior study, Alyson and Natasha explored the tensions between institutional expectations on grading and relational teacher education. When summarizing the results of this earlier research, Alyson wrote:

> *If I state on the syllabus what I want to do in grading and carry it out, then I am supported by the administration. So, the tension for feedback/assessment lies in the faculty member's hands. I need to be comfortable identifying the pieces of the cultural practices of teaching that stand in opposition to my beliefs about teaching and learning and stand against them. (Meeting Notes, 6/5/2019)*

However, the practice of using rubrics, a cultural practice of teaching, had not yet been revealed as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) for Alyson.

In July 2019, Alyson and Natasha were writing about the prior study and, in search of supporting literature, found Biggs (1996) which suggested the formation of an evaluation rubric based on performance growth. This reading, along with study findings, urged Alyson to again restructure course assessment for Fall 2019. Wanting PTs to take more ownership for their assessment, Alyson crafted a rubric for course evaluation that would require PTs to assess their own growth throughout the term. She planned to implement additional self- and peer-assessments aligned with the new rubric. Alyson noted that rubrics were essential "in order for students to be able to defend the grade they feel they have earned" (Meeting Notes, 8/15/19). Alyson said during a meeting:

> *You wrote here that there were times that I was hesitant to use the rubric or felt constrained by the categories? And I think that is something to think about, because I'm still thinking about grading as me being the one assigning the grade. And so, the rubric is still this measure that I'm using, but I don't think you get rid of the rubric. I think that's what sets the standard. (Meeting Transcript, 8/5/2019)*

At this time, Alyson still used rubrics in the traditional sense, a tool used for establishing grades consistently, however, this is the first time she referred to rubrics in a different way, as that of standard setting.

At the start of the 2019 term, Alyson provided the following rubric description for earning an A in the course:

> *The teacher is able to reflect on their own teaching using the language and content from the course; evaluate the decisions made about lesson planning and assessment; improve their practice; formulate a personal theory of mathematics teaching that demonstrates research-based practices; and generate new approaches to teaching based on content and principles discussed in class. (Methods Course Syllabus, Fall 2019 – Fall 2022)*

Throughout the fall 2019 term, Alyson collected data from the ten PTs in her class and continued thinking about the usefulness of the current course grading system. Studying the data from the previous year pushed the new inquiry toward consideration of the ways in which this new evaluation system supported PTs to develop autonomy or authority for their own pedagogical growth.

Analysis of the fall 2019 data started in January 2020, with a focus on understanding constructs related to power, authority, and autonomy. With interruptions due to Covid-19, analysis was slow but revealed the use of rubrics as an important element in the shifting of authority from instructor to PT (Atlas-ti Memo, August 2020) through the first phase of coding. In analytical discussions reflecting on the possible meanings of this theme, Alyson struggled with discomfort. Natasha said, "there's this separate thing going on between talking about the rubric and how the rubric is used, versus the students taking up authority" (Meeting Transcript, 8/10/20). Later, Alyson summarized by saying:

> *I think there are some cases where I use the rubric as a way to take the authority back from the students. But then there are other ways where I see the rubric as a way to kind of give them the authority to make some of these decisions for themselves. So, there's give and take. (Meeting Transcript, 8/10/20)*

As Alyson planned for another term of her methods course, this time during a pandemic, the team opted for no additional changes to the evaluation system but continued to consider the ways in which Alyson supported PTs' use of rubrics in self-evaluation.

During fall 2020, the team struggled to keep up with pandemic teaching requirements, presentations at virtual conferences, and moving data analysis forward. In spring 2021, the team completed phase two of coding and analysis of the 2019 data. In analytical discussion, rubrics surfaced again in the statements that PTs made in journals and class discussions. Alyson, explained her thoughts and questions:

> *I've been thinking about that rubric one. At first, I don't know what I feel about the rubric taking such a big role. I'm feeling better about that now. And I may change my mind once I get into it. But they're [PTs] going to get into their own classroom, and they're not going to have somebody standing there saying, This is good, this is bad. They need . . . some kind of standard to which they're comparing themselves, so that they can stop and think about, is this practice that I'm doing a good practice? . . . And so, I almost think that shifting them to thinking about what is the standard is not really a bad thing? (Meeting Transcript, 4/29/21)*

These ideas prodded Alyson to think more carefully about how she presented rubrics and standards to her PTs during methods classes. She said "if I want to shift the power to the students [PTs] but the rubric is still sitting there . . . I need to think about how to talk about that with them, in better ways" (Meeting Transcript, 5/20/21).

In fall 2021, as the team continued to write about this study, external reviewers of a manuscript in progress urged them to consider how Alyson's thinking about the use of rubrics had changed. Alyson, Natasha, and Jennifer recognized that the delays in writing caused by the pandemic provided an opportunity to examine evidence of how Alyson's thinking changed over time as recorded in meeting notes, transcripts, and analysis logs. They proceeded with a search of this data for discussion of rubrics and organized those conversations and transcripts as a tool for reflection. Reflecting on these changes, Alyson realized that part of her struggle related to the role of rubrics as tools for standardization (Meeting Notes, 4/20/22), which was not her goal as a constructivist teacher. She stated, "My current thought on rubrics is that they are guideposts for students but not the totality of grading (in any course) and that I provide them for PTs to have knowledge of what to aim for" (Meeting Transcript, 4/27/22). Rather than being the solitary tool used to determine grades in consistent ways, Alyson now viewed rubrics as a tool to both communicate best practices and support PTs in evaluating their own pedagogical growth. Moving forward, Alyson plans to attend to the ways in which she discusses rubrics and standards with her PTs, with a clear understanding of the ways in which she intends to use rubrics in supporting their pedagogical growth.

Discussion

At the beginning of Alyson's alternative assessment journey, she relied on prior experiences in mathematics teaching and designed an assessment system that lacked numerical grades but included rubrics describing expectations for success. As found in the literature (Bush & Greer, 1999; Perlman, 2003; Thompson & Senk, 1998), rubrics were a familiar tool that clarified expectations and supported her ability to justify earned grades for students. She removed numerical rules but was still using rubrics in a traditional sense. Although questions of authority and autonomy led the direction of the analysis, questions about the use of rubrics surfaced in discussions of the data. PTs' discussion of rubrics found in data caused Alyson to reframe ideas about rubrics to thinking more closely aligned with her goals. Through self-study and critical friend conversations, Alyson recognized this incongruence, reframed her thinking, and is working toward communicating about rubrics and grading in new ways.

Ungrading (Blum, 2020) is a growing trend among educators at all levels. However, research that examines these practices is not keeping pace; grading practices merit scholarly inquiry (Supiano, 2022; Talbert, 2022). This self-study

begins to provide research that informs how alternative assessment, as a form of ungrading, is enacted and the ways in which it impacts both learners and instructors. Grading practices provide necessary structures for all learners to find success (Delpit, 1988; Wolf & Stevens, 2007) so the removal of these structures may have unintended consequences for learners. Though this study did not find unintended consequences, it revealed that removing one grading structure (numerical grades) produced an unintentional focus on another structure (rubrics). The ways in which traditional structures such as rubrics and grading operate on authority and autonomy for learning warrant closer inspection (Pace & Hemmings, 2006).

Alyson learned about her own assessment practice as the authors examined data representing the voices of Alyson's PTs alongside Alyson, Jennifer, and Natasha's wonderings about the impacts of changing assessment systems. This research provides an example of "teacher educator knowledge as that which is enacted in practice, while engaged in one's professional activities, as constantly evolving and developing from experience, and as situated in a particular context" (Vanasssche & Berry, 2020, p. 188). Through this example, the field of teacher preparation can "focus on critically analyzing the (normative) beliefs and assumptions about teaching that underpin practice" (Vanassche & Berry, 2020, p. 207). Assessment practices are not often critically examined yet have the potential to influence the ways in which prospective teachers develop as educators. Additional research is needed to better understand the ways in which grading, or ungrading, shapes learning.

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Trials and Tribulations of Transitioning Into Leadership

A Self-Study of Teacher Education Leadership

Brandon M. Butler & Diane Yendol-Hoppey

Critical Friendship | Tensions | Teacher Education Leadership | Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices | Reciprocal Mentoring

Self-study research into teacher education leadership is still in its relative infancy (Allison & Ramirez, 2020). Much of this research has been conducted at the higher levels of administration, which include the deanship (e.g., Clift et al., 2015), with some scholarship on low-level administration, (e.g., Allison & Ramirez, 2016; Haniford et al., 2021; Kitchen, 2016). In this self-study, the authors - a college dean and a program administrator - sought to understand what shared experiences exist among TE administrators, the challenges/possibilities of enacting our administrative roles and responsibilities, and how reciprocal mentoring would assist in the learning of teacher education leadership. We used Berry's (2004) tensions of teaching teachers to understand the tensions of serving in teacher education leadership. In this paper, we focus on the tensions of action and intent and planning and being responsive.

Introduction

Given the rapidly changing context of higher education, higher education leaders must understand the social, political, and economic context if they are to support faculty and staff in change and transformation. According to Teague (2015), one issue "is who will serve as the next generation of leaders. With the significant turn-over in leadership at colleges and universities expected in the coming years, attention must be paid to identifying and developing well-qualified and prepared leaders" (p. 1). The need to focus on developing leadership capacity is essential given that Rowley and Sherman (2003) illustrate that leadership positions are often filled by academics with limited experience in formal management. Although evidence suggests leadership development is essential (Boyatzis et al., 2006; Gmelch & Buller, 2015), formal leadership development in higher education remains lacking, with most leadership development the result of learning on the job (Anderson & Johnson, 2006; Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020).

In this self-study, we aim to add to the literature on teacher education leadership (e.g., Snow et al., 2022), by investigating our transition into leadership, Diane as college dean, and Brandon as program director. Recognizing the lack of training and support for leading in higher education (Allison & Ramirez, 2020; Mills, 2010), coupled with the isolation experienced by teacher education leaders (Loughran, 2015, 2021), we wondered how reciprocal mentoring and critical friendship across leadership levels would help us understand and develop our leadership practices. As such, we

sought to answer the following questions, how do we understand the tensions we experience while engaged in formal teacher education leadership?

Literature Review

Understanding and navigating the leadership challenges of an increasingly complex higher education environment is even more demanding in colleges of education facing unprecedented pressures from outside and inside the institution. Seismic shifts in K-12 education require colleges of education to have leadership prepared to work with radically altered public school partners, licensure requirements, high-stakes assessments of teacher education programs, declining enrollment, and a profession publicly under attack (Hollins & Warner, 2021). Coll et al. (2018) state that,

> *What is clear is that education [leaders] are expected to be trailblazers in the current tumultuous process of change and adaptation. They experience both internal and external stress related to change. Internal stressors come from the institution itself as budgets are squeezed, enrollments shift, and accountability demands mount. External stressors come from school districts that hire the teachers produced by the college, policymakers at all levels wanting improved or different K-12 student outcomes who think colleges of education need to produce the teachers that can do this, and think-tanks both those supportive of and those critical of teachers and public schooling (p. 5).*

These challenges require colleges of education to have leadership positioned at all levels to reinvent and innovate if they are to remain competitive. Teacher education leaders cannot innovate alone, nor can faculty innovate without the support of leadership.

In a previous study (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020), we wrote of teacher education leaders "working through" faculty to affect desired change. The concept of "working through" others requires formal leaders in higher education to rely on faculty to identify, design, implement, and sustain various curricular innovations. In higher education, faculty are responsible for curriculum, yet higher education leadership is often expected to hold faculty accountable for this work (Kim & Maloney, 2020). Enrollment is under scrutiny as it trends downward (Sutcher et al, 2019; Wiggan et al., 2021), and accusations are made by those outside academia that programs are not relevant or needed (Aydarova & Berliner, 2018). Given the attacks teacher education face to remain relevant and bridge the research-practice gap, this responsibility is real to the survival of teacher preparation programs.

The challenges for teacher education leaders related to working through others are many (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020; Kim & Maloney, 2020). First, faculty must collaborate with one another to build program and curricular innovations (Hollins & Warner, 2021). This collaboration requires support from the whole faculty, not the work of a few. Second, as faculty collaborate, they must appreciate the diverse expertise colleagues must bring to the table and that knowledge needs to be recognized and integrated in a cohesive manner (Hollins & Warner, 2021). Faculty must identify and agree upon a body of knowledge important to quality program design. Third, faculty must have the prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to design quality programs (Hollins & Warner, 2021; Snow et al., 2022). No one person possesses that knowledge and as a result, disparate knowledge is required to succeed, including knowledge typically found at the university level and in schools. Finally, faculty must take collective responsibility for assuring program quality and continuous improvement (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018; Hollins & Warner, 2021). When these conditions are present, higher education leaders are positioned to work through faculty (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020; Hollins & Warner, 2021).

Theoretical Perspective

Berry (2004, 2007a, 2007b) has written extensively about the tensions teacher educators experience while teaching teachers. She noted these tensions reflect the "ever-present ambiguity of teachers' (and teacher educators') work" (Berry, 2004, p. 1313), and are meant to "capture both the feelings of internal turmoil that many teacher educators experience in their teaching about teaching as they find themselves pulled in different directions and the difficulties that many teacher educators experience as they learn to recognize and manage these opposing forces" (p. 1313). Berry identified six tensions that produce conflict within the teacher educator's practice, including telling and growth,

confidence and uncertainty, action and intent, safety, and challenge, valuing and reconstructing experience, and planning and being responsive.

Teacher educators have used these tensions to investigate their practice (e.g., McConn & Mason, 2019), but we were interested in understanding how these tensions existed within our work as teacher education leaders (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). Like other teacher education leaders (Allison & Ramirez, 2020; North et al., 2021), we struggled with the demands and expectations placed upon leaders. As such, we sought to apply these tensions to our leadership experiences and, building on Berry's work, offer our conception of tensions in teacher education leadership (Table 1).

Table 1

Contrasting Tensions of Teaching in Teacher Education and Teacher Education Leadership

Tensions	In Teaching (from Berry, 2007b)	In Teacher Education Leadership
Telling and Growth	This tension is embedded in teacher educators' learning how to balance their desire to tell prospective teachers about teaching and providing opportunities for prospective teachers to learn about teaching for themselves.	This tension is embedded in leaders' learning how to balance their desire to tell faculty and provide specific learning opportunities related to strengthening teacher education as opposed to relying on them to learn about how to strengthen and innovate in teacher education for themselves.
Confidence and Uncertainty	This is a tension experienced by teacher educators as they move away from the confidence of established approaches to teaching to explore new, more uncertain approaches to teacher education.	This is a tension experienced by teacher education leaders as they balance what they know about teacher education (and the culture of higher education/teacher education) with learning on-the-job how to lead innovation/change in teacher education.
Action and Intent	This tension arises from discrepancies between goals that teacher educators set out to achieve in their teaching and the ways in which these goals can be inadvertently undermined by the actions chosen to attain them.	This tension arises from discrepancies between goals teacher education leaders set out to achieve and the ways in which these goals can be inadvertently undermined by the actions chosen to attain them.
Safety and Challenge	This tension comes from teacher educators engaging students in forms of pedagogy intended to challenge and confront thinking about teaching and learning, and pushing students beyond the climate of safety necessary for learning to take place.	This tension emerges in the discomfort created in the lived experience of the teacher education leader when engaging faculty in activities intended to challenge and confront program innovation, and pushing faculty beyond the status quo.
Valuing and Reconstructing Experience	This tension is embedded in the teacher educator's role of helping prospective teachers recognize the value of personal experience in learning to teach, yet at the same time, helping them to see that there is more	This tension is embedded in the leader's role of helping faculty recognize the value of their past experience and expertise as important to the puzzle, yet at the same time, helping them see there is more to teacher education than individual expertise and recognize the importance of building new and more comprehensive

Tensions	In Teaching (from Berry, 2007b)	In Teacher Education Leadership
	to teaching than simply acquiring experience.	understandings of high-quality teacher education programs.
Planning and Being Responsive	This tension emerges from difficulties associated with implementing a predetermined curriculum and responding to learning opportunities that arise within the context of practice.	This tension emerges from difficulties associated with changing current practices and responding to learning opportunities that arise within the leadership context.

Methods

Manke (2004) urged leaders to "consider self-study as a mode of learning about administration that can make great contributions to educators' understanding of the context and practice that surround them" (p. 1389). Although we were leaders in different institutional and professional contexts, we saw benefit in collaborating with one another. Allison and Ramirez (2020) argued that "Leadership self-study inquiries heighten the importance of working with a trusted colleague, someone who is a confidential sounding board, provides an outside perspective unencumbered by institutional politics, and dispassionately challenges rationalizing or defensive thinking" (p. 1206). Accordingly, we framed our work through critical friendship, which helped us "act more wisely, prudently, and critically" as we served in teacher education leadership positions (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 161). We also viewed our collaboration as a form of reciprocal mentoring, which Paris (2013) defined as "pairs of two equal, though differently skilled, experts who act in the role of mentor and mentee to each other for mutual benefit" (p. 136).

Context

By summer 2023, Diane had concluded her sixth and final year as dean of the college of education at a high-research university in the southeastern United States. Before becoming a dean, Diane worked at three very-high research universities in the mid-Atlantic and southeastern United States. She held ever-increasing leadership responsibilities, including center director, department chair, and associate dean of educator preparation before becoming dean at her current institution. Diane returned to faculty in fall 2022 following six years as dean. In summer 2023, Brandon completed his 12th year at a very-high research university in the mid-Atlantic. Brandon has held several program-level administrative roles, serving as program director for two graduate degree programs and coordinator for two non-degree certificate programs.

Data Collection

Data collection began in spring 2018. We first shared professional autobiographies (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001), which provided us with insights into the professional work of the other, allowing for a degree of trust and relationship building (Branyon et al., 2022). Afterward, we generated periodic individual narratives related to our work as teacher education leaders. We contributed 13 narratives during the 2018-2019 academic year. During that time, we found ourselves distracted by academic and leadership responsibilities and renewed our collaboration through a book study of Clift et al.'s (2015), "Inside the Role of Dean". During the 2019-2020 academic year, we individually wrote narrative responses to each chapter and engaged in ongoing dialogue.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in three levels. First, we used Berry's (2004) six tensions of teaching as *a priori* codes for thematic coding of data categorically (Saldana, 2021). We individually identified themes and then discussed passage meanings and developed agreement. We aligned these themes with their respective tension, where we looked for patterns and generated thematic interpretations for how teacher education leaders experienced tensions in their work. Following this initial thematic analysis, we identified two tensions (action and intent; valuing and reconstructing experience) as the focus of this self-study, having focused on others (confidence and uncertainty; safety and challenge)

in another paper (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). For this second round of analysis, we turned to process coding (Saldana, 2021). Our final round of analysis used focused coding, from which the results of this self-study emerged. Codes for the two tensions were analyzed separately to ensure that categories and sub-categories aligned with the pertinent tension. To ensure trustworthiness, we used reciprocal mentoring and critical friendship, and provided exemplars using "previously defined categories validated from research" (Mena & Russell, 2017, p. 115).

Findings

Teacher education leadership is a lonely and time-intensive enterprise (Loughran, 2021). The work of improving teacher education is complex, with much of it taking place behind the scenes. To accomplish the myriad goals of teacher education, colleges of education require leaders who are knowledgeable about teacher education and invested in reform. In this section, we first explore the tension of action and intent and how we worked to achieve the goals of teacher education while countering those actions that inadvertently undermine the accomplishment of those goals. We then turn to the tension of valuing and reconstructing experience to highlight how we reconstruct individual and collective understandings of teacher education to improve the teacher education experience.

Exhibiting Care and "Working Through the Divide" as Teacher Education Leaders

Being Concerned About Good Teacher Education

Although having leaders invested in teacher education is necessary for the long-term success of teacher education, there is no guarantee that those in leadership have professional backgrounds or identities associated with teacher education. This is increasingly likely as distinct colleges of education are combined with other colleges or embedded with departments and programs not associated with teacher preparation. At one point, Diane's college was at risk of being combined with another college at her university. She expressed her reservations with senior leadership, noting, "I told my provost that at this institution you need a teacher education dean to work with the urban school districts." She went on to highlight the challenges teacher educators might face if they did not have a college-level voice both inside and outside the institution, "It is just too complex and a department chair will likely not have the clout to raise money or change policy."

Diane was worried about what might happen to the positive developments in improving teacher education if she stepped down, stating, "The organization cannot rely on one person giving up their life though to do the dean work … I hope they can find a great next dean who is a teacher educator, but I don't get to pick my replacement." As a dean, Diane was viewing teacher education change from a senior administrative position. Alternatively, Brandon, who was a program director and teacher education faculty, saw dedicated faculty searches as a vehicle through which change could be affected long after she stepped down as a dean. He asked, "Is there a way you can have a voice in the matter? I know you've got a number of searches going and your hope is to fill them with individuals who commit to strengthening the teacher education work."

In caring about teacher education, perhaps one of the most significant challenges for a leader is the distance developed from teacher education practice. Curriculum has historically been the purview of faculty and programs, with senior leadership maintaining some distance. As a teacher educator, Diane found this challenging because as dean, "We give up much of our ability to directly impact curriculum and programs, work with students, and engage in creative activities." As someone with aspirations toward higher levels of leadership and who cared deeply about teacher education, Brandon acknowledged this tension, saying, "I understand the further you are away from the faculty position, the less you have to do with the nuts and bolts." He added, "You become 'big picture,' when then some faculty critique you because you're overly broad and not providing specifics, but if you provide the specifics they then complain because you're meddling in the domain of faculty responsibility."

Seeing the Big Picture as a Teacher Education Leader

In discussing our leadership experience, we wondered if faculty resistance to change was due to one's location in the institution. For us, being a teacher education faculty member was akin to being a classroom teacher, with Diane noting, "It reminds me of when I was a teacher and couldn't understand the principal sometimes. Usually, I didn't have a complete enough picture to fully inform budget and other choices." The question was less if there was a "conspiracy"

toward change, it was how much of the “big picture” did faculty have about a college or a given situation. Diane stated, “The dean has the advantage of seeing the broader picture to help facilitate the implementation of an idea.” But we also acknowledged that leaders must engage faculty with the overarching goals of the institution, with Diane highlighting her attempts, “I have tried to provide faculty members with opportunities to inform the strategic plan and budget allocation. I learned very quickly that there is a big picture one must possess to fully participate in these activities and full participation in a process like that takes a tremendous amount of time.”

As teacher education leaders, we want to affect positive change, and to do so as quickly as possible. We felt poor teacher education would negatively affect student learning in K-12 classrooms. At the same time, we acknowledged change was a process. Diane argued, “Sometimes you have to acknowledge the incremental outcomes. None of it is fast and that is problematic because the work of teacher education needs to be done with a sense of urgency.” What was problematic was the lack of collaboration in achieving change. For us, we felt we were individual voices advocating for change rather than achieving as part of a collective. Diane noted the lack of collaboration at the four institutions she had worked in her career, stating, “I have watched too many faculty spend more time trying to take someone else down than working together.”

Re/Constructing a Comprehensive Picture of Teacher Education as Leaders

Shifting Interpretations of Teacher Education Leadership

Leadership changes in higher education are inevitable. The average tenure of a dean in a college of education is approximately three years (Coll et al., 2018). Department chairs serve approximately six years, with most returning to faculty and some into higher administration (Gmelch & Miskin, 2011). Leaders carry different goals and visions for their departments and colleges, mannerisms and ways of being, and ways of engaging faculty and other stakeholders. It is also inevitable that each of these may shift during one’s tenure as a leader as they continue learning the work of leadership. For us, our experiences with leaders have varied and directly inform - or challenge - the ways in which we see ourselves as leaders. Brandon reflected on the dean who hired him at his institution, noting that she “was a model of how to care for others… She clearly cared and interacted with her faculty on a daily basis. I knew that if I had to talk with her about something, her door was always open.” He highlighted the need for positive leadership, as his dean during this study was less personable and constructed barriers between faculty and administration. Having served on faculty and as an administrator at four different institutions, Diane noted the lack of positive leadership examples, stating, “The experiences I did have were with negative examples, not positive ones.”

Having served in various administrative roles, Diane helped Brandon make sense of his experiences with his dean. She replied, “Communication is central to being a good leader. You can have good and necessary ideas but if you cannot communicate intentions, then you’re going to lose more faculty than you would if you did.” She continued, “You’re never going to please everyone - that’s impossible - but you can mitigate dissatisfaction through proper communication and structuring of processes.” Brandon found this feedback assistive, replying, “Yes, this is an important trick - proper communication and structuring processes.” But, having lacked proper models for such practice, Brandon added, “Not ever really sure how to do that though. [I guess] you know it when you see it.”

Experiencing Challenges in Promoting Change

If the goal of teacher education is to support continued positive socio-cultural growth and change through the development of effective educational practitioners, it stands to reason that teacher education itself requires leaders intimately familiar with best practices and scholarship associated with teacher education. However, as we noted, few leaders with oversight over teacher education view themselves as holding expertise *in* teacher education. This reality negatively impacts the ability of those invested in promoting change in teacher education from doing so. To make sense of our place and responsibilities as teacher education leaders, we often discussed the substance of reform initiatives, particularly those that went beyond the “surface level,” which generated faculty resistance. One conversation was indicative of this constant struggle:

> *Diane: …Change requires a lot of time, thought, and policy development with layer upon layer of approval at our place.*

Brandon: Change has been hard when it comes to things beyond course/program curriculum. To try and incorporate things into tenure and promotion, or basic faculty collaboration and communicative spaces, is met with resistance.

Diane: So, faculty here often resist administration suggesting changes. When the faculty aren't policing and improving themselves, this is really frustrating.

Diane also sought to identify the cause of faculty resistance, stating, "I believe it is aloo fear and worry. Perhaps they don't have confidence that they can do it or they believe that change will negatively impact their life." Noting how she had to rethink her leadership to achieve change, Diane continued, "Expanding the sphere of listening and empathy is a goal for me. This becomes easier as I gain more confidence in my ability to communicate and navigate difficult conversations."

Building New and Existing Programs to Improve a College

Although we experienced challenges as teacher education leaders, we also found success in achieving some aims. For Diane, an immediate priority was creating a learning culture, particularly among her leadership team. Through them, she hoped she would have a "team that is powerful enough to create a learning organizational culture within the culture." She added they were "beginning to have a vision of where we are going with the college." This approach reflected her mindset of accomplishing goals by working through others. Diane said, "I have been told this by a former dean when I was an associate dean. I agree totally but the approach only feels urgent when certain conditions exist." For Brandon, his accomplishments were more limited in scope. Over several years he worked with faculty and school partners to develop a school-university partnership, and then was tasked with revising and leading an existing program. He noted, "I took on program administration with little understanding of what would be expected of me… [but] I took on the master's degree program thinking this was my chance to put my stamp on something institutionally."

In contrast, Diane, as a dean, had to gain the support of faculty and was forced to use other measures to achieve success. Brandon asked, "How have you been able to secure legitimacy for what you want to do?" She said, "I have placed pressure points and aligned accreditation demands that introduce the importance to faculty (which has led to some changes)." Diane also mentioned the need for specificity and clear communication when building a message about a college's priorities, stating, "Check in frequently. Recognize incremental and large success." As dean, Diane met with each faculty member during her first year to get to know them, met with departments each semester, met with faculty - by rank - as a group, led monthly leadership team meetings, and held regular faculty assembly meetings. Achieving success meant working as part of a team, with Diane arguing, "I don't know anything that doesn't take a real team to be successful."

Providing faculty with opportunities to engage with leadership and substantively influence program, departmental, and college goals and their enactment is necessary to achieve meaningful teacher education reform. Early in our study, Brandon asked Diane what she saw as the dean's role. Given that she was figuring out the dean role, Diane expressed uncertainty but then posed a question. "What would I hope a good dean would do?" She answered her own question, stating that a dean should "provide a clear vision with clear ways to achieve that vision, [and] nurture faculty and programs that can help achieve that vision." This brings us full circle, in that we believe for leaders to affect meaningful teacher education reform, leaders must be concerned with the pursuit of good teacher education and be intimately familiar with teacher education practice, making them, truly, teacher education leaders.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, we highlighted how important leadership is in affecting positive change and improvement in teacher education. Teacher education requires leaders who have a deep commitment, care, and vision for teacher education, but also understand the urgent demands placed on teacher educators to reform teacher education (Hollins & Warner, 2021). However, without substantive reform in how teacher education leaders are trained and supported, it is likely that teacher education will not meet its full potential (Anderson & Johnson, 2006; Coll et al., 2018).

Perhaps a persistent challenge facing teacher education leadership is the long-standing perception of teacher education itself. Olsen and Buchanan (2017) noted that teacher education is "not typically viewed or treated as a distinct profession but rather as a job or role that educators drift into" (p. 28). If teacher education continues to be viewed as somewhat "self-evident" (Zeichner, 2005), requiring little support or training to effectively operate as a teacher educator, then it is little surprise that similar views are held toward teacher education leadership. The reality, as the research on teacher education leadership has shown, is far different. Clift (2011) noted that "the life, obligations, responsibilities, and roles of a faculty member do not provide a clear framework for assuming the role and responsibility of a teacher education administrator" (p. 168).

Successful teacher education requires knowledgeable and effective leaders. However, leaders require supportive learning environments to develop in their roles and responsibilities. Such environments may consist of formal training programs, learning modules and mentors provided institutionally, and professional development offered through professional organizations. In our case, we found reciprocal mentoring and critical friendship effective in supporting one another through the trials and tribulations of transitioning into leadership. We felt less isolated in our institutional environments, and we felt supported by someone familiar with our struggles. We also found benefits in exploring our growth through self-study research, as the shift into administration can create challenges in actualizing your scholarly identity (Butler & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020). Our collaboration provided us with the space to understand and improve our leadership practices while generating scholarship about that growth.

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Voices in Debriefing Mathematics Methods Teaching

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Debriefing | Mathematics Teacher Educators | Knowledge

Mathematics teacher educators (MTEs) use of knowledge in teaching has been described categorically, yet scholars using self-study in mathematics education have called for additional study of use of knowledge in practice. We focused on MTE debriefing with preservice teachers (PTs) following early field teaching. Using self-study methodology and D'Ambrosio's voices construct we analyzed transcripts of MTEs' debriefing with PTs. Findings include three ways the MTE used voice of mathematics teacher education as a discipline in debriefing: bridging, exploring, and telling. Findings underscore how teacher educators use knowledge in the moment of teaching about teaching and how teacher educators struggle to maintain an interpretive stance.

Introduction

Mathematics teacher educators' (MTEs) post-teaching or debriefing conversations with preservice teachers (PTs) include providing "guidance and feedback" (Lampert et al., 2013, p. 231) and "avoiding judgments" (Brown et al., 2020, p. 89), while focusing on the lessons' mathematics. Debriefing conversations after an "educative experience" include a "purposive discussion" of experience (Lederman, 1992, p. 145) for reflection (Pearson & Smith, 1985) that produces learning. Yet, debriefing conversations can involve power and control issues that limit PTs' reflection (Sundli, 2007). To interpret our interactive moves during debriefing conversations, we share findings from a self-study of our debriefing practices. We argue that MTEs use the voice of the discipline (D'Ambrosio, 2004) of mathematics teacher education to inform interactive moves during debriefing conversations.

Study Context

We consider ourselves "constructivist teachers" (Steffe & D'Ambrosio, 1995, p. 148) who create models (Ulrich et al., 2014) of PTs' "ways of operating as they confront situations in mathematics teaching and learning" (Kastberg, 2014, p. 353). Such models are developed through our interactions with PTs learning about teaching. At the time of the study, we were four constructivist mathematics methods teachers at Purdue University teaching mathematics methods in an undergraduate teacher education program. We supported PTs' mathematics teaching using "children's mathematics" (i.e., mathematics children develop; Steffe, 1994, p. 132). Models of PTs using children's mathematics and our cultures, knowledge, and experiences inform our teaching of mathematics teaching (Loughran, 2007). Sue-Ellen and Signe are white Americans and long-time collaborators, with experience teaching post-secondary mathematics. At the study's beginning, Sue-Ellen had taught mathematics methods (10 years) and early childhood (5 years). Signe had taught mathematics (10 years) and mathematics methods (15 years). Mahtob is Iranian and had taught methods once and mathematics in Iran. Lizhen is Chinese with a linguistics background who had not taught methods. Sue-Ellen, Mahtob, and Lizhen were doctoral students and Signe was a mathematics education professor during data collection. As novice MTEs, Lizhen and Mahtob were attentive to Signe and her experience creating a power differential in the team.

MTEs play a significant role in PTs' views of mathematics (Drake, 2006), related emotions, and mathematics teaching (Bibby, 2002; Jenßen et al., 2021). Purdue University required nine mathematics credits prior to a three-credit mathematics methods course in preparation for student teaching. Methods built from PTs' mathematics experiences and included an elementary school practicum (early-field) with nine, four-hour sessions. During the practicum, PTs interviewed elementary students, conducted whole-class assessments, co-taught one mathematics lesson, and solo-taught another. PTs engaged in one debriefing conversation. Using pre-planned priming questions, like "Tell me about what you found exciting in your lesson," and "Tell me about a student's mathematical idea that you were curious about during the lesson" (critical-friend dialogue, Sept. 19, 2018), MTEs initiated PTs' reflection on teaching and attended to PTs' interpretation and use of children's mathematics to inform teaching decisions.

PTs' early-field teaching provides opportunities for reflection on teaching (Brown et al., 2020). MTEs can support PTs (Stanulis & Floden, 2009) through debriefing, yet there is unequal power and control (Sundli, 2007) in such interactions. Additionally, MTEs may struggle to engage PTs in wondering about teaching rather than noticing (Roller, 2019) and retelling events. Brown et al. (2020) illustrated how debriefing conversations emerge as PTs and MTEs share views of events and potential action. Martin and Russell (2018) described teacher educators' stances in debriefing conversations, highlighting differences between transmission and interpretive stances. While debriefing conversations can promote PTs' reflection on teaching (Graham & Young, 2000; Pearson & Smith, 1985), how MTEs experience such conversations is less clear. We use self-study methodology to document, interpret, and improve our debriefing conversations.

In debriefing conversations our interactive moves built on constructivist listening (Weissglass, 1990) to motivate PTs' development of "authority of experience" (Munby & Russell, 1994, p. 92). Listening is the "main component of constructivist teaching" (D'Ambrosio, 2004, p. 136). MTEs create models of PTs' mathematics teaching by listening to their descriptions of mathematics teaching. D'Ambrosio (2004) described three voices involved in listening during teacher-learner (i.e., MTE-PT in our study) interactions: voice of the discipline (VOD), voice of the learner, and the teacher's inner voice. Due to space considerations, we focus on MTEs using their VOD of mathematics teacher education. VOD includes MTEs' experiences, practices, and pedagogical knowledge of mathematics teacher education as well as "ways of thinking, strategies and understanding" (D'Ambrosio, 2004, p. 137) of mathematics teacher education. For example, an MTE's experience teaching and learning mathematics, such as subtraction, informs how she observes and listens to PTs' accounts of teaching subtraction.

Aims/Objectives

The goal of the self-study was to document, interpret, and improve our debriefing practice. The question guiding our inquiry is: How do MTEs use the voice of the discipline in debriefing PTs' mathematics teaching?

Methods

Analysis of our debriefing conversations using the D'Ambrosio's (2004) VOD is part of a project focused on improving debriefing practice. Data collection and analysis (2017 – present) were challenged by MTEs' life events including COVID-19, completing PhDs, and beginning new positions. From 11 recordings of four MTEs' debriefing conversations with different PTs (spring and fall 2018), each MTE selected one debriefing conversation.

Our self-initiated, improvement-aimed, interactive study utilized self-study methodology (LaBoskey, 2004). Two monthly critical-friend dialogues were instrumental as provocations for reframing and interpreting our debriefing experiences. Critical-friend dialogues involve "interchange of thought or talk" (Placier et al., 2005, p. 57) through cycles of critique and inquiry. Dialogues build knowledge by exploring divergent views and meanings of convergent views. We acknowledge the power differentials in the team. Signe led the critical-friend dialogues, while Sue-Ellen acted to mediate Signe's dominant voice by interjecting questions and inviting Mahtob and Lizhen to contribute.

We applied three qualitative methods to two data sources (debriefing conversations and related critical-friend dialogues). First, we used D'Ambrosio's (2004) VOD to analyze one debriefing conversation per participant during a critical-friend dialogue (Placier et al., 2005). Dialogues produced retrospective accounts of debriefing conversations and VOD uses. We discussed factors including time, place, relationships, and the VOD that informed our actions. Second, we

separately analyzed the four debriefing transcripts using the VOD. We engaged in analytic dialogues (Guilfoyle et al., 2004; Placier et al., 2005) of our analysis resulting in three categories of VOD uses during debriefing conversations: bridging, exploring, and telling. Third, to address educative authenticity (Grant & Lincoln, 2021) of our interpretive inquiry, we used the categories to analyze our critical-friend dialogues. This step addresses what we learned and how we came to know about our debriefing practice. All four debriefing conversations contained evidence of categories of VOD uses, yet we used Mahtob, Lizhen, and Signe's debriefing conversations in this report.

Outcomes

MTEs used the VOD in debriefing conversations in three ways: bridging, exploring, and telling. We represented these interactive moves in vignettes using excerpts from Mahtob's, Lizhen's, and Signe's debriefing conversations and critical-friend dialogues.

Bridging: Mahtob's Debriefing

For bridging, the MTE uses two ideas: (1) one from her VOD and (2) another from her hypothesis regarding the PT's view of teaching and children's mathematics. Using these two ideas, the MTE attempts to create an opportunity for a PT to reflect on teaching or children's mathematics. Importantly, while the MTE may have these two ideas, her attempts to bridge may be unsuccessful in encouraging such reflection.

Mahtob's debriefing conversation followed her observation of Allie's lesson using base-ten blocks and procedures to solve two-digit subtraction problems. Throughout the course, Mahtob was challenged by Allie's approach to teaching as telling and demonstrating procedures, since Mahtob viewed children's mathematics as developing through challenges to their existing concepts. Allie modified her lesson plan to address Mahtob's suggestion that third graders use base-ten blocks to model numbers and solve subtraction problems. In the excerpt, Allie noted that the child's answers using the blocks and the procedure were different.

> *Mahtob: What was the most exciting or interesting part of your lesson?*
>
> *Allie: I think when I was looking at the papers they [children] were turning in. Cause you suggested to do the algorithm and do the blocks and have them solve it differently, and a lot of the kids had a right answer for the block method and the wrong answer on the same page using the algorithm. So, it was really exciting.*
>
> *Mahtob: I see. So, was that the exit ticket that you are talking about?*
>
> *Allie: … Yea it was really exciting to see that they were really using that [block method].*
>
> *Mahtob: Yea, cause I think so far that's what you have been observing with them [children]. That they're not...*
>
> *Allie: [finishing Mahtob's sentence] Getting carrying over [regrouping tens to ones in the standard algorithm]*
>
> *Mahtob: Yea.*
>
> (Mahtob-Allie debriefing, fall 2019)

In the debriefing conversation, Mahtob used her idea from her VOD regarding children's interpretation of ones and tens place in two-digit numbers. After Allie described the children's actions, Mahtob used her VOD in relation to Allie's noticing the differences in children's use of blocks and procedures. This effort to bridge created a dialogic space for Allie to reflect on the children's use of blocks and the subtraction procedure. During the critical-friend dialogue, Signe and Lizhen affirmed Mahtob's efforts to bridge using her pedagogical knowledge that mathematics teaching should use children's mathematics. Signe described Mahtob's agreement with Allie as "letting her talk" (critical-friend dialogue, June 4, 2021). Mahtob described the space as an opportunity for Allie to reflect on the children's work and share new ideas about their thinking. Yet, Mahtob was concerned. "I don't want to push too hard…. because I felt like when I'm

doing that, she just stopped engaging….” Mahtob described trying to bridge to Allie’s interest in the children’s engagement with the blocks and her challenge to keep the children focused. “...I was trying to redirect her to talk about the challenges [in teaching] mathematics or children’s mathematics that she found.” Mahtob eventually realized that her bridging move would not result in Allie attending to the children’s mathematics:

> *So, during the debriefing, I wanted to point it [children’s mathematics] out. But I think she was excited about the lesson. I just didn’t want to bring it up into her face and say, ‘I don’t think so.’ I was hoping that when she analyzed her students’ work, she might actually get to that [children’s mathematics] (Mahtob’s critical-friend dialogue, June 4, 2021).*

Mahtob’s responses to Signe’s and Lizhen’s perspectives on the VOD made explicit her difficulty eliciting Allie’s reflection on the children’s use of regrouping and blocks. Mahtob’s bridging move drew from children’s mathematics she saw to her hypothesis about Allie’s focus on a subtraction procedure. Although Mahtob elicited Allie’s description of the differences between the children’s use of the blocks and the procedure, Allie returned to the importance of teaching, regrouping, and managing the children’s behavior. Not wanting to risk Allie disengaging, but with her idea from the VOD still in mind, Mahtob hoped her questions would provide Allie an opportunity to connect her observations to children’s mathematics.

Exploring: Lizhen’s Debriefing

As constructivist teachers, one goal during the debriefing conversation was identifying ideas within the PTs’ description of teaching that related to our VOD. An MTE uses ideas from her VOD to hear and see PT’s teaching. In exploring, the MTE uses her ideas from the VOD to create questions or statements in her search for evidence of the PT’s view of teaching and children’s mathematics. In contrast with bridging, exploring requires only the MTE’s idea(s) from the VOD, to identify ideas from the PT’s description of teaching. Exploring can transition into bridging if the MTE hypothesizes a PT’s idea.

Lizhen’s debriefing conversation used ideas from her VOD involving children’s fraction thinking. Exploring was cognitively challenging for the MTEs, including Lizhen. Simultaneously holding her idea about children’s fraction thinking in mind while listening to Mandy’s description of teaching for evidence of children’s mathematics was a significant challenge. Lizhen’s debriefing conversation with Mandy and her teaching partner was informed by a folding activity with string used in the methods course. Their lesson included using paper folding to generate fractions. They used two sets of fractions (1/2, 1/4, 1/8 and 1/3, 1/6, 1/9) with their fifth graders. From class discussions, Lizhen anticipated that Mandy would use children’s mathematics in her teaching.

> *Lizhen: First, tell me what you’re excited about?*
>
> *Mandy: I’m excited when they [children] wanted to move on. Like if they saw that we did a half, they wanted to go ahead and start doing the fourth. They just came up with different ideas, how to get there, especially when we started doing the third, the sixth, and the ninth. Because you could see it clicked, when they realized how to get from one [fraction] to the next, to the next. So, I thought that was really exciting to see.*
>
> *Lizhen: Yeah, I remember you talked about the fourth in Tuesday’s class on campus. You said, ‘OK, if this is half then you fold it [string] one time; if it’s third then you fold it [string] twice.’ When students do half, fourth, or eighth, if they build on their previous problem, they just need to fold one more… But coming to one-third, one-sixth, and one-ninth, that will be different? What did you find about students’ thinking when they folded these three fractions?*
>
> *Mandy: They did find the third. They recognized if you fold a third in half, you get a sixth. It was the ninth, a lot of them first said, ‘Oh you just take a sixth and fold it in half again.’ So, a lot of them were getting one twelfth, which was to be expected. But once we talked about the multiplication, when they fold it in half again, that six [parts] turns into twelve [parts on the paper strip].*

Lizhen: Yeah, how did the students fold one ninth?

(Mandy's teaching partner responded.)

Lizhen: Ah, did any student fold one ninth right away?

Mandy: I didn't have anybody who did it right away.

Lizhen: So, they built on the previous problem?

Mandy: Yes, they just continued trying to do like the half, the fourth and the eighth. You fold it in half, then you fold it in half, you have fourth; then you fold it in half, you have eighth. So, they figured it was the same way [by folding the paper strip in half] with the third, the sixth, and the ninth.

(Lizhen-Mandy debriefing, fall 2019)

Lizhen's ideas from her VOD were grounded in children's fraction thinking. One idea was how using halving to create 1/2, 1/4, 1/8 might be overgeneralized for fraction sequences like the second set (1/3, 1/6, 1/9). Lizhen considered how the PTs conceptualized children's fraction thinking. Lizhen's idea from the VOD motivated her to explore the PTs' view of children's fraction thinking using questions. Mandy described children's actions (i.e., paper folding) rather than their mathematics. She further described her demonstration of multiplication to show how halving a six-part paper strip creates twelve parts. Lizhen continued to explore Mandy's experience for evidence of children's fraction thinking. Mandy repeated her ideas about the children's error without addressing the children's thinking. Thus, Lizhen stopped exploring.

During the critical-friend dialogue, Signe identified the PT's second fraction set as "unusual" (critical-friend dialogue, June 11, 2021), noting, as Lizhen had, that the halving strategy children developed for the first fraction set would be problematic when applied to the second set. Signe referenced Lizhen's focus on fraction thinking from the VOD. Signe further described Lizhen's questions and requests for information as exploring Mandy's view of children's fraction thinking in relation to creating one-ninth. Mandy's reference to multiplication did not deter Lizhen from using her VOD to question PTs about children's fraction thinking.

Telling: Signe's Debriefing

MTEs may use telling after unsuccessful bridging or exploring attempts. Like bridging and exploring, telling begins with the MTE's idea from the VOD. However, rather than attempting to use or identify hypotheses about PTs' ideas, the MTE uses her ideas from her VOD to motivate PTs' reflection.

Jason planned to teach a two-digit addition lesson to first graders using base-ten blocks and problems like 33 + 11. Signe's written feedback on the lesson pointed out children's potential confusion with double-digit numbers. "Jason, I encourage you to consider using different digits for the tens and ones position so you can see how the children are differentiating the digits" (Signe's feedback to Jason, Nov. 2, 2018).

During Jason's lesson, Signe observed that Jason had not addressed her feedback regarding 33 + 11. Signe attempted to center her thinking on Jason's description of teaching and children's mathematics, hoping Jason might address the problematic nature of numbers like 33 and 11. However, after several attempts to explore and then bridge, with time running out, Signe resorted to telling to motivate Jason's reflection on the role of the digits.

Signe: So, one thing I wondered about is, what made you feel mathematically curious when the students were saying mathematics to you?

Jason: I would just say once again [Jason had already described his curiosity during the debriefing] …The difference between tens and ones. I mean, that's what the whole lesson was about. That's what I'm most curious about. If she just saw the number three, and was like, 'alright, the tens place is three.' That they're actually thinking 'that means thirty.'

Signe: Yeah, so that's a guideline for you. So, if you're like, 'oh, ok, I'm curious about that,' then that's something that you REALLY need to find out about with the kids. Because that'll really motivate you to focus.

One comment I had for you, building on from that. When they say three, and the number's thirty-three, how will you know? So, I know you think hard about these things, so I really wondered about the choice of the numbers, because it's thirty-three, both digits are the same. So, if the students report digits, then it's not clear to me that you'll know which one they mean. So maybe strategically selecting the number that you're using so that both digits, the ones and the tens, aren't the same digit.

Jason: Yeah, that's smart.

(Signe-Jason debriefing, fall 2018)

In this excerpt, Jason wondered, as he had earlier in the debriefing, whether the child interpreted a three in the tens place as 30. Signe used her VOD to explore Jason's description of teaching for his ideas about children's place-value thinking. Signe also used her VOD to bridge Jason's curiosity about children's use of tens and ones and the classroom teacher's use of a place-value chart and choral counting.

In our critical-friend dialogue, Signe reflected on her difficulty eliciting Jason's reflection on the children's challenge in using base-ten blocks. She described her difficulty eliciting Jason's reflection on using children's choral counting to support development of a unit of ten. Jason responded with an idea for teaching addition using a number line. Signe elicited Jason's idea about children's meaning for digits multiple times during the debriefing and described deciding to "share (her) intellectual and academic expertise" to "support him to see a way forward" from his idea (critical-friend dialogue, July 2, 2021). Signe's idea about digits from her VOD did not help her create a situation that could motivate Jason's reflection on children's place-value thinking. So, she had to "just go to straight up giving advice" (critical-friend dialogue, July 2, 2021), i.e., telling. While Jason agreed that Signe's suggestion was a "smart" choice, our critical-friend dialogue revealed that Signe questioned and was uncomfortable with her use of telling.

Discussion

We have focused on the MTE-PT debriefing, a form of post-teaching conversation, to investigate ways of supporting PTs' reflection on their field teaching experience. D'Ambrosio's (2004) VOD situates teachers' acts of meaning during interactions with learners within the teacher. Applied to debriefing conversations, D'Ambrosio's VOD situates MTEs' acts of meaning during debriefing conversations within the MTE. From this view, we hypothesized that MTEs use the VOD to inform interactions during debriefing conversations. Our self-study produced three interactive moves informed by our VODs: bridging, exploring, and telling.

Defining the interactive moves of bridging, exploring, and telling allowed us to identify relationships among the moves, as MTEs worked to create reflective opportunities for PTs during debriefing conversations. For example, Mahtob's bridging move to create reflective opportunities for Allie involved Mahtob's use of her VOD regarding teaching to connect with Allie's description of children's subtraction procedures and base-ten blocks. Similarly, the goal of Lizhen's VOD use was to explore Mandy's construct of children's factional thinking aimed at creating reflection opportunities for Mandy. When bridging and exploring feel unproductive, MTEs may use telling to create reflective opportunities. Signe used telling after her bridging efforts did not result in Jason's reflection about the children's mathematics.

Findings illustrate how MTEs' actions in debriefing conversations move beyond MTEs' knowledge categories to ways knowledge is used in teaching about teaching mathematics. While our descriptions of MTEs' using the VOD may sound cognitive, interactive moves are also informed by emotions, places, and relationships with PTs. Our critical-friend dialogues unearthed evidence of this complexity. Space does not allow us to unpack ways such factors inform the VOD use . We assert that MTEs' uses of the VOD occur within a flow of information that transforms MTEs' understanding of the VOD and PTs' conceptions in real time.

MTEs' mathematics teacher education experiences and anticipation of programmatic and teaching demands PTs will face inform debriefing conversations. Debriefing as mentorship (Stanulis & Floden, 2009) has been identified as providing opportunities for PT learning (Brown et al., 2020; Roller, 2019), but can contain challenges informed by issues of power and control (Sundli, 2007). Our findings illustrate ways these issues play out as MTEs use the VOD as the primary source of insight regarding best practice for mathematics teaching. Sundli (2007) cautions teacher educators that endorsing particular behaviors and thinking may encourage PTs to replicate rather than analyze such behaviors. Brown et al. (2020) note there is "no 'best' model" of mathematics teaching, "a meta-rule for communication which promotes the development of personal conviction in each of us" (p. 106). Our findings further support these cautions. Although we intended to support PTs' reflections on teaching, the cognitive demand (Roller, 2019) of wondering about observed events in PTs' teaching challenged us. Our unique VODs, served as defacto "best" models of teaching Brown et al. (2020) cautioned about.

Findings illustrated that we used the VOD to explore and bridge to PTs' experiences of mathematics teaching and learning, yet often moved to telling to motivate PTs' reflection on teaching. Our use of telling drew from assumptions characteristic of the transmission and interpretive stances (Martin & Russell, 2018). We assumed that we should identify "teaching behaviors that should be improved," characteristic of a "transmission stance," and that "teacher candidates will always have uncertainties" the supervisor must identify and support with "relevant discussion," characteristic of the interpretive stance (p. 337). Telling is informed by both stances, the events in the course, our relationships with PTs, and the preceding debriefing conversation with an eye on challenges we imagined the PTs would encounter. We experienced resonance with the description of Brown et al. (2020) that debriefing conversations take unexpected paths and should be engaged in with a focus on unpacking the teaching of the PT. Telling can encourage PTs to abandon their thinking and follow the MTE's suggestions (Sundli, 2007). Yet, we experienced the cognitive demand of wondering aloud about PTs' teaching (Roller, 2019), for example Lizhen's challenge to maintain her thoughts while creating a model of Mandy's.

Consciousness of MTEs' VOD use in debriefing PTs' teaching informs our efforts to improve debriefing practice. Despite intending debriefing conversations as reflective opportunities in PTs' learning about teaching, we identified our use of the transmission stance. Improving our debriefing practice rests on maintaining an interpretive stance throughout the debriefing conversations by providing reflective opportunities PTs can capitalize on.

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Learning How to Be a Better Teacher Educator Online

A Self-Study in Times of COVID-19

Maria Assunção Flores & Tom Russell

Teacher Education | Self-Study | Teaching | Critical Friend | COVID-19 Pandemic

The aim of the self-study was to investigate the first author's practice as an online teacher educator, focusing on how to become a better teacher educator online. Looking through the eyes of the student teachers and with input from Tom as critical friend, Maria set out to understand her online teaching practices and to identify ways to improve her practices. Her main concerns were student motivation and participation and the quality of pedagogical interaction in an online course. Overall, this self-study highlights the key importance of pedagogical voice and productive learning as well as the value of focusing on new strategies for maintaining in-person features in an online learning environment.

Introduction

Being a teacher educator is always challenging and the COVID-19 pandemic generated new challenges with the sudden shift to online teaching. In times of significant educational change (Berry & Kitchen, 2020), such as the experience of being a teacher educator online during the pandemic, self-study can make a significant contribution not only in documenting but also in better understanding one's own practice. As a teacher educator since 1994, Maria anticipated the experience of being a teacher educator totally online with high expectations and with anxiety. It entailed a sense of discovery of a new space for pedagogical interaction and the realization that considerable joint, ongoing and real-time learning had to occur. Prior collaborations inspired Maria to share these thoughts with Tom, and the idea of collaborating in a self-study of Maria's online teaching experience followed quickly. Both authors had been involved in self-studies of their practice as teacher educators before the pandemic (Russell & Flores, 2020, 2021). The new context of online teaching and the possibility of taking advantage of digital tools were seen as two important elements, with Tom acting as a critical friend.

Self-study is key to developing a pedagogy of teacher education (Loughran, 2005a) and to going beyond the view of teaching as mere "doing" to include the "why," leading to the development of more informed and meaningful practice to enhance student learning (Loughran & Menter, 2019). In a review of literature about teacher educators' professional learning, Ping et al. (2018) suggested that:

> *doing a self-study appears to be an important type of practitioner research for teacher educators, which enables them to reflect on and scrutinize their own practices or assumptions about learning and teaching, aiming at improving their teaching practices. (p. 100)*

A critical friend can play a central role in identifying assumptions underlying practices and in helping the teacher educator studying personal practice to delve more deeply and to identify significant features that the researcher may not have identified for analysis. As Carse et al. (2022, p. 127) concluded, "collaboration is a critical feature of self-study. A critical friend with personal experiences of teacher education is a unique asset." Looking into one's own practice with new eyes constitutes a key feature in self-study by teacher educators (Loughran, 2005a).

Framing the Self-Study

This self-study is guided by four of the 18 assertions about the pedagogy of teacher education presented by Loughran (2005b):

> - *Learning about teaching needs to be embedded in personal experience.*
>
> - *Articulating personal principles of practice helps in aligning practice and beliefs.*
>
> - *Teaching is about relationships.*
>
> - *Modelling is crucial—student-teachers learn more from what we do than what we say. (pp. 34-36)*

Humanizing the online environment by creating a climate conducive to fostering the relational and social dimensions of teaching and to listening to students were at the forefront of the decisions made at the beginning of this self-study of teaching in a totally online environment. In other words, it is about shaping community in online courses by supporting the relational (Murphy & Pinnegar, 2018).

Methods

This self-study was conducted during one semester of online teaching (February to May, 2021). The context was a compulsory online course titled "Integrated Curriculum Approaches for Basic Education" within a Master Degree in Teaching English for Primary School. Fifteen student teachers were enrolled in the course, which was done totally online via Zoom (3 hours per week) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the self-study was to investigate Maria's practice as an online teacher educator, focusing on how to become a better teacher educator online. Looking through the eyes of the student teachers and with input from Tom as critical friend, Maria set out to understand her online teaching practices and to identify ways to improve her practices. Her main concerns were student motivation and participation and the quality of pedagogical interaction in an online course.

Maria's main concerns, drawing on the experience in semester one, related to the political, ethical and pedagogical dimensions of online teaching (who, why and for which purpose) beyond the more technical and instrumental dimensions (what and how: content and online tools) and to the coherence between principles/discourse and action/real practice. The idea of teacher agency in curriculum development within a more humanistic and flexible perspective (in theory and in practice) and the need for "humanizing" the online space (screen/ virtual classroom; fostering the human presence/interpersonal dimension on a screen) were also key features.

The research questions for this self-study were: "Can I enable dialogic teaching and productive listening to students in an online environment?" and "Can I create and sustain a relational pedagogy when teaching online?" Amongst the guiding principles underpinning Maria's stance as a teacher educator were:

i. learning about teaching implies a focus on the learner rather than on the curriculum and it may be enhanced by approaches that are modeled by the teacher educators (Korthagen et al., 2006);
ii. modeling productive learning (Russell & Martin, 2014) and putting meaning into "reflection" through a teacher educators' own practices may contribute to enhancing professional learning in a more explicit way.

Maria explained the purpose of the self-study when she first met the students and all agreed to participate and signed a voluntary informed consent form. Some students were interested in learning more about self-study and some stressed that it seemed a good strategy to understand and improve practice. LaBoskey (2004, pp. 842-849) set out five essential characteristics: self-study research is self-initiated and focused, aimed at improvement, interactive, using multiple,

primarily qualitative methods, and validated based on examples of normal practice. This self-study report is guided by previous reports of self-study of online teaching practices, including Dunn and Rice (2019), Donovan et al. (2021), and Rabin (2021).

The primary data sources were questions put to students in several different ways. Tickets out of class were collected anonymously at the end of each lesson using the online tool called Mentimeter. inviting them to state the most important ideas they were taking from the class. Also, specific questions were posed and responded to electronically, including the value of the tickets and their views of the course in relation to other courses in their program. Students' reflections and portfolios were also studied, along with Maria's reflective journal, email communications with Tom, data collected by Tom and Tom's attendance at one of the virtual classes. Data collection was ongoing throughout the course. Student teachers were also asked to give permission for the quotation of any of their written statements. Their questions about the research were always answered promptly and an overview of findings was reported at the end of the course.

Findings

Conducting a Self-Study Online

When Maria shared with the student teachers the intention to do a self-study at the very beginning of the course, they were surprised. Some asked questions such as "What do you mean by that?" and "What does it entail?" but all responded positively. Maria was pleased with that response and later asked the students: "What do you think about a teacher educator doing a self-study of his/her practice?" Their anonymous responses were positive and confirm the importance of inquiring into one's own practice to understand and improve it in meaningful way.

> *I think it is a great strategy to enhance his/her practice and others' practice. It is an essential tool/strategy to improve teaching in order to make it more relevant and fruitful.*
>
> *I think it is really important in so far as both the teacher educator studying his/her practice and his/her critical friend can improve their practice and try to find innovative alternatives.*
>
> *I think it is extremely positive for reflecting and this makes it possible to improve teaching.*
>
> *I think it is a great idea. It enables the teacher educator to change his/her practice to make it more powerful. I would like to do it in my practice as a teacher.*
>
> *It is important for teachers to update their ways of being a teacher and their teaching. It makes them think about what they do and help them to develop knowledge about the practice and sharing it with others.*
>
> *I think it is key to improving practice and its effectiveness and to enhance students' interest and outcomes.*

These responses confirm to Maria the importance of studying her own teaching openly, both online and in person, both to better understand her teaching and to model the potential of self-study to future teachers.

Inviting a Critical Friend to Collaborate in a Self-Study

The participation of a critical friend was received positively by the students and they highlighted it in their accounts. This was something new for them and they stressed the value of this opportunity to learn:

> *In this class there was participation and argumentation as always. I also found Tom's participation extremely interesting.*
>
> *I want to say that it was a pleasure to know Tom's experience as a teacher. Thank you so much for this opportunity.*
>
> *I'm thankful for this opportunity, it gave me some powerful insights into teaching and learning.*

I really enjoyed the task about the sentences focusing on curriculum. It made me make sense of what I have learned. I also enjoyed Tom's responses to our questions.

Thank you for the opportunity to get to know Tom and to learn from him. It was an experience that I will never forget as a future teacher of English.

Online teaching made it possible for Tom to participate directly in one class, and this encouraged Maria to use online software to invite others to participate in her classes, online or in person. The collaboration of a critical friend clearly enhanced the value of the self-study.

Challenging Beliefs About Teaching and Being a Teacher

Student teachers' accounts collected anonymously and from their personal portfolios stressed the ways in which their ideas and beliefs about teaching and being a teacher had been challenged in an online course. Not only did they mention the relevance of the reflective tools and how these help to make explicit their implicit theories, but also they highlighted how they made sense of those theories in the group discussions. In general, their views were positive. Some spoke about specific aspects of the teaching profession, such as the lack of curricular autonomy and social recognition, as in the following:

I have to say that I particularly enjoyed the critical reflection that teachers have to do about themselves but also the use of tickets out of class as you can get feedback from the students about your teaching. Most of the times students don't have an opinion about what they are learning and how.

It made me think that teaching is a profession of great responsibility. A good or a bad teacher may change a student's' life.

In this module I have changed my definition of what it means to be a teacher. I have learned about teachers' autonomy or lack of it. I have also learned that teachers have to like what they do and not give up…

In this module I have to admit that I have changed some taken-for-granted ideas. I have learned other ideas which I find very important and they are sometimes obvious but sometimes you don't reflect on them. For instance, the importance of reflection in the process of becoming and being a teacher but also in your practice as a teacher.

These comments indicate that the online course was effective in helping students identify and explore their underlying assumptions about teaching as a profession. The reflective strategies were effective in the online course and Maria will continue to use them in teaching, both online and in person.

Having a Voice

Student teachers appreciated the opportunity to be heard in the classroom, particularly through the tickets out of class. They reiterated the importance of listening to students in the classroom, but also stressed the role of feedback and the adjustments made in the lesson as a result of their participation, particular because they felt comfortable in responding anonymously. The tickets out of class were found even more relevant and useful due to the totally online nature of the course.

This is an excellent way of asking for doubts or questions or even suggestions and it allows a reflection on the part of the teacher. The tickets made it possible for everybody to have a voice.

I think that the tickets promote openness and communication and also positive feedback.

Tickets give us space to ask questions that sometimes we are afraid to ask in the classroom. It is the first course that I had this opportunity and I appreciate it.

I think they are very useful. Apart from being able to give our opinion about the class, the initial discussion at the beginning of the following class makes us understand that the teacher takes into consideration students' needs and tries to adjust the lesson to them.

Tickets out of class are a good way to share our doubts because online teaching does not enable a direct interaction with the teacher. The answers in the following class are useful to revise the lesson.

They are good ways of providing feedback without the constraints that sometimes exist in face-to-face situations with the teacher.

It is an excellent strategy of hearing from the students and of having feedback as the information is anonymous. The teacher always showed concern about discussing the answers and doubts. This was useful to make adjustments where needed.

I think they are useful, especially because the pandemic did not allow face-to-face teaching.

Tickets out of class were new to these students and they found them particularly helpful in the online context. It was particularly powerful that Maria began each class by reporting and responding to comments about their learning in the previous class. This is a strategy to be continued online and in person.

Promoting a Climate of Sharing and Mutual Trust in an Online Environment

From the beginning of the course, Maria tried to create a positive atmosphere so that students felt comfortable in expressing their views and sharing their experiences. Teaching online was challenging and trsut was something that Maria wanted to explore during the online course. Of importance were a set of "rules" and suggestions for making the most of the online experience, such as using the chat option and the breakout rooms whenever there was a need for a joint or personal communication.

Humanizing the online environment was key as well as building trust in order to foster students' sharing and participation on the screen. Students reiterated the relevance of the portfolios developed throughout the course. They identified the complexity of the topics (e.g. curriculum, assessment, analysis of legislative texts) but they also acknlowledged the specificity of the course and its significance in their journey to become teachers. The relational aspect and the dynamic nature of the activities were particularly emphasized, as well as the "openness", "discussion" and "interactivity" in online classes. The following quotations are drawn from a specific question asked electronically: "In what ways do you find this module/class different from most of your other classes?".

Yes, it is different, as the content is different and the teacher's approach is different as she is always asking questions and makes us reflect. Also the portfolio makes us be aware of what we need to do.

It focuses on a topic that is dense but it promotes critical thinking and reflection on a set of essential concepts that are key to the teacher's work.

I like the discussion in small groups. The teacher is open and students do not feel afraid of saying what they think or of asking questions and I am thankful for that.

I think the main differences are the pace of the lesson and the kinds of activities we do. We can discuss the topics, understand the ideas of the colleagues and work with other colleagues. This course has a dynamic that is not usual.

In this course there is much more reflection, participation, discussion and sharing of knowledge about all the topics. Classes are more dynamic and include a wide variety of methods and activities.

Besides the content, this course is different from the others. The tasks in group and the organization of the lesson and the activities make it very attractive for us. We participate a lot. I even forget that I am online!

These comments speak directly to Maria's goal of ensuring that the online teaching experience was engaging and productive. Conducting a self-study of her first online teaching experience paid rich dividends that could not have been achieved in other ways.

Modeling Teaching

Maria's concern about "walking the talk" makes her always question what and how she does what she does as a teacher educator and this was particularly challenging in online teaching. Teaching totally online entailed even more attention to her practice and to listening to the students as well as considering the perspective of her critical friend. One particular issue that was emphasized related to the concept of wait time in an online environment. This was an issue that was adjusted along with strategies for managing silence. It was important to leave more time for student voices to be explored rather than focusing solely on Maria's voice. Students recognized adjustments in terms of the pace of the lesson and they highlighted the positive atmosphere and their engagement in the activities and discussions. It was rewarding to read their anonymous comments pointing to aspects of modeling teaching and promoting reflection about be(com)ing a teacher:

> *In this online course, time flies even if it takes place at the end of the day and we already feel tired. The teacher has been adapting the pace of the lesson.*
>
> *This course encourages you to think differently about teaching and being a teacher as you can talk openly about what you think and feel.*
>
> *The teacher challenges us to reflect about teaching and education in general and to explore the role of the teacher in the classroom and beyond.*
>
> *I think that the examples of the teacher's teaching and the climate itself are very powerful. It shows us how we can also teach and how we as teachers should care about our students and their learning.*
>
> *This course is the only course that I have that instigates us to question things and be critical in relation to teaching and assessment. This is something that you don't find in the other courses.*

These comments make it obvious that the students valued Maria's unique efforts to make the online teaching experience not only productive but also unique. While self-study methods can identify weaknesses as well as strengths, these comments indicate that Maria's goal of responding to the online challenge was achieved. Importantly, many strategies can also be used when teaching in person.

Students' Comments About the Online Course Experience

The following examples illustrate students' feedback in the tickets out of class:

> *I find the way the teacher does teaching in Zoom very interesting. She is able to motivate us to participate in class, and classes become quite productive.*
>
> *The discussion was really interesting in today's class. I really enjoyed when we shared and reflected on our experiences and made sense of the theories that we learned.*
>
> *The discussion about teaching and being a teacher was particularly relevant and interesting. It contributed to reflecting on our past experiences and also to analyzing the kinds of attitudes and behaviors we want to adopt in the future as teachers.*

Maria was pleased that they linked her teaching to the importance of productive learning and their making sense of teaching both individually and also collectively:

Conclusions

As demonstrated in the students' voices, Maria's experience in this self-study has been rewarding but it also entailed adjustments in online teaching, namely, in regard to managing silence in the online classroom and in creating a diversity

of teaching and learning experiences so that students were not bored but became more engaged, especially because this was their last course. This self-study has contributed to changing Maria's practice in ways that are aligned with her beliefs and professional values as a teacher educator:

- doing more interactive activities that encourage students' participation in class, making the most of the online tools that I had to learn;
- creating more opportunities for students to express themselves about my teaching and their learning, taking advantages of anonymous online tools;
- doing less talking when exploring topics that are conceptually complex at the beginning and exploring students' pre-conceptions and ideas;
- fostering project-based learning so that students who do not have any teaching experience make more explicit links between theory and practice;
- creating space for speaking with the students at the beginning or the end of the lesson so that the online environment can be more humanized;
- making the goals of each lesson clearer and building together with the students a roadmap for teaching and learning throughout the course;
- giving time and space for the more shy students to express themselves in different ways;
- avoiding responding to my own questions and providing the "right" time for students to communicate their ideas;
- continuing to use a diversity of ways to listen to students and to promote pedagogical voice.

Despite challenges, the experience of being an online teacher educator provided opportunities to test and to learn new ideas and activities based on sharing, on student involvement, on making connections between beliefs and practices in teacher education and on building relationships with students that enhance trust and commitment so that modelling is more likely to happen. The key role of the critical friend helps to make a self-study become stronger, more challenging and more meaningful. This was particularly relevant during the Covid-19 pandemic. In such a demanding and unexpected context, the importance of relationships and a pedagogy of care (Murray et al, 2020; Moorhouse & Tiet, 2021, Rabin, 2021) as well as issues of equity and inclusion in online teacher education (Donovan et al., 2021) have been highlighted. In times of radical educational change (Berry & Kitchen, 2020), doing a self-study of being a teacher educator online during the pandemic can make a significant contribution not only in documenting but also in better understanding one's own practice.

As Dunn & Rice (2019) suggest, one of the major challenges in online teacher education is that many teacher educators find themselves underprepared and under pressure to design online teacher education courses that reflect their beliefs about what constitutes high-quality teacher preparation practice. Maria's main concern related to the social presence in teaching online and the alignment between beliefs and practice in relation to a dialogic approach to teaching.

In teacher education the role of relationships plays a central role, as does the power of listening to students and improving practice.The critical friend was key in looking at Maria's practice and in discussing aspects of teaching and learning with the students. If critical friendship can be challenging, its rewards can also be profound (Russell, 2022). Students' anonymous responses proved effective in getting to know their views. The online experience was challenging and required a search for new strategies and tools to foster student engagement without losing the interpersonal, social and reciprocal dimensions of teaching and learning.

Findings point to the importance of joint learning and co-construction of knowledge as well as making explicit one's beliefs and actions as a teacher educator in light of Loughran's assertions about the pedagogy of teacher education. The power of listening to student teachers and learning from them was a key insight gained in the self-study. The same can be said for the need to make pedagogy in teacher education more transparent as reflective practice can and should be taught. Added to this was the power of moments of silence in technologically mediated interaction and the value of the personal as well as the professional in making sense of the process of be(com)ing a teacher.Overall, this self-study highlights the key importance of pedagogical voice and productive learning as well as the value of focusing on new strategies for maintaining in-person features in an online learning environment.

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Parallel Performance

Constructing Identities in a New Teacher Education Program

Candy L. Jones & Alysha J. Farrell

Identity | Teacher Education | Teacher Identity | Teacher Educator Identity | Teacher Educator | Team Teaching | Identities

In faculties of education, teacher and teacher educator identities are socially constructed in parallel as individuals simultaneously develop and perform the roles of teacher and teacher-educator in complex play-within-a-play structures. After engaging in a program renewal process for an integrated B.A./B.Ed. program, designing and team teaching two first-year courses in the program, and engaging in a self-study using 25 weekly recorded conversations, a student focus group conversation, and artifacts collected from teaching and students, the authors of this chapter describe three themes that emerged in relation to teacher/teacher educator identity construction. These themes, framed as theatre metaphors, include 'knowing the setting/characters,' 'scripting and performing,' and 'pulling back the curtain.' Together, they describe and shed light on the nature of teacher/teacher educator identity formation, the complexity of engaging in teacher educator identity formation after moving from the classroom to academe, and the promise of team teaching as a powerful tool for growth.

Introduction

The act of teaching, whether it is in the public school system or in a post-secondary institution, requires one to simultaneously *perform* multiple identities in an array of contexts, while in the presence of other, equally multifaceted identities (Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Rice et al, 2015). It is within this complex environment that identities are both constructed and performed as they interact with each other, much the same as a theatrical masterpiece takes shape in the spaces between characters and scenes, all in the presence of (and through the interpretation of) an audience. The research we describe in this chapter looks at our own experiences performing new roles as teacher educators whilst interacting with teacher candidates just beginning to imagine themselves in the role of teacher. Through the use of theatre metaphors, we consider the complex ways in which our own multifaceted identities as teacher educators grew out of, and interacted with, those of each other and of our education students.

Background

As part of our service work as second-year, tenure-track faculty members in a faculty of education at a small Canadian university, we volunteered to participate in the design of a new Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Education Integrated Program (IP). Although we likely didn't fully recognize it at the time, our involvement in the program renewal process was motivated by many factors, including an impetus to improve things for students in a struggling program (very few

students made it past the first year), our desire to carry our weight as faculty members, and our need to achieve tenure and promotion. Alysha, who had been previously involved in a significant number of improvement-oriented initiatives in schools, school divisions and other organizations, led the faculty committee (including Candy) through a carefully planned renewal process that began by engaging with literature about quality teacher education programs, and concluded with the design and implementation of a new IP that has since improved student retention and the overall success of the program.

The following year, our third year in new positions in the Faculty of Education, we volunteered to design and co-teach two new courses that would be the first (and only) year-one IP courses students would take upon entering the newly designed program. These courses (later titled "Teacher Identity: Becoming Tomorrow's Teacher" and "Power, Positionality and Privilege: Schools as Complex Spaces") brought us together to work creatively and collaboratively in the interest of the program and our students. The design and co-teaching of these first-year courses sparked our curiosity about professional identity development in both our pre-service teachers, and in ourselves as new teacher educators and faculty members. The process also revealed affective dimensions at play that inspired us to conduct a self-study about what was happening as we performed the role of teacher educator with both each other and our students, who were themselves learning to take on the role of teacher.

Theoretical Framework

As is the case with most self-study (LaBoskey, 2004), the research that we engaged in was grounded in social constructivism, the idea that phenomena like teacher and teacher educator identity are constructed within social contexts as complex interactions take place within a community of learners. Social constructivism, as a framework, aligns with concepts of teacher identity development and the role of teacher educators in this process in several ways. According to Danielewicz (2001), "selves are made unwittingly in moments of convergence, when there is a strong confluence of forces, or a crossing-over of disparate vectors of experience" (p. 195). From this point of view, the interactions between pre-service teachers, instructors, and experiences (past and present), allow for the individual and collective formation of personal and professional identities that continuously evolve and emerge in complex ways, throughout the course of a teacher's (or teacher educator's) life/career.

Aims of the Study

The research study sought to answer three questions: (1) How do we (as teacher educators) attempt to foster the development of teacher identity through the process of designing and co-teaching two new first-year IP courses?, (2) How is teacher identity development evident in first year IP students?, and (3) How does the process of engaging in an IP program renewal, the design of two new courses for IP students, and co-teaching the new courses impact our own emerging identities as new teacher educators in a faculty of education?

Review of Relevant Literature

Teacher Professional Identity

Significant research has been conducted in relation to the professional identity of teachers over the past 25 years yielding a fairly cohesive view of the nature of teacher identity. While many early researchers in the field conceptualized 'the self' as singular, fixed, and stable, researchers more recently (particularly over the last two to three decades) have begun to recognize the multiple, changing, and unstable nature of 'the self' (Hong, 2010). Many such authors describe identity not as something one *has*, but as something one *uses* and that *constantly changes* over the course of a person's whole life (Beijaard et al., 2004; MacLure, 1993). From such a view, identity is continually being formed and reformed, constructed and reconstructed, through a dynamic, active process that is ongoing and never completely finished (Alsup, 2019; Beijaard et al., 2004; Britzman, 2007; Cooper & Olson, 1996; Danielewicz, 2001; Hong, 2010; Steenekamp et al., 2018).

Similar to notions of instability in relation to identity, is the concept of plurality of selves in the field. While there are many terms for this, including 'multiple selves/identities' (Day et al., 2006; Nias, 1984; Steenekamp et al., 2018), 'sub-identities' (Mishler, 1999), 'multiple I's' (Cooper & Olson, 1996), 'possible selves' (Goodnough & Mulcahy, 2011), and 'multiple subjectivities' (Alsup, 2006), all suggest that teacher professional identity is, in fact, not a unitary or singular

thing, but rather, is made up of multiple, interwoven and complex identities that make up the larger whole. According to Alsup (2006, 2019), this involves a dynamic process that requires crossing over discursive spaces (e.g. from student to teacher) by engaging in what she refers to as 'borderland discourses'. It is the "in-between ground, the place of becoming, the space of ambiguity and reflection" (p. 9) that *is* the goal of teacher education according to Alsup (2006); this is the place where the new identity of 'teacher' is formed, built upon, and interwoven with the other co-existing identities of an individual.

Developing an identity as a professional teacher has widely been referred to as a process of 'becoming' by many researchers and theorists in the field (Beijaard et al., 2004; Clarke, 2008; Danielewicz, 2001; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2015; Puchegger & Bruce, 2021). Such a view aligns with notions of the unstable, ever-changing self, or what Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) refer to as "an ongoing process of integration of the 'personal' and 'professional' sides of becoming and being a teacher" (p. 113). This process is both multifaced and complex, influenced by not only the multiple selves of those engaging in it, but a variety of other individual factors such as "one's personal experiences, family background, sociocultural contexts, influential people, and the psychological, emotional and intellectual features" (Bukor, 2015, p. 7) that make up the whole person. According to Clarke (2008), the process of identity formation is also "intimately related to the discourses and communities that we work within" (Clarke, 2008, p. 187), and is "inevitably political as well as ethical work . . . formed at the nexus of the individual and the social" (p. 189). Fostered through social interaction and within social contexts, "teacher identity is continually being informed, formed, and reformed as individuals develop over time and through interaction with others" (Day et al., 2006, p. 607). In this way, teacher professional identity is a complex, dynamic process influenced by a myriad of factors.

Teacher Educator Professional Identity

While not exactly the same (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2015), teacher educator professional identity formation shares many of the same characteristics as teacher identity formation, such as the fact that it involves 'multiple selves', that it is derived from "multiple influences – some internal and embedded in the intensely personal, and some external, embedded in sociocultural and political contexts" (Davey, 2013, p. 19), that it is dynamic and ever-changing (Andreasen et al., 2019; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2015), and that it "has powerful emotional and value-laden components" (Davey, 2013, p. 19). In addition, for those transitioning from teacher to teacher educator in academe, significant uncertainty, sometimes referred to as "identity shock" (Davey, 2013, p. 58), must be weathered in order for transformation to occur. Such transformation poses many "real-world challenges" and "emotional tensions" (Izadinia, 2014, p. 430), such as difficulties acquiring necessary organizational knowledge (Davey, 2013; Izadinia, 2014), feelings of doubt about self-efficacy and academic credibility (Andreasen et al, 2019; Izadinia, 2014), and concern about having the capacity to conduct quality research (Izadinia, 2014). On top of this, Davey (2013) notes that teacher educators also have a "broadly conceived but deeply held ethicality of purpose and practice" (p. 164), which refers to their desire to behave in ethically appropriate ways, or to 'do good' by caring for students, 'give back' to their communities, be a 'good colleague,' and 'pull their own weight.' Moreover, they feel a deep need to "walk their talk" (Davey, 2013, p. 169) in the classroom, demonstrating, through their example, qualities of excellent teaching. These qualities and challenges, particularly for those new to teacher education, make teacher educator identity development difficult in the critical first years in the profession.

Methods

Self-study was an appropriate method of inquiry for our project due to the personal and professional nature of identity work (Pithouse et al, 2009), and the collaborative nature of co-teaching together (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013). We were interested in improving our own practice (LaBoskey, 2004) in terms of fostering the growth of teacher identity in our students, and ultimately, we had a lot of identity formation to undergo as new members of academe. Self-study allowed us to collaboratively look at both trajectories through our work, aligning it with our research purposes and our personal and professional goals as teacher educators.

Data Sources

In line with the work of LaBoskey (2004), "multiple, primarily qualitative, methods" (p. 849) were used in this self-study, including multiple forms of qualitative data. Our first data source was a series of 25 weekly conversations that we

recorded during our third year in the faculty, designing and co-teaching the first two IP courses together. A rich data source in self-study as noted by Bullough and Pinnegar (2001), these weekly conversations contained our reflections about our classes and the student growth we observed; our planning for future learning opportunities; and our thoughts, musings, and emotions about co-teaching together and engaging in program renewal. In addition to the weekly recorded conversations, we increased the trustworthiness of our findings by adding artifacts from our teaching (course outlines, assignments and lecture slides), artifacts created by our students (digital stories, papers and portfolio reflections), and a focus group discussion held with participating students in the fall after they had completed their first year of studies. In total, 16 students shared artifacts from their first-year courses and five participated in a recorded focus group discussion. Both the focus group discussion and the recorded weekly conversations were transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred in two distinct phases. In the first phase, we individually reviewed the data, highlighting important excerpts, coding sections of the data, and recording our thoughts using analytic memos (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Saldaña, 2009). Following our separate reviews of the data, we met to discuss our noticings, including critical incidents, moments of tension, and the coding we had assigned to various sections/pieces of data. During this discussion, we collaboratively identified broad themes we felt were emergent in the data and several ways in which student and teacher educator identity formation were evident within each theme; it was at this time that theatre-related metaphors were also established around the themes we had noticed. We decided to return to the data to flesh out the themes and connections related to parallel identity formation through a second round of individual coding. A few weeks later, we met again to discuss our findings, firming up our themes, and identifying key examples from the data that illustrated their presence.

Outcomes

The three broad themes that emerged from the data were 'knowing the setting/characters', 'scripting and performing', and 'pulling back the curtain'. The theatre metaphors framing the themes were derived from previous conceptualizations of identities as performed, adaptive in nature and responsive to complex and dynamic situations that occur in real time (Puchegger & Bruce, 2021; Rice et al, 2015). In line with notions of the need for teacher educators to learn by *doing*, both our own identities and the identities of those with whom we worked were *becoming* through our actions, through our complex connections with others, and through our many *performances of teacher* (Puchegger & Bruce, 2021).

Knowing the Setting/Characters

The need to learn about our new setting/context surfaced in the recorded conversations in many ways, often in tandem with expressions of frustration and fatigue. Engaging in the IP renewal process and designing new courses required us to understand how to move programmatic change through the various levels of the institution. Similarly, designing new experiences and classroom elements such as digital storytelling and e-portfolios required us to learn about the technology and resources available in the faculty and university, and how to access them. Finally, incorporating classroom micro-practicum experiences in kindergarten classrooms necessitated our learning about and navigation of provincial requirements such as criminal record checks and child abuse registry checks, school division structures and policies, and faculty-school division connections. Part of the “identity shock” (Davey, 2013, p. 58) we felt as educators entering academe had to do with losing and attempting to regain our knowledge and agency within a new institutional setting. In addition to the broadening of what Davey (2013) referred to as “scope and required expertise” (p. 164), and coming to terms with the reality of being tenure-track faculty, we had to understand how university and local school division structures worked to advocate for a more robust program and to plan experiences for our students.

Parallel to our own getting to know the local and institutional settings in which we found ourselves, was our students’ experiences transitioning to a university context from, in many cases, small rural contexts. In addition to navigating the borderland spaces (Alsup, 2006) between student and teacher, many of our IP students also navigated the spaces between high school and university, and between rural and urban identities. Just as we experienced frustration and difficulty adapting to our new context(s) as teacher educators, our students struggled in their own ways as they

transitioned to university (e.g. homesickness, difficulty with math classes, mental health). Understanding where our students were from and the issues they were facing was important for us for two reasons: (1) students needed to overcome the challenges they faced to work towards their new identities as teachers, and (2) we needed to learn how to support students experiencing these issues. In response to their struggles, we found ourselves providing support in a variety of ways (e.g. walking them over to student services for counseling or advising, asking them about their non-education classes, setting up tutors for their math classes, and numerous after-class conversations). The support we provided students, in addition to exemplifying Davey's (2013) notion of an "ethicality of purpose and practice" (p. 164), supported teacher identity growth in the IP students as is evidenced in the following student comment:

> *Just back to how you guys cared about us. Learning, getting to know your students on a more personal level is very helpful and they can feel that they can come and talk to you about things . . . [This] is something that I want to instill in myself as a teacher-- that my students feel comfortable to come and talk to me. Like how I feel comfortable to come and talk to you guys. (Sally, Focus Group Discussion)*

Scripting and Performing

We began planning (or scripting) the two new courses focused on identity and positionality at the beginning of the year by considering the structure and culture we wanted to build for students. We knew that the previous IP had been largely unsuccessful due to a lack of connection with the Faculty of Education and with the field. On top of offering Education courses in each year of the new IP, we made the decision to co-teach two sections of the first-year courses in the same room for two reasons: (1) for students to get to know and interact with their entire first year cohort (the group they would travel through the 5-year program with), and (2) to allow students to experience a collaborative approach to teaching that is often not utilized in tertiary education but that has many benefits, particularly in teacher education programs (Crawford & Jenkins, 2017). In addition, hoping to build connections between students and other faculty members, we brought in our colleagues as guest speakers to present to students in areas of their expertise. Finally, we made the decision to include micro-practicum experiences in which students went to pre-kindergarten and kindergarten classrooms to observe teachers and students interacting in real-time, in non-evaluative and low-pressure contexts. Data from the study indicated that the structural and community-fostering decisions we made (our script) were important for the success of IP students transitioning to university contexts:

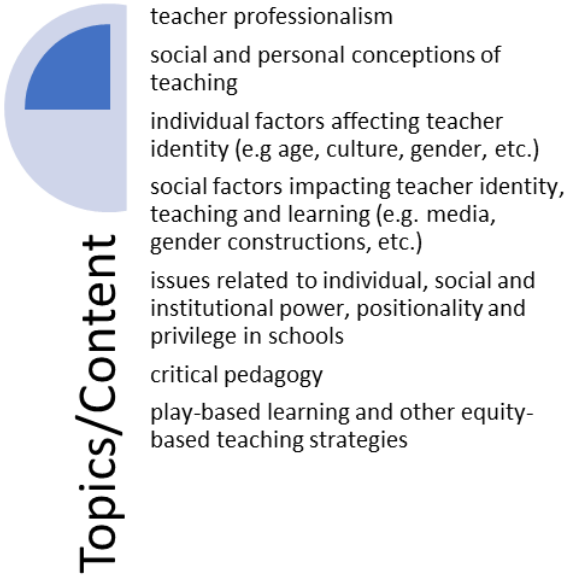
> *[C]oming from a small town, I knew all my teachers like inside [and] out of school. Smaller communities are generally just like that, so [when] you walk into university first year, you are walking into a school with a lot more kids than what you are used to. So, when you have a classroom that kind of makes you feel like you are back in a smaller community, it really, really helps. (Paul, Focus Group Conversation)*

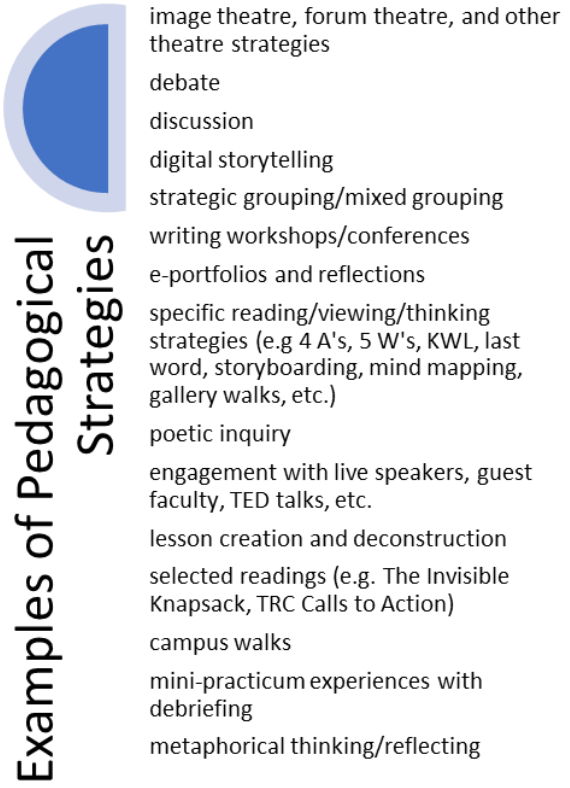
They were also important, according to student comments in the focus group, for helping them get to know their fellow cohort of students and other faculty members, for exposing students to diverse points of view, for promoting idea development, for connecting them to classrooms early in their program, and for developing confidence in their own abilities to "perform teacher".

In addition to addressing structure and cohort culture, we also had to both script and perform the content and pedagogy we would use in the first-year identity and positionality courses. Informed by research conducted at the beginning of the IP renewal process, we elected to focus on teacher identity, professionalism, critical social justice, teaching, and learning through a variety of embodied pedagogical strategies (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Content and Pedagogical Strategies Used in Courses





As Davey (2013) noted, we held a deep commitment to embodied pedagogies as teacher educators, choosing to engage students in learning about teaching through observing and experiencing it. For example, students engaged with literature about play-based learning by doing a gallery walk, they went on a campus walk to investigate local accessibility issues, and they engaged in poetic inquiry and digital story-telling to think about their own connections to home/place. In this way, we attempted to 'walk our talk', teaching about pedagogy by using it in our practice, hoping that together we were modeling for students what effective, collaborative pedagogy could look like.

Data from the study suggested that students engaged deeply with both the content of the courses and the pedagogical strategies they experienced. For example, one student commented that "over the course of the whole year, there were just little bits and pieces where you came to know more about what kind of teacher you wanted to be. More about yourself, I guess." (Sally, Focus Group Discussion), while another student described the importance of having the opportunity to collect pedagogical strategies "in a notebook for five years down the road when you are teaching" (Paul, Focus Group Discussion). In our discussions, we noted growth in student confidence about their own abilities as teachers as they began to understand what 'acting like a teacher' looked like. Moreover, we saw through their actions in classes and in their micro-practicum experiences, evidence of teacher identity growth as they became more engaged than passive in their learning, as they became more comfortable taking risks, and as they began to see themselves as members of the profession, scripting learning experiences for their students.

Pulling Back the Curtain – Making Visible the Doing while Becoming Ourselves

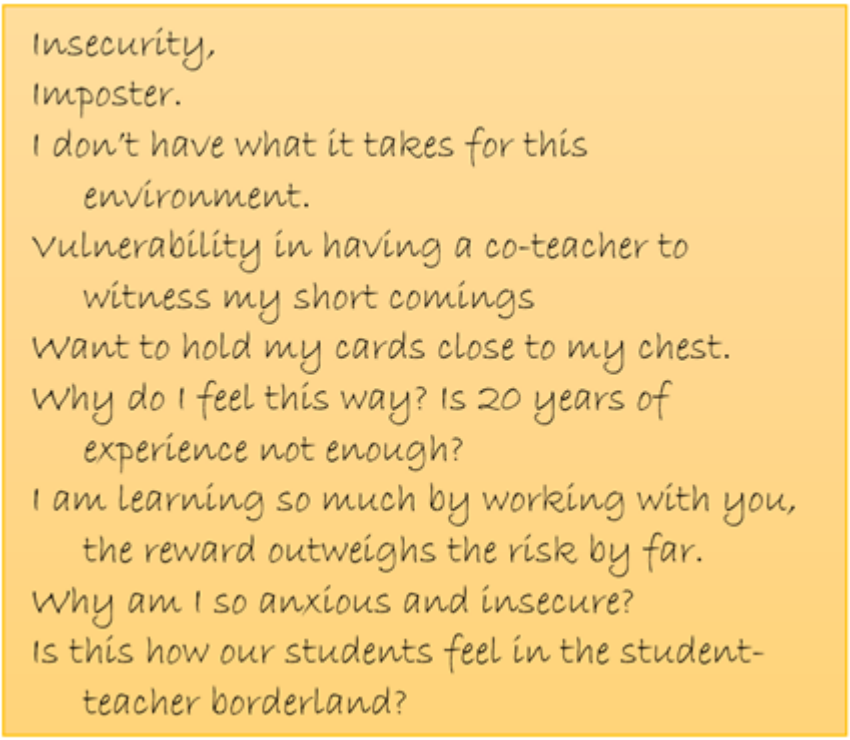
Closely related to Davey's notion of embodied pedagogies, for us, was a conceptualization of *pulling back the curtain* on not only pedagogy but on 'performing teacher' in a broader sense. In using this phrase in our conversations and classes, we made visible the choices we were making as educators to each other and to our students. We frequently asked our students to unpack our performance; for example, we asked them to think about why we greeted them at the door or their tables when they entered each day, in order to consider the choices we made as teachers and how they might perform the same role themselves in a classroom in the not-too-distant future. At the same time, we simultaneously performed our own roles as becoming teacher educators together in our team teaching context as we engaged with

topics and tensions, brainstormed and combined our favorite pedagogical strategies, debriefed how our lessons went and unpacked student reactions and the growth we observed. Moments of particular tension, such as our thinking about what it meant to teach teacher candidates about positionality while simultaneously unpacking our own positionality as white female educators, provided vital parallel structures, or plays-within-plays of sorts, in which we were able to think about teacher and teacher educator identity concurrently, allowing a multitude of identities to interact and inform one other. It was within this complex reality that identities were constructed for Candy, for Alysha, and for our IP students.

Finally, the discussions we engaged in together about our experiences with program change, course design, and team teaching served yet another purpose in our becoming teacher educators. They pulled back the curtain on not only our choices and noticings; they made visible to ourselves and each other the vulnerability of performing teacher educator while becoming one that has been described by others (Davey, 2013; Izadinia, 2014). The most poignant example of this occurred in a November 21st conversation when Candy shared with Alysha some disparate thoughts she had recorded on a sticky note (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

November 21st Sticky Note



Affectively, we felt the vulnerability and support with (and for) each other simultaneously, connecting these affective dimensions to what we saw in our students. We recognized the emotional nature of identity growth through our multiple performances in the classroom and with each other, allowing us to consider more deeply our own becoming and the experiences of our students' doing and becoming teacher.

Conclusion

The self-study we engaged in highlighted the complex and interconnected ways in which teacher identity and teacher educator identity formation were fostered in parallel through our engagement in program renewal, course design, team teaching, and ongoing discussion. Oscillating between actor, producer, and audience from moment to moment, we existed in a perpetual play-within-a-play, socially constructing our roles and identities together as we learned about the setting and characters, scripted and performed our parts, and pulled back the curtain on our actions and

understandings. These experiences verified, for us, notions of teacher/teacher educator identity(ies) as multiple/plural, changing and dynamic, formed through a process of becoming, and multifaceted. Moreover, they highlighted the complexity of transitioning from the classroom to academe, inclusive of its "real-world challenges" and "emotional tensions" (Izadinia, 2014, p. 430). These findings have implications for our own future practice(s) as we continue to engage with teacher candidates, and as we work with other colleagues who may be new to academe. Moreover, they suggest that team teaching is a valuable way to navigate parallel identity formation as teacher candidates and teacher educators engage in embodied social constructivism, performing and becoming together on an academic stage.

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Teaching As Orchestration

A Self-Study of Adapting to Forced Change

Alan Ovens, Rod Philpot, & Blake Bennett

Self-Study Teaching Orchestration Online-teaching

In this chapter we use the metaphor of orchestration to explore the dynamic nature of teaching. While we focus specifically on our experiences of emergency remote teaching (ERT), such moments offered an opportunity to experience online teaching, assess its pedagogical value and associated issues more generally. Sources of data were generated via personal journals, group meetings and digital communications (e.g., email, messenger). Among the themes that emerged from our analysis was the need to acknowledge that we were creating lessons within a highly uncertain, changing and ambiguous environment. We settled on the metaphor of orchestration as a good way of capturing how we were organising our teaching and trying to provide stability within an inherently dynamic context. In our discussion of the outcomes, we focus on three themes. Firstly, we felt constrained by the limitations in the online environment which often forced us into transmission styles of teaching. Secondly, the lack of visibility and presence of our students in an online mode often left us unable to manage and adjust the learning activity of the lesson. Thirdly, the plethora of online tools available to us necessitated both the time to learn, and a design sensibility in order to be effective.

Introduction

The complexity of teaching is fascinating, illusive, and frustrating. While the concept of complexity is simultaneously difficult to grasp and conceptualize, it also has real presence that needs to be managed when teaching. In this chapter we use the metaphor of orchestration to explore the dynamic nature of teaching and use it to discuss how we work to provide some order to pedagogical situations that are dynamic, volatile and ambiguous. The concept of orchestration derives from research on educational complexity and conceptualises teaching as a relational and interactive process in which the teacher is steering or guiding, as opposed to controlling, a dynamic interactive process (Hordvik et al., 2020). While we suggest that teaching is always evolving and complex, we have experienced this to a much higher degree over the past three years as we have had to adapt and manage our teaching in response to the public safety measures introduced by the government to mitigate the risks of COVID-19. Through self-study, we sought to enact a collective project in which we interrogated, problematized, and expanded our own assumptions of teaching. Our aim is to develop a shared understanding and resourcefulness for teaching in an age where pedagogy in a university setting is an increasingly complex and novel problem. Our long-term goal is to ensure that high quality student learning remains the key outcome in rapidly changing contexts with a specific focus on examining how we can exploit the affordances offered by the possibility of blended and flexible learning formats.

In this chapter we focus specifically on our experiences of emergency remote teaching (ERT) where we shifted several times from on-campus classroom-based teaching to exclusively online delivery and online assessment. While we are aware that historical events like the COVID pandemic are unusual and have the potential to date quickly, its value lies in the way it interrupted and contrasted strongly with the status quo. These moments offered a valuable opportunity to experience online teaching, assess its pedagogical value and associated issues, and contribute to the growing research base that explores the transition to online and emergency remote teaching (e.g. Godber & Atkins, 2021; Luguetti et al., 2021; Moustakas & Robrade, 2022; O'Brien et al., 2020; Varea & González-Calvo, 2021). Through the dialogical approach enabled by the self-study, we have been able to describe the key challenges we have experienced and identify within these some of the key assumptions that underpin our practices as teachers in a university setting

Context

All three authors teach in a three-year undergraduate degree in Sport, Health and Physical Education, and two of us contribute to graduate courses in teacher education[1] . The relatively small cohort of approximately 120 students across the three-year programme provides us with the agency to draw on a range of modes of instruction. While many issues are influencing the evolving nature of pedagogy in our university setting, the biggest challenge to our teaching over the past two years has been the need to adapt to the public safety measures introduced by the government to mitigate the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. These have included a range of measures, such as the compulsory wearing of masks, the need for social distancing, campus closures, adopting hybrid teaching and fully online remote teaching (which includes both synchronous and asynchronous forms of teaching). In reality, this has essentially meant that within a semester, a course could move between two contrasting modes of teaching; either on-campus, where courses were designed for in-person, real-time interaction, or ERT, where courses are forced into online formats that were not part of their original design (Bozkurt et al., 2020; Hodges, 2021).

Over the past two years we have experienced large changes in our teaching. In 2020, the city of Auckland experienced two short lockdowns[2] that resulted in moving to ERT mode and necessitated all examinations to be conducted in an online format. In 2021 we started the academic year[3] with two weeks of ERT, returned to on-campus teaching, and then went into full lockdown again for 12 weeks following the first community case of the Delta variant being identified in August. At this point, all remaining teaching in Semester 2 moved back to an ERT mode. At the start of 2022, the campus continued to be closed for the first term and all teaching continued in ERT mode. By the second term, the campus was open again and there was an option of moving courses back to an on-campus mode provided students wore masks and that a hybrid option for students was available. By semester 2, our courses were back to an on-campus mode again. This meant that all the courses were taught in both modes. It is the ability to contrast our experiences of the different modes that allow us, in this study, to reflect on our teaching, and reflect on how best to evolve our pedagogies to the affordances offered by digital and online technologies.

Teaching As Orchestration

In order to understand how our personal pedagogies adapt and evolve in university settings, we argue there is a necessity view the university as an ecosystem that is both a system and systemic (Ovens & Butler, 2016). That is, it is simultaneously a system that is made up of elements that work together as parts of an interconnecting network and systemic in the sense that any change in one part of the system ripples through and affects all parts of the system (Davis & Sumara, 2014; Ovens et al., 2014). As a complex ecosystem, its structure, purpose, values, and functioning are interdependent with, affected by, and coevolve alongside, its constituent elements (e.g., government policy, trade unions, student enrolments, technology, etcetera).

The metaphor of orchestration offers a way to think about and theorize teaching as a practice within this complex ecosystem (Hordvik et al., 2020; Hordvik et al., 2021). Orchestration promotes an image of the teacher as stage manager, unobtrusively steering an evolving and dynamic situation over which they have only limited control. It acknowledges that the elements in any setting, including the student and teacher, emerge from the social–cultural–material environments in which they are situated (Wallace, 2003). As a way of thinking, it shifts attention from teaching being a wholly rational activity to instead acknowledge the ambiguity and uncertainty inherent in the process (Jones &

Ronglan, 2018). Teachers are positioned as actors in a web of relations who act intentionally to bring order to the complexity, unpredictability, and uncontrollability of student learning.

Viewing teaching as an act of orchestration helps us to frame teaching as a constant negotiation between teachers and students as they respond to evolving and ambiguous circumstances. This occurs in two ways. Firstly, the teacher plays a role in designing a course ecosystem that enables students to achieve the course aims and purpose. This involves decisions about course mode (face-to-face, online, blended, synchronous, etc), learning content and activities, use of media and technology, and design of assessment activities. However, teachers never have complete agency over such decisions since they are always made within the institutional and programme constraints. Secondly, teaching involves the teacher actively participating in the course ecosystem, orchestrating lesson activity and skilfully shifting between different teacherly roles as appropriate.

Methodology

This research uses collaborative self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) methodology (LaBoskey, 2004). Core to self-study is the idea that turning the critical gaze on oneself enacts a disposition of desire, particularly in the sense that it "reflects a desire to be more, to improve, to better understand" (Ovens & Fletcher, 2014, p.7). In other words, the underlying common purpose in self-studies is to become more fully informed about our process(es) of enacting practice and to explore and build on these "learnings" in public ways (Loughran, 2007). To enact this aim we embraced what Snaza (2010) refers to as the perspective of 'dwelling.' That is, situated as researchers turning inquiry on our own selves-in-practice, we enacted a constant questioning through collaborative dialogue as we reflected on our unfolding identities within the performances of our teaching.

We acted as critical friends to each other to create an intellectually safe and supportive community in which each researcher sought to improve their practice through critical collaborative inquiry (Samaras, 2010). The process was iterative and entailed cycles of simultaneous data generation and analysis, where analysis informs and supports new sets of experiences and data generation (Lingard et al., 2008). It involved a willingness to open one's practice to critique and becoming mutually vulnerable (Richards & Ressler, 2016). Sources of data were generated during the longest period of ERT in the second semester in 2021. These include 36 weekly personal journals from each lecturer, recordings of six support and analytical meetings of 60-90 minutes duration (held approximately every 2-3 weeks) and digital communications (eg, email, messenger).

Our method of analysis was dialogic in the sense that we used group meetings to foreground and challenge the patterns, structures, and assumptions inherent our data in order to develop new understandings and ways of performing as teachers (Placier et al., 2005). The aim was to identify key issues or highlights from our teaching, which generally tended towards one person tabling a key issue or event that became the main focus for that meeting. We then shared and challenged our interpretations through discussion, often providing elaboration, explanation, comparison and theorisation. Among the themes that emerged was the need to acknowledge that we were creating lessons within a highly uncertain, changing and ambiguous environment. In trying to find ways to discuss this, we settled on the metaphor of orchestration as a good way of capturing how we were organising our teaching and trying to provide stability within an inherently dynamic context. In the discussion that follows, we reflect on our practices and experiences and focus on issues that emerged within our analysis of the data related to enabling good pedagogy in our situation.

Outcomes

Drawing on the metaphor of orchestration, where we view teaching as a constant negotiation between teachers and students, we focus on three themes that emerged from our analysis. Firstly, we felt constrained by the limitations in the online environment which often forced us into transmission styles of teaching. Secondly, the lack of visibility and presence of our students in an online mode often left us unable to manage and adjust the learning activity of the lesson. Thirdly, the plethora of online tools available to us necessitated both the time to learn, and a design sensibility in order to be effective.

Constrained by Technology

Moving to an online mode of teaching challenged not only our ability to structure and support learning activity, but it also contrasted with and challenged our beliefs about the importance of embodied, practical experiences. For example, Blake initially designed his coaching course to have students working with pupils from a local school. In this way, his students could experience coaching in an applied setting where the knowledge they were learning could be enacted as part of the decision-making involved in the act of coaching. Blake's role was one of setting up the situation for the students, coordinating and monitoring the activity, and probing with questions to encourage reflection on their coaching efforts. Moving online meant a complete change, with Blake focusing more on content knowledge for coaching by uploading pre-recorded videos and content, as well as facilitating more of a discussion style of lesson.

Similarly, Rod's service-learning course was designed to give students experience in a professional work setting. Pedagogically, student learning was situated and contextualised in authentic work-place problems. Students could observe experienced professionals and get a sense of what and how knowledge was used in their chosen field. For Rod, the dilemma confronting his orchestration of the course can be seen in his journaling, "A synchronistic lecture at the same time is easy….but how do we do a 60 hour service learning online" (Rod, personal journal, 17/8/21) Pivoting to online delivery was possible (and necessary) but it also meant a change to the content and assessment tasks of the course.

The key point here is that moving online was not simply a case of teaching with digital tools on platforms like zoom. Rather it required a change in pedagogical approach in which the tools that we had most readily available to us were more suited to the transmission and distribution of information than the situated and embodied experiences we preferred. This meant that the initial tendency was to adjust courses to become oriented around simple transactional exchanges of information. We struggled to find ways to engage students in meaningful and deep learning. The challenge was to utilise tools and pedagogical designs that fostered higher-order learning, especially in courses focussed on developing the dispositions and decision-making skills involved in complex situations where professionals work.

Student Presence

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of our changing pedagogy in relation to teaching online was how we sustained and shaped learning activity for the students. We found that synchronistic, collaborative activities maintained student connectivity, enabled problem posing and voicing of students' perspectives. However these activities are difficult to access for students who are also parents, essential workers and who have limited access to computers and high quality Wifi. In this sense, we found the issue of student visibility and presence difficult to manage. We are referring here to the way our pedagogical activity as teachers impacts on students' cognitive, social, and emotional presence. In our journals and discussions, we often highlighted the fact that during on-campus teaching we can see students and how they engage with the learning activities. We see what their attention level is, and we see if they are confused, distracted or bored. This visibility is core to how we sense, respond, and manage student learning in the lesson. Moving online fundamentally interrupts and transforms the nature of student visibility. Student presence now becomes meditated via online video or LMS metrics.

One of the biggest issues we encountered with teaching online was the reluctance of students to have their cameras on. It the first weeks of the ERT, Blake noted, "when their camera's are off, it's like talking to yourself…who am I actually talking to?" (Blake, personal journal, 11/08/21). We were highly aware that the students' choice to turn their cameras off may be linked to their desire to keep their home life private. We understood how the lockdown had changed the life situation for many of the students. While some could continue largely unaffected, we also had students who now needed to care for children full time, squeeze in additional employment, attempt to study in crowded homes, share their technology with siblings, and/or cope with poor internet connectivity. We understood that this changed situation limited the ability of students to engage with each course, and our desire to respect their right to privacy was behind not insisting that the students turn their cameras on.

The key point here is that our lived experiences in face-to-face teaching have made us attuned to student engagement. We can read the classroom and recognise who is uncertain, who is off task, who is struggling. This limited our ability to

make informed decisions about adjusting delivery style, using collaboration and group work, choosing where to provide support and encouragement, and use humour to lift the mood in the lesson. Our well-honed instincts based on years of classroom practice, our ability to 'hover', interject, challenge, and respond are no longer possible to do in the same way. Without the ability to observe students' expressions, body language, and other cues that might suggest issues related to boredom, not understanding content, etcetera, that are normally available in the on-campus classroom environment, we each became challenged as to how best to adjust our pedagogy accordingly.

Changed Pedagogical Competencies

Our experiences of moving online highlighted the competencies needed to design effective online resources and lessons. While the ability to present information as text, images, video, music, and interactive elements holds out the promise for enhancing learning for our students, we also found that it requires set of competencies to produce that content. As other self-studies have highlighted (e.g., Tolosa et al., 2017), becoming proficient with new technologies is both time consuming and requires a design sense to ensure teaching resources are interesting and engaging. We have found this unsettling because time is such a valuable commodity, particularly in university contexts where research productivity is a high priority. In this sense, and to varying degrees, the change in context (to online delivery) and the inclusion of digital technologies has highlighted the need for improved abilities to design and use digital learning resources.

In response to being forced online, both Alan and Blake spent a number of hours making videos to upload to their course LMS. In addition to recording lectures, these videos were accompanied by scripts, quality audio clips, and attention to details such as fonts used, animations, superimposed images, background music, sound effects, and 'B-roll' footage. Both Alan and Blake intended to create courses that were flexible in nature (allowing asynchronous learning opportunities), supported by videos and the opportunity to 'unpack' unpack this via a Zoom lesson. However, both had the reservation that their pedagogical efforts were not working as intended. Alan captures these frustrations when he states, "I really wish that I could be in the gym … this just feels like such superficial learning going on at the moment." (Alan, personal journal, 6/10/21).

This theme highlights how learning is an ongoing aspect of the orchestration of course ecosystems. Even though we were experienced lecturers teaching content we know well, we were neophytes in the online context. Although Zoom has been a well-used tool by all three lecturers for meetings, its use as a presentation tool has only come to fruition since our first COVID-19 enforced lockdown. Our ability to show slides, show video, enhance sound quality, draw, and highlight have been learned over the last 24 months. This learning has been time consuming and because of mistakes that we continue to make - it is very common to have at least two attempts at recording a lecture. Orchestration, particularly in the sense of being able to adapt to and utilise a diversity of technologies, must also accommodate the idea that our competencies to effectively utilise those technologies also change. Moving online required us to respond to a quickly evolving environment and orchestrate learning in a context where many of our fine-tuned teaching instruments were unavailable.

Although digital technologies abound and, as Toquero (2020) recently asserted, the potential exists for universities to scale up training for educators and upgrading emerging technologies to enable innovative teaching that moves beyond transmission pedagogies, the demand on academics to return to the neophyte stage and relearn what we already felt confident doing – alongside the everyday demand of broader role as an academic – is at best daunting, and at worst compromising. Heeding Calderon et al. (2020) who cautioned that student-centred digital technology approaches may have the most positive response from students when they are new, we are aware that the most effective use of novel digital tools may therefore be the domain of the early adopters, with a never-ending cycle of the learning of new technologies needed to motivate students. However, while this may serve the needs of students, it is likely to be untenable for research active academics.

Conclusion

The forced transition to virtual platforms in response to COVID-19 has been rapid, reactive, and has created a number of challenges for education systems as a whole, and for individuals situated within these systems in particular (Godber & Atkins, 2021; Moustakas & Robrade, 2022). As our experiences highlight, it would be a mistake to see these challenges

as simply ensuring teachers and students have the technology, connectivity, study space and support to continue with their teaching and learning. Moving to online teaching changes the very nature of teaching and learning as well as the forms of learning culture and outcomes that result. It demands that we adapt to and manage the ambiguity and volatility of the learning ecosystem as a core part of being effective teachers.

Understanding teaching as a form of orchestration offers a number of insights about our experiences of moving between on-campus teaching and Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Firstly, our experience of the complexity of moving between different teaching modes supports the view that teaching is a process of steering rather than controlling learning. In the on-campus mode, we acknowledge that we are all skilful in managing the learning environment of the classroom or gymnasium. We feel confident and competent interacting with students in this mode. However, the move to ERT highlighted the need for a different set of competencies (Jääskelä et al., 2017). Secondly, the move ERT often was not coherent with the initial course design. The first response of lecturers to ERT might be to establish conditions with students under which online learning and assessment can take place (Luguetti et al., 2021), rather than assuming the courses are continuing as 'business as usual'. Thirdly, ERT often offers unprecedented agency for lecturers to explore both new directions and old assumptions embedded in their pedagogical work (Godber & Atkins, 2021; Toquero, 2020). Although the online context may be easiest to negotiate through asynchronistic recorded lectures, increasingly there are examples of synchronistic collaborative learning experiences that foster student interaction and align with principles of constructivist learning, and that do not require a high level of pre-lecture production skills. Indeed, higher educators will need to consider the resources of their own student cohort to find equitable solutions that meet the needs of their students and preserve their own wellbeing.

The past two years has provided rich opportunities to study our teaching as the COVID-19 pandemic has meant us teaching on contrasting modes. In this paper, we have reported on our experiences using online teaching in ERT, where we were not able to blend them in any meaningful way with other face-to-face pedagogical approaches. The contrasting experiences have enabled us to reflect on our own lived experiences as lecturers. Our concerns about not seeing students and being constrained by both the pedagogical choices available online and our own skills may not be shared by students. There remains a lack of research on the relationship between the use of digital technology, engagement, and subsequent learning (Calderon et al., 2020).

ERT has expedited a 'trial' of a 'virtual' university experience for students and highlighted the volatility, uncertainty, complexity and dynamism of good teaching even when it is not in an ERT mode. By using the metaphor of orchestration to frame our actions as teachers, we are better able to acknowledge how we assemble lessons and steer student engagement to facilitate learning, while also challenging the idea that there is "one best way" to do this. However, for orchestration to be accepted and viewed as a mature social theory of teaching requires more work, both philosophical and empirical. Nevertheless, we hope that the findings presented in this chapter goes some way to provide a fuller, more realistic, examination of the potential of framing teaching as a process of orchestration.

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[1] In this chapter we refer to a programme as being a set of courses that lead to a qualification, such as a degree, while a course is a semester-long class that students enrol in to complete their programme.

[2] The New Zealand Government introduced a 4-tiered Alert Level system to help combat COVID-19. Level 4 was termed “lockdown” because people were expected stay and work from home, limit all unnecessary travel, and restrict all social contact to a small family “bubble” (See NZ Ministry of Health, 2022)

[3] The New Zealand academic year runs from March to November

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Uncovering Care in My Pedagogy and Collaborative Self-Study

Nikki Aharonian & Susan Joffe

Collaborative Self-study | Critical Friend | Pedagogy of Care (POC) | Vulnerability

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I embarked on collaborative self-study with a colleague as a critical friend. Together we scrutinised my pedagogy in a pre-service teacher course during the rapid transition to online education. Inquiry revealed the centrality of care in all dimensions of my teaching: course design, content, and relationships. This chapter looks behind the scenes of that study, focusing on the contribution of our dialogical collaboration. Journal entries and emails demonstrate how care, prominent in my teaching, permeated ongoing conversations with my critical friend. That respectful, nourishing research partnership and my pedagogy of care were mutually supportive, both requiring honesty and involving vulnerability. Our dialogue enabled me to grow, enhancing the learning experience I gave my students during a traumatic period. Empowering self-study led to immediate changes in my practice and helped me overcome challenges like stress, loneliness and self-doubt during the pandemic. Similarly, growing awareness of my relational pedagogy enabled me to appreciate and maximise the benefit of our research partnership. I recommend that educators providing care for students consider engaging in collaborative self-study. These reciprocal relational processes, aiming for transformation and continual development, can nurture each other and be particularly powerful in times of crisis or change.

Context of the Study

COVID-19 triggered rapid change in educational practice. Social distancing limited face-to-face instruction, and like other teacher educators in Israel and beyond, I was coerced into digital spaces. I was technologically competent but had never taught a course online. During the initial confusion, Susie, a colleague, suggested we coact to research my online pedagogy. We didn't know each other well, so the offer was surprising, flattering, and alarming. I worried that I had not researched independently since my PhD, a narrative practitioner inquiry, very different from the research I assumed my colleague was visualising. Considering her an accomplished researcher, I was drawn to the possibility of collaboration but troubled by self-doubt. Overcoming insecurity, I seized the opportunity to research during the pandemic.

This chapter looks behind the scenes of a qualitative collaborative self-study conceptualised by two teacher educators at an Israeli college of education during COVID-19. That study focused on teaching in my yearlong didactics course for pre-service teachers studying English Language and Literature and a teaching certificate. After teaching the course face-to-face, I designed and taught Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL) online. My colleague and I researched the intricacy of TEYL and how I enacted pedagogy of care (POC). The chapter explores how my critical friend and I demonstrated mutual care in self-study while I struggled to provide compassionate teaching, a pedagogy of care, for my students.

Self-Study

Self-study is recognised as professional learning for teacher educators (Loughran, 2014). A respected and rigorous methodology (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2019), self-study, was recommended during the pandemic by Berry and Kitchen (2020) "for documenting the experiences and insights that come from radical change" (p. 123). Self-study enables teacher educators to evaluate how their educational assumptions and values suit their practice (Buttler, 2020). It scrutinises the local and specific while allowing readers to reflect on their own contexts (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Attracted by the intertwining of teaching and research, we aligned our inquiry to the five elements LaBoskey outlines (2004); "...self-initiated and focused... improvement-aimed... interactive... includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods... defines validity as a validation process based in trustworthiness" (p. 817). Choosing self-study during the pandemic enabled us to examine my teaching critically, learn from the experience and make real-time changes to my pedagogy for the immediate benefit of my students. Furthermore, our research relationship provided ongoing support.

Critical Friends

Self-study requires collaboration (Samaras, 2010), usually with a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005), facilitating questioning, dialogue and the search for additional perspectives. Significant collaboration enables researchers to achieve more together than either could alone (van der Walt & Meskin, 2020). Both parties must feel comfortable to enable productive discussion (McEntyre et al., 2022).

My critical friend and I were situated in the same educational context and embarked on the research with shared objectives. Despite the resemblance, we were positioned in the study in different roles. Based on the "Critical Friend Definition Continuum" (Petroelje Stolle et al., 2018, p. 23), Susie was located in the middle of several criteria – she wasn't a "close friend", but certainly not "a stranger", she was positioned somewhere between "an insider" and "an outsider" in the study, between "fully involved" and "loosely involved", and her role was between "reciprocal in nature" and "one way". Our divergent perspectives led to fruitful discussions and various pedagogical and methodological understandings. Petroelje Stolle et al. (2018) argue that researchers often mention critical friendship without explicitly describing the collaboration; this chapter unpacks our research relationship.

Vulnerability

Self-study involves publicly accepting vulnerability as researchers honestly share their practice (Cuenca, 2020). Self-study researchers discuss vulnerability as challenging but necessary in their inquiry (Rawlinson, 2020). Kelchtermans (2009) argues that generating educational knowledge requires engagement with different viewpoints, procedures and "discomforting experiences… in which… one's personal interpretative framework is thoroughly challenged" (p. 270).

In the early stages of this research, working with a critical friend accentuated my sense of uncomfortable vulnerability. As the collaboration developed, I embraced vulnerability as a powerful trigger for reflection and learning.

Pedagogy of Care

Conceptualisations of education (Noddings, 2005) and teacher education (Kitchen, 2010) based on respect and compassion have been discussed. Shoffner and Webb (2023) conclude that there is no all-embracing definition of care in education. Still, it is widely accepted that it involves "relational interaction of carer and cared-for" (Shoffner & Webb, 2023, p. 3). Kitchen (2005) adopts the term "relational" to describe a supportive, empathic and respectful teacher-learning environment.

The complexity of online pedagogical care is gaining interest (Rabin, 2021). Online POC involves more than building caring relationships with students (Burke et al., 2022; Morris & Stommel, 2017). Our research presents an elaborate model of POC in online teacher education, illustrating how POC can be embedded in all elements: synchronous and asynchronous learning and educator-student communication.

Aim

In this chapter, writing alone, I discuss collaborative self-study and POC as mutually supportive practices in intertwining research and relational teaching. Following others who link self-study with critical friends and POC (e.g. Moorhouse &

Tiet, 2021); I explore how dialogic interactions with my critical friend supported me while I struggled to provide care for my online students in a period of rapid change. Similarly, I demonstrate how growing awareness of my relational pedagogy enabled me to understand and maximise the benefit of my research partnership.

The question driving my critical inquiry is: How does intentionally intertwining collaborative self-study and POC enhance my practice as a relational teacher educator researcher?

Method

Coming from different research backgrounds, our decision to adopt a qualitative self-study methodology was not trivial.

> *I kept returning to the kind of research that excites me… We talked about practitioner inquiry…, which may… transform our online teaching and improve learning for our present and future students… I threw the idea to her… to my surprise, I heard excitement…*
>
> *Susie came with a tool kit of quantitative knowledge and linguistic experience… I didn't know how to talk about classroom discourse in… statistics and graphs… We began unpacking terms - motivation, engagement, online learning, and… sharing our ambitions about looking closely at classroom practice. (September 24, 2020[1])*

I had practitioner inquiry experience, but my critical friend was unfamiliar with qualitative research or self-study. Through collegial dialogue, Susie became enthusiastic and adopted the role of a critical friend. We began collaborative self-study surrounding TEYL during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Ethics

We predicted that receiving authorisation from the college's ethics committee to research my teaching would be challenging. Sometimes I felt inclined to concede when Susie and others suggested researching a colleague's practice. Explaining my insistence to Susie clarified and strengthened my determination to perform research embedded in my educational practice.

> *"Because I am an ethical educator and have respectful relationships with students based on listening and respect, I desire to do this. I'm interested in honest dialogue with my students to improve my teaching…" (September 30, 2020).*

I grappled with the significance of ethical research in my professional context, protecting the well-being of my students. Susie agreed, but the struggle with the ethics committee was taxing. Methodological flexibility and creativity helped us design the inquiry in ways that received approval. We were invariably committed to ethical conduct towards our participants, each other and ourselves as researchers and the data generated (Brandenburg & McDonough, 2019).

Participants

From the outset, the thirty-six TEYL students knew I was researching my teaching with Susie, who taught them another class. As TEYL educator, I was also a research participant.

Susie and I met weekly via Zoom throughout the academic year and the following year. Meetings lasted approximately two hours. Gradually our dialogue became closer and more personal; meetings became more focused and productive as we clarified our aims and methodology. We compared understandings, brainstormed, explored assumptions, and planned. Collaborative data analysis provided continual opportunities to contemplate how teaching and learning were compatible with "our evolving ideals and theoretical perspectives" (LaBoskey, 2004, p.820) and explore the "living contradictions" (LaBoskey, 2004, p.829) evident in my work.

Data and Trustworthiness

Data in the study included lesson video recordings, emails, student interviews, and my reflective journal written during TEYL and the inquiry. I did not write journal entries in a set format or at regular intervals; instead, when I needed to

document teaching or research ideas, grapple with dilemmas or jot down my experiences. This chapter is mainly based on my journal.

Methodological quandaries surrounding our collaboration arose in data collection, including who should conduct the interviews. There were three options, me (the teacher educator), Susie (their lecturer in another course), or us both. There were advantages and disadvantages to all three options. We worried that two lecturers might be overwhelming. We thought the interview might be more honest if Susie asked about my teaching, but we understood that interviews could connect the educator and students in self-study. We discussed the issue, read methodological literature, and reached out to accomplished self-study researchers for advice. Finally, we decided that I would interview alone as a teacher-researcher inquiring into her work using self-study based on trust and relationships. Additional dilemmas appeared later, including unexpected student remarks about Susie and other colleagues.

We strived to achieve trustworthiness in this inquiry in several ways. We collected multiple data forms and engaged with them alone and together to make meaning from them. Through detailed writing over two years, I maintained continual researcher reflection (Lennie, 2006). Similarly, ongoing critical researcher dialogue (Samaras, 2010) and collaboration (Riley, 2012) throughout the course and following year contributed to our researcher's integrity and study trustworthiness (Hamilton et al., 2020). Sharing my vulnerability in my journal and conversations was crucial in developing credibility.

Outcomes

Unpacking Care

As we gradually uncovered my POC in TEYL, the framework suggested by Burke and Larmar (2021) helped me recognise many of the caring characteristics of my teaching prominent in our research relationship. Elements associated with the first two principles outlined in the framework, modelling and dialogue, were significant in our interactions.

POC – Modelling Care Through Intentionally Person-Centred Online Interaction (Burke & Larmar, 2021)

I observed three elements of this principle in our interactions: mutual respect, a friendly environment and commitment to collaboration and ongoing learning (Burke & Larmar, 2021). Susie and I based our collegial relationship on mutual respect. We valued and discussed our differences in background, fields of expertise, pedagogy, methodologies, and work preferences. Early in our collaboration, I reflected, "Susie is a linguist… I need to be aware of her capabilities, to allow her to look at the data through her eyes, just as I will… through mine" (December 21, 2020). We were highly devoted to working together for mutual benefit and passionate about our learning. A year into our collaboration I wrote: "I didn't embark on this research for a pat on the back; I'm not interested in valour stories…. I joined Susie… to learn, improve my teaching and share critical pedagogical understandings with my colleagues..." (September 20, 2021). Our informal, friendly, and sincere communication contained affectionate greetings, amiable comments, and information.

POC – Exercising Immediacy and Responsiveness (Burke & Larmar, 2021)

Burke and Larmar (2021) argue that responding to students promptly and supportively is central to POC. Throughout TEYL, my commitment to student success and well-being appeared in my correspondence.

> *When snowed under, it is difficult to ask for help, but it can change the whole picture… This is an essential understanding for you as students and will be even more critical when employed as teachers. I'm here if you want to think about this together. (Email, May 28, 2021)*

I identified that many of the messages I conveyed to students, like that above, were equally relevant to the relationship I was developing with my critical friend. Many conversations centred on our workloads and the importance of sharing our challenges. I recognised that supportive comments I wrote to students were often similar to those Susie and I expressed to each other. "I'm sorry to hear that life has been so difficult lately… Remember that… it's just a matter of working through… You can do it! If you would like help… please say so…" (Email to student, May 20, 2021). The caring, relational focus that was obvious in my pedagogy was also paramount in my research alliance.

POC – Dialogical Orientation (Burke and Larmar, 2021)

Burke and Larmar (2021) elaborate on two elements of dialogical orientation in POC: appreciation of multiple perspectives and open-ended dialogue. After identifying these in my pedagogy, I pinpointed them in my ongoing conversation with Susie.

In my writings, I value our differences. At the outset, I was wary of Susie's research background but later recognised its contribution. "Susie has an analytical, quantitative, linguistic background. She isn't looking for the narrative and dialogue I'm looking for… We will approach the same data with different lenses… hopefully uncovering understandings that neither of us… could have discovered alone" (December 21, 2020). I acknowledged that working together was generating research richer than either of us could have produced on our own.

We needed to set ground rules early for honest open-ended dialogue to eventuate. I repeatedly asked open-ended questions and requested Susie's genuine opinion. I pointed to my pedagogical shortcomings to show I expected to discuss the negatives in my practice. "I asked Susie if she sees things not working well. She brushed it off, saying that she didn't imagine there would be any. I guess there will be lots…" (December 21, 2020). Initially, Susie may have hesitated before mentioning problems as we didn't know each other well enough, or she may have been overly optimistic.

Knowing TEYL was proceeding well, I was wary of self-glorification, only identifying positive aspects of my teaching. I recognised that our desired transformation was in my practice's problems and dilemmas. During early analysis, I wrote, "I don't want her to say everything is fine if she sees elements… needing improvement… This learning… requires humility, putting ourselves at risk. If I don't move beyond… 'Your lessons are great….' I'll miss the transformational opportunity I'm seeking" (January 3, 2021). I constantly reminded myself of the importance of open-ended critical scrutiny of my work.

POC – Respectful Communication; Modelling and Expecting a Culture of Respect and Mutual Care (Burke & Larmar, 2021)

For many educator-researchers, pressure, and self-doubt are constant. I wrote comments like, "Thirty years teaching have not soothed the nerves; I still can't begin a course without doubting my ability… worrying that the seeds of motivation and curiosity won't germinate" (October 22, 2020). I felt comfortable voicing them with Susie; her responses helped balance my perspective. Awkward situations require deliberation and shared awareness of mutual respect. When students mentioned Susie's course in interviews, I debated my response.

> *Some of her teaching techniques were given as instruction examples, connecting students and allowing them to focus and learn. Other comments pointed to the difficulty some students faced… Would those comments have been made if Susie had been interviewing with me? How will she react…? There is much learning here for us as a team, but I can't help feeling a little uneasy. (September 20, 2021)*

I needed to be as sensitively open and honest with my critical friend as she was with me.

Identifying Vulnerability

Findings reveal a high degree of vulnerability in my teaching and research. The close, caring relationship I developed with my critical friend supported me as I navigated new pedagogical challenges, enabling me to grow and learn.

I found the close critical viewing of my lessons painfully uncomfortable. I wrote, "...this is something different, up close, raw, exposing" (February 14, 2021). The word "cringe" appears several times in my reflections, emphasising my uneasiness. "Watching my Zoom lesson wasn't easy… I felt vulnerable and could feel myself cringing at remarks I made and how I sounded and looked… Looking straight into the mirror is never easy, especially alongside others" (January 3, 2021). Six weeks later, I remained unaccustomed to this vulnerability.

> *I cringe as I sit face-to-face with myself and watch and listen. My physical presence on the screen, my hair and skin, up close is unsettling… I see myself as others see me.*

> *Beyond the physical image, my behaviour, language and reactions are open to close scrutiny. 'Why did I say that? 'Why did it take me so long to answer?', 'Why did I laugh like that?'… (February 14, 2021)*

Our meetings helped me process this vulnerability and see the exposure in context. "Once a week, I glance at myself as an educator and researcher through her eyes… a kind of debriefing session… I return to seeing the videos as they are, snapshots in an educational web I've created" (February 14, 2021).

After a year with an honest collaborator, I felt more comfortable opening up to her and becoming more honest with myself. I grappled with contradictions in my pedagogical assumptions. For example, "What surprised me most was the length of my monologues. That wasn't something I expected… While I feel the students are engaged… and 'with me', the long transcripts of my speech, rarely interrupted by others, startle me" (February 14, 2021).

Those reflections led to additional conversations and immediate changes in my practice. Openly sharing vulnerability and expressing care and support allowed us to learn from those delicate circumstances. Data analysis showed how I discovered my learning was similar to messages I had previously written to students.

> *I understand that seeing yourselves on video… can be unsettling. In this age of distance learning… teachers need to jump this hurdle. Speaking English in front of your peers is worrying for some, but that is also something you need to master before you enter the classroom. (Email, November 11, 2020)*

Growing awareness of vulnerability enabled me to generate new understandings connecting my practice and research.

Sustainability: Learning to Take Care of Myself

My critical friend scrutinised my teaching, but she cared for me and worried about my well-being. Uncovering my POC, Susie noticed strong links between my demands of myself and the care I enacted for students. She pointed out my passion for teaching and my enthusiasm for preparing students to be successful, caring educators. Identifying a severe problem in my practice, Susie's reactions and unerring questions made me aware of the personal and professional price I was paying for caring in the ways I was. "I refuse to compromise lesson quality and focus on tiny details… I'm a role model... This requires maintaining my enthusiasm and creativity while I, like my peers, feel pressured and severely overworked" (November 6, 2021). Susie's questioning led me to dwell on questions of sustainability. "My insistence on intensive communication… and my pedantic concentration on… variety… the endless hours spent doing "urgent" tasks… My students and I all paid the price… I neglected reflection and my learning… because of the exaggerated workload… (July 20, 2021). Words like "insistence", "pedantic", "endless", "neglected", and "exaggerated" reveal my growing impatience surrounding my practice.

Susie noticed and questioned time-consuming expressions of care in TEYL. This sharpened my awareness of sustainability issues and forced me to reconsider my practice. "Am I feeding students with a teaspoon when I send a reminder email with uncompleted tasks? Is this feasible? Would I do this… in a regular academic year?" (January 8, 2021).

Eventually, Susie confronted me with a complex question: "How can educators create caring learning environments in balanced, healthy, and sane ways? How can it be doable?" I then dared to express new understandings about my often-excessive devotion to my work and neglect of self-care. I conceded, "I am a workaholic and a pedagogical perfectionist; for the first time, I am admitting it" (September 27, 2021). In self-study, there is "always more to ponder and possibilities to explore" (Hamilton et al., 2020, p. 313). I continue searching for an adequate response to Susie's question; it is crucial for my well-being.

Discussion

Self-study and practice are intricately interwoven (Vanassche & Berry, 2020). This study accentuates the affinity between pedagogical care and collaborative self-study (see Moorhouse & Tiet, 2021; Rabin, 2021). Self-study, like POC, is directed towards transformation and constant professional growth (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022); both are grounded in dialogue involving vulnerability. This chapter explores and demonstrates how the two relational processes are mutually supportive.

Examination of my teaching, alone and with my critical friend, and scrutinising my practice through the theoretical lens of POC enabled me to notice the familiar in new ways (Anfara & Mertz, 2015). Sharing my assumptions led me to grapple with awkward questions about my practice and reach new understandings of online pedagogy.

Collaborative self-study allowed me to observe my practice with a supportive critical friend, but the process was unsettling. I "decisively embraced vulnerability" (Petroelje Stolle et al., 2018, p. 150), exposing my practice while negotiating new pedagogical terrain. Weekly meetings and collaborative analysis of my teaching required me to be candid, acknowledging my triumphs and deficiencies (Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2018). This vulnerability is ingrained in self-study (Berry & Russell, 2016).

Martin (2020) proposes that we "must not only consider how we enact care towards our students but also the ways that we engage in processes of care for ourselves, particularly during difficult pedagogical moments" (p. 15). Providing care in my teaching heightened my awareness of the mutual care I shared with Susie and its contribution to the study, my professional learning, and my well-being. Engaging in interpretive inquiry close-up, personal and sensitive, strengthened our relationship, enabling us to support one another throughout the pandemic.

Limitations and Recommendations

Unfortunately, we did not record our meetings, overlooking potentially rich data. I will undoubtedly document future conversations.

Despite our decision to explore my teaching, I regret a lack of reciprocity. Teaching and researching TEYL was so demanding that we did not look sufficiently at Susie's work to meet her unique professional needs.

I strongly recommend that teacher educators interested in learning from and improving their pedagogy engage in self-study with critical friends. These collaborations can be particularly beneficial and powerful in times of crisis or rapid change. Joining the call for institutional support for POC educators (Burke et al., 2022), we advocate the institutional provision of time and encouragement for collaborative self-study. Caring research relationships can motivate and help fill the significant emotional needs of educators caring for students. This inquiry shows how collaborative self-study can provide this necessary care and enable teacher educators to combat loneliness and self-doubt.

We contacted established researchers in the self-study community during the inquiry about methodological dilemmas. Grateful to receive respectful, constructive responses, we recommend others dare to reach out this way.

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[1] All quotations are from my teaching and research journal unless otherwise stated.

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“It is a bit like cooperating as teachers”

Group Supervision of Masters Theses in Teacher Education

Ronny Johansen, Siv Svendsen, Bjarne Isaksen, & Janne Madsen

Teacher Training | Group Supervision | Primary Education

This study investigates the relation between supervisors’ intentions and their practice when supervising Norwegian teacher students in groups on their master projects and writing of theses. This supervision involves forming groups of students writing individual theses, which allow discussions to take place both between peers and between teachers and students. These groups act as professional communities of practice, where students mutually engage in developing their theses. The question being explored is: Can group supervision of master’s thesis writing prepare teacher students for their future participation in professional learning communities of teachers? Data is gathered from two student groups via a focus group interview. The interviews were analysed thematically. This study emerges from a group of teachers within the field of primary education, acting as mentors for the students. The mentors also form a professional community of practice, aiming to develop and professionalize the practice of supervising. Thus, the project falls into the design of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP). Results and discussion show how features by the supervision develop student skills, such as daring to raise your voice, presenting interpretations, handling supervising, discussing matter rather than person, argue based on theory and handle tensions. These are all skills useful in teacher teams, but the transferability wasn’t visible for the students before brought to their attention by the mentors. The article concludes by presenting three meaningful alternatives to the existing practice. This insight is taken back to the community of mentors to improve the supervision practice, so this can both scaffold students master projects, and strengthen their confidence, enabling them to enter communities of practice as new teachers and contribute to development.

Introduction

Since 2017 the five-year teacher training master program has been implemented nationwide in Norway and the first cohort of students handed in their master thesis in the spring of 2022. A group of researchers and teachers at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN) have been supervising groups of students writing their master thesis within the field of 'primary education', an across-the-curriculum subject within Norwegian Teacher training. To supervise these students as future teachers, and to develop the field itself, we supervise the students in groups, inspired by the principles of "Collaborative academic supervision" (Nordentoft et al., 2013). The supervision has taken place online in groups of students with different master projects and one or more teacher educators/supervisors. This allows discussions both between peers and supervisors-students to take place.

Where previous research has focused on Norwegian teacher student's outcome of writing a master thesis, this study will explore the potential outcome of 'group supervision' for the student's future work as teachers. The supervisors see a potential transfer value for the students when they later join communities of teachers. Whether this potential is experienced by the students or not is to be investigated. In other words, the relation between the supervisors` *intention* and their *practice* is this article's focus. According to Loughran (2007), making the relations between practice and intentions visible is a main reason to study one's own practice. Thus, this study uses "Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices" (S-STEP) (LaBoskey, 2004) as a strategy.

The research question is: "Can supervision in groups of master thesis writing prepare teacher students for their future participation in professional learning communities of teachers?" Data for this study is gathered by interviewing two student groups about their outcome of the supervision, shortly before the students were handing in their theses.

Research and theoretical framework

Previous Research

Previous results from the group supervision project at USN are being published in Isaksen, Johansen, Svendsen and Madsen (2023) discussing how online group supervision of master projects created an open and fruitful atmosphere for peer-learning and individual development as student researchers. We find similar results in Kumar and Johnson (2017, 2019), even if the latter is not related to group supervision but is an investigation on the outcome of the five-year teacher training program.

Group supervision is a well-established field of research, and there are several projects concerned with collective forms for supervision/mentoring in higher education. Samara (2006) finds that group supervision may develop skills that are necessary for group communication and interaction. Dysthe, Samara, and Westrheim (2006) discuss how group supervision contributes in diverse ways, for instance with supervisors and peers providing ways of thinking and arguing, disciplinary knowledge, negotiation of divergent voices and giving supportive and critical feedback (Dysthe et al., 2006, p.309). This leads to "discussion and creation of new understandings" (p.310). Group supervision also may contribute to seeing disagreement as productive (Dysthe et al., 2006), and the students being more conscious of their choices.

Theoretical Framework

Hoaglund et al. (2014) state that to be part of a group and to work in teams, can be seen "as critical skills that all teachers in the 21st century must possess" (p. 521). That implies to be part of a professional learning communities, as newly educated teachers:

> *"...the basis for the skills needed to function within a collegial professional learning community must be developed through intentional, scaffolded experiences in an effort to overcome teacher isolation that leads to the attrition of first year teachers (Hoaglund et al., 2014, page 521-522)*

The researchers behind this study have chosen to see the student groups as professional communities, established by both the mentors and fellow students, to gradually master their writing of theses.

A similar concept, also relevant for this project, is 'communities of practice'. A community of practice (CoP) can be characterized by mutual engagement, shared repertoire, and joint activity (Wenger, 1998). When participants engage mutually, they participate, they accomplish to and benefit from collaborating in the community. The shared repertoire in a supervision group would be relevant professional concepts, knowledge about the master's thesis and the demands to the shared experience of conducting a research project. Joint activities are processes where the participants negotiate and collaborate to reach their shared goals, even though the only overlap of interests between the participants is that they are in process of writing, this group can be understood as a learning community according to the above criteria. Each participant in the CoP is individually responsible to contribute and through contributions from all participants a shared understanding of the aim is developed (Isaksen et al. 2023).

According to Hargreaves & Shirley (2009) a learning community strengthens the involved teachers` professionalism and can lead to development and changes to advantage for the pupils. In this perspective experiences from group

supervision could be useful learning for our students. Participation in communities of practice influences changes and development of teacher identity (Wenger, 1998). Along this line of reflections, we anticipate the professional identity of the students to be influenced in groups of supervision when their shared community of supervision covers a shared field of participation, identity, experience of meaning and learning, four dimensions presented by Wenger (1998). Yet, the supervision groups are not identical to the Communities of Practice described by Wenger (1998) because they do not share an earlier development of learning and will not exist as a community in the future either.

Teachers in Norway often work in teams (Helgøy & Homme, 2007; Lyngsnes, 2011) These teams can be an important arena of learning, if they are organized and participated appropriately (Lyngsnes, 2016). According to Engeström (1999) tensions are important for development if the situation is not featured as a conflict. In various groups within educational systems externalization of the knowledge seems to be a way to facilitate tensions without conflicts (Isaksen et al. 2023). The supervision groups in our project are organized with some features like many teams of teachers.

Based on this we identify two levels of communities of practice in our context: 1) The student groups focusing on the master projects, and 2) The mentors and the researchers, aiming for developing the group supervision. This study is a part of this.

As the results will show below, a third level may be visible, though not as a physical, real community or group. However, the student's statements clearly form a picture on how they expect teachers' communities of practice to be. This "third level" is the students' notion of teacher teams, based on their experiences from school placement.

Method

As mentioned, this study emerges from a group of colleagues within teacher training at the University of South-Eastern Norway. We will explore the relation between our intentions and our practice when supervising master students. Teacher training is a complex field and the risk of losing the sight of our intentions is present. To reduce complexity and sort out crucial factors to understand and improve, we can "explore selected parts of the field" (Loughran, 2007). Our selected part of the teacher training program we aim to professionalize, is the practice of supervising master students. We do this according to Loughran (2007) by passing the research findings back to the field of practice (Loughran, 2007, p. 15-16).

This project falls into the design Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) (Hordvik et al., 2020; LaBoskey, 2004). To improve our practice, we focus on it in an interactive analysis keeping both the process and the outcome in mind in a continuous interplay between research and practice within the frames of practice (LaBoskey, 2004).

Approximately 40 students in our department were mentored in groups when they wrote their master's thesis this year, involving 10 mentors (this study is by four of them). We collected data from two of our groups by a focus group interview with altogether 9 students.

The interviews with the student teachers were transcribed and analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). We coded systematically (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and this led us to several distinct categories. All the researchers participated in this collaborative process of analysis (*kollektiv analyseprosess*, Eggebø, 2020). The categories were in data-reducing-processes (Nilssen, 2012), where we looked for patterns, connections, and differences (Miles & Huberman, 1994), brought down to the following two categories:

1. Student statements on the *transfer value* of group supervision to their future teacher career, participating in teacher teams/ teacher's community of practice. These include the *students' notions of teachers' communities.*

2. Student statements on *the supervision process*: when it is working well and the potential for improvement, including the outcome and utility of the group supervision regarding their master projects and writing of theses.

Results

We will present the two main categories with further three results within each of them, documented with student citations and comments.

The Transfer Value of Group Supervision

When supervision in groups was planned by the teacher educators, transferability of experiences between the teacher education and the future teacher profession, was an important argument. The teacher educators were concerned about all kinds of relations to the field of practice, and this was considered as one of them. The student statements are here further categorized into three results, all related to the value of this transferability.

Result 1: The Connection Between the Group Supervision and the Students` Future Work

The transferability features of group supervision were not obvious to the students when this supervision started. As one of them puts it:

> *"How this can be relevant for future professional work was first emphasized now, in our last meeting. It has not been focused on in an explicit way, in my experience (…) which may have caused this not being experienced as being connected."*

Quite clearly this effect of the supervising *form* has been brought to the students' attention by the supervisors late in the process, which partially was caused by this connection growing on the researcher during the semester and partially caused by wanting to see if the students spotted the connection by themselves.

The same student cited above points out that if this had been brought to attention earlier, it could model how to work in teams as teachers:

> *"We create this community of group supervision, which is meant to be more than supervision, it is created with expectations of transfer of experiences to future practice as teachers."*

The student teachers are in their last year of education and we as their teachers and supervisors expect them to relate to and reflect about their future profession. Maybe this is to expect much, and that the students need our contributions to establish and strengthen this relation.

Result 2: The Learning Community of Students As a Parallel to a Team of Teachers

When students were made aware of the possible connections to the field of practice, they soon compared being a student in a supervised group with being a teacher in a team:

> *"Yes, it is a bit like cooperating as teachers, to question why you think the way you do, regarding everything around the school system and how you perform your work in school and, yes, teamwork."*

The student finds the experiences from participating in group supervision transferable to participating as a team member in school. So are several more emotionally challenging skills like to dare raise your voice, to dare presenting your interpretations, handle supervising/advising from peers/colleagues and make sure you discuss the matter rather than the person. Further, through group supervision the students experience that discussions can make a difference, they practice how to justify and argue based on theory and they experience how to constantly be "in process," all features transferable to teacher teams in future practice.

Result 3: Students` Understanding of Teacher Team

When comparing group supervision with future participation in teacher teams, students stated their thoughts and ideas about teacher teams.

> *"Do teachers have the tools for cooperation? Do they know how to collaborate? The principal says, "every Tuesday between 2 and 3.30 you are going to cooperate". That is actual the only tool they have"*

The students do have expectations of working in teams as a future teacher, in this case, they are rather low, where teachers' ability to collaborate is questioned, likewise their access to relevant tools. When asked what features a competent teacher team needs, the students stated, "reflecting and wondering, being able to take difficult discussions and knowledge-based arguments." The students seem to have strong ideas about the competences needed.

The students also mention that teamwork and a culture of collaboration in teams varies quite a lot between the schools. The relevance and transfer value of group supervision depends on this:

> *"It varies from school to school whether the teams are functional. In some teams, you [the teacher] just run your own class by yourself (…) While in other teams, there is collaboration all the time, as a team, all the time."*

The students have different experiences from periods of placement in school. As student teachers they have been outsiders and are now able to reflect on their observations. They do know that the competence for collaborating in teams amongst teachers could be better, but they are little specific about what is needed.

The Supervision Process – Outcomes and Potentials

Result 4: Outcomes and Effects on the Master Projects

One student talked about the effect of writing in order to present their work for the student group:

> *"It is sort of a competition, or, that came out wrong, but you get more motivated to do a job, because I'm actually using some other students' time."*

Group supervision influences the students' writing process, they feel motivated, and they get support. This outcome is especially significant when the students write individually on their thesis. Collaborating in groups gives more eyes on their work, more voices to comment, more questions and so on. The students also are inspired by listening to each other's presentations of projects. Group supervision increases the students` engagement, prepares them for being part of a critical, reflective group commenting on their work. The effect of closely watching fellow student working with their project and writing is summed up by a student:

> *"We have read many masters' theses until now, but it is nice to observe a master's thesis being written and to get explained why, how things are done that way. You don't catch sight of this simply by reading a thesis."*

By presenting their own work and responding to others, the students become "outsiders" to their own writing. They read and understand with other perspectives, and this seems to contribute to improvements of the content. The students claim that learning the nature of the other students' projects contributes to a less theoretical focus on their own. Also, the supervision groups' schedule pushes the students' project forward.

Result 5: When Group Supervision Succeeds

Even though result 1 above shows the importance of the students collaborating, the teacher educator as participant is also significant in the group supervision. One of the students put weight to this:

> *"You (the supervising teacher educator) step aside, ... assign us (the students) a role where we give feedback and become the assessors. The meta-perspective we, as students, gain from that, is very valuable."*

The teacher educator is referred to as important for the success of group collaboration, not only because we supervise the scientific content, but also because we organize the students into an active role in the collaborating group. The students are expected to participate actively in the feedback and the role is therefore passed to them. They are expected to assess the shared texts and this role is passed to them. To make this possible the teacher educator must step aside, this student tells us.

Result 6: Some Ideas for Improvement

The students have never participated in group supervision where the participants write on different texts before. They were skeptical of the outcome in the beginning, but as shown above, they after a while found themselves as engaged and learning students. Collaborating supervision seemed to work. One of the students suggests we start in another way the following year.

> *"We could have had … supervision on supervision in groups when we started. To show us "this is what is expected from us, this is what we should expect from each other"."*

Our students were not prepared for this kind of supervision, and one student reflected on this and concluded that the collaborative supervision would be prepared for a better start if we had opened the semester with some information. This result is already brought into practice in our teacher education. The following year the first meeting between students and supervision teacher educators was a seminar where the students and the supervisors learned about group supervision together before writing their supervision contracts.

In addition, students put forward some more practical suggestions, like earlier planning for an earlier start-up, milestone schedules and planned, stated deadlines and suitable sized groups.

Discussion

Following Loughran (2007) we will in this section "develop our critical reflections" on group supervision by discussing the results to finally draw some conclusions and to find *meaningful alternatives* to our practice

According to Hoaglund et al. (2014) a professional learning community can be developed through intentional scaffolded experiences. The students in the study do not form a community of professionals as such, but each group functions as a learning community when working on their master projects. Their learning and development is scaffolded by their supervisors and, more significant, by their fellow students.

As pointed out above, there are two levels of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) in this study: The student groups and the group of supervisors (including the researchers). What distinguishes these two communities, is the practice they build their mutual engagement and joint activity (Wenger, 1998) around: The students are collaborating in their research and writing processes. The focus of the supervisors is how to improve and develop their supervision practice.

What may connect them is the feature of their collaboration, not the content of their practices. And here lies the potential and the challenge for collaborative academic supervision: To become more than just a way of scaffolding student writing. To achieve this, our practice could be altered so that supervisors make the transfer value explicit to students early in the process and add this as intentional experiences to the outcome of the collaborative process, alongside the traditional academic activities. Result 1 and 6 above both point out the early introduction of this aspect and the need for information about the collaborative processes and their potential. However, as result 2 states: Once made aware of this, the students clearly saw group supervision as a parallel to working in teacher teams.

Hoagland et al. (2014) further points out that forming a community among first year teachers can prevent attrition with experience from group supervision. Our students are prepared for this kind of active participation.

One feature of group supervision making it a valuable experience for later work, is tension. Engeström (1999) points out that tensions are important for development. In this research project we meet tensions in several variations. Results 1 and 2 illustrate the tensions between the supervisors' intentions and students' expectations and need for information. When these tensions now are uncovered, results can be communicated back to the supervisors, making way for developing a new practice.

Another tension visible in the results is between the students' relatively strong ideas about the collaborative competencies needed for working as a team and that this competence varies among teachers and schools. This is shown in result 3. Some of the skills developed and looked upon by students as useful in future teacher teams, are also useful tools to handle tensions in a professional way – without developing conflicts but lead to improvement – such as handling feedback from colleagues, discussing matter and not person, to argue on the basis of theory. These are features often known to academic staff, therefore this can be an arena to transfer them.

This arena – the group supervising meeting - where students receive and give feedback on their master's work, has the potential of friction arising. The collaborative climate is then of importance for the friction not developing into major conflicts.

If we turn to result 4, the students clearly state that the group supervision and collaboration is helping and motivating them in their projects. One way to look upon this is also by the concept of tensions: More students mean more “eyes” on your work, more plurality in feedback, more perspectives etcetera. The students witness diverse ways of writing master theses and the tensions between them, affect their writing. Another clear tension is stated clearly in the student citation: The feeling of using someone else’s time makes the student put more effort into the work – it almost becomes a competition. This sense of obligation to the group may also prevent students from loneliness when writing their masters` thesis as an individual project.

Isaksen et al. (2023) points out that the participants are individually responsible to contribute to a community of practice. But in a supervision process with an unequal power balance and with learning and development of some of the participants, it is important for the supervisors to step aside and make room for the students to take their responsibility. This is also pointed out from one of the students in result 5 as an important feature for the supervision process to succeed.

Our research question is: "Can group supervision of master thesis writing prepare teacher students for their future participation in professional learning communities of teachers?" Based on this discussion and reflections above, the answer is: Yes, and in several ways if certain conditions are met by an altered practice. We will sum this up in the conclusion.

Conclusion

As self-studying researchers and mentors we aim to professionalize our practice when we pass the research findings back to the field of practice (Loughran, 2007, p. 15-16). We will present three meaningful alternatives to our existing practice in the following.

First, the mentors involved in our group supervising need to emphasize the transfer value of group supervision by making it an intentional, explicit part of our practice. As we have seen, timing is crucial: This needs to happen at an early stage in the master projects, because it takes time for the students to be able to participate actively in commenting on the masters` work to the other students. To discuss with the students how to do this, is also important.

Second, the awareness of tensions as an “engine” for development needs to be recognised by all parts. Students need to learn this as a part of their “training” to become active participants in this community of practice, but more important: supervisors (teachers, academic staff) must acknowledge these features of tensions, both for supporting the writing process and preparing students for their future participating in teacher teams.

Third, the supervisors need to be made aware of and recognise the success criteria for group supervision to work. One important example here is that the supervisor is able to step aside and let the student both learn and to take the role as peers.

We hope this will strengthen the students’ ability as new teachers to raise their voice and contribute to development in their future community of practice. We are worried about this, because one could easily expect that active participation might be even more difficult as newly qualified amongst experienced teachers than among fellow students. The question is: Do we as supervisors scaffold the students to emerge their self-esteem as contributors into a professional collaborative? We hope this study is a step in the right direction.

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Reflecting on Supervision During Emergency Remote Teaching

How Two Novice Teacher Educators Supported Each Other and Teacher Candidates

Monica Anthony & Michael W. Krell

Teacher Education | COVID-19 Pandemic | Supervision | Student Teaching

Our self-study explores the developing pedagogies of a novice field supervisor and a novice professional development school coordinator as we worked together to support TCs completing their student teaching internships during emergency remote teaching (ERT) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We draw on Cuenca's (2010b) notion of university supervisors as teacher pedagogues, rather than evaluators or administrators. Our findings show that increased communication between PDS coordinator and supervisor resulted in greater transparency of each others' pedagogy, which facilitated deeper pedagogical reflection and creative problem-solving about how to support teacher candidates during ERT. Other findings include the benefit of written feedback for teacher candidate development and the importance of responsiveness to the emotional as well as pedagogical needs of teacher candidates. We believe that our practices during ERT can inform the development of structures and supports that improve the practices and pedagogies of PDS coordinators and supervisors in general.

Context of the study

While field experiences (teacher practicums; student teaching) are a valuable and integral component of practice-based teacher education (e.g., Darling-Hammond et al., 2005), there continues to be a lack of research on the preparation and experiences of teacher educators who work closely with teacher candidates (TCs) in the field: in particular, research on field supervisors and professional development school (PDS) coordinators (McCormack et al., 2019; Simmons, 1999). Our self-study explores the developing pedagogies of two novice teacher educators (the authors) as we worked together to support TCs completing their student teaching internships during emergency remote teaching (ERT; Hodges et al., 2020) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of our reflection and analysis is Mike's (the second author's) experiences as he adapted to his role of secondary mathematics supervisor amidst ERT, but we also incorporate insights about Monica's (the first author's) experience as PDS coordinator during this time.

Although many institutions of higher education treat teacher education as a "self-evident activity" (Zeichner, 2005, p. 118), the transition from K-12 teacher to teacher educator is fraught with anxiety (Murray & Male, 2005). The novice teacher educators interviewed in Murray and Male (2005) describe their transition from teacher to teacher educator as a

“slow, uncertain process” (p. 130). The uncertainty of the process can be exacerbated by conflicting messages from the institution of higher education, especially when institutions position scholarly research above “ground-level practice,” such as the supervision of TCs (Dinkelman et al., 2006, p. 14). Thus, graduate student teacher educators, like those examined in our study, often receive more support and opportunities to hone their research skills than to develop their pedagogy of teacher education.

As a result of a lack of teacher educator preparation, Monica, a first-year PDS coordinator and doctoral candidate during ERT, experienced the complex challenges of the role compounded by a lack of recognition for her work (Dismuke et al., 2018; Simmons et al., 1999). Likewise, as a novice field supervisor and first-year doctoral student at the same institution, the second author, Mike, felt underprepared for the responsibilities of his role (Cuenca, 2010b; McCormack et al., 2019). In fact, because Mike is a non-traditionally certified secondary mathematics teacher, he was also unable to draw from an apprenticeship of observation (Lortie, 1975) as it relates to supervision and traditional educator preparation programs. Other than a two-hour Zoom presentation largely focused on the administrative and evaluative responsibilities of supervision, his only understanding of his role came from a handful of discussions with his supervising PDS coordinator, Monica, and two other field supervisors at the beginning of the semester. Furthemore, both Mike and Monica experienced uncertainty about how to perform their roles as the educator preparation program continued to adapt to challenges presented by ERT.

The role of field supervisor is often perceived as primarily administrative and evaluative, which is perhaps why most supervisors do not receive substantial training for how to enact their role (Cuenca, 2010b; McCormack et al., 2019; Zeichner, 2005). Rather than focus on the administrative or evaluative responsibilities of supervisor or PDS coordinator (Fayne, 2017; Koerner et al., 2002; Simmons, 1999), our study adds to the literature on teacher education pedagogies. Specifically, our work builds on Cuenca’s (2010b) description of supervisor as teacher pedagogue, the pedagogical relationship between supervisor and TC, and how novice supervisors transition from teacher to teacher educator. Cuenca (2010b) chronicles his journey as a novice field supervisor, describing a transition from “teacher technician” (p. 38) to pedagogue. Ultimately, by engaging in self-study, Cuenca was able to move beyond sharing “this is what worked for me” (Murray & Male, 2005, p. 131) to creating meaningful learning experiences that problematize teaching and support TCs in applying theory to practice (Blanton et al., 2001; Loughran & Menter, 2019). One outcome of our self-study is to extend the concept of teacher pedagogue to the role of PDS coordinator and how they support the development of supervisors as teacher educators.

Objectives

In alignment with the Castle Conference 14 theme of “Pausing at the Threshold,” we utilize self-study research to reflect on our experiences as supervisor and PDS coordinator during ERT and to apply these reflections to position, reposition, reframe, and reimagine these roles by addressing the following questions:

1. How did the PDS coordinator support the development of the supervisor as a teacher educator?
2. How did ERT shape the way the supervisor supported TCs during their field experiences?

Methods

During the 2020-2021 academic year, we were both graduate students at the same large mid-Atlantic university. Monica served as the PDS coordinator for secondary mathematics at the university. As PDS coordinator, she oversaw all aspects of the student-teaching internship, including matching TCs with their mentor teachers, supporting the supervisors who observed each TC, and meeting with TCs weekly in a seminar course. This was her first year in the role of PDS coordinator. For the previous four years she served as university supervisor for undergraduate and master’s degree secondary mathematics TCs.

Mike was a first year doctoral student assigned to supervise three TCs in the secondary mathematics master’s certification program. This was his first time serving in a supervisory teacher education role. Prior to entering the doctoral program, he taught mathematics in an urban public high school, entering the profession through an alternative certification program. In that capacity, he had engaged in limited teacher education as a district professional development coordinator and mathematics department chair.

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the authors developed a critical friendship around professional practice (Stolle & Fambaugh-Kritzer, 2022), as Monica supported Mike in discovering and refining his pedagogy of supervision. Our critical friendship evolved naturally as we worked together to support TCs in their field experiences. When we decided to conduct a retrospective self-study on our practice, we engaged in a research-focused critical friendship (Stolle & Fambaugh-Kritzer, 2022), reflecting critically on our practices and interactions as we analyzed our data. Data consisted of 62 email correspondence chains between the authors, as well as our meeting notes, from August 2020 to May 2021. These emails contained detailed information on Mike's practice as a supervisor. We supplemented this correspondence data by journaling about our reflections throughout the research process. To help ensure the fidelity of our methods, we shared our analysis and analytic memos with teacher education researchers who practice self-study.

The conditions of ERT caused most of our communication to occur electronically. One recurrent type of communication are debrief emails between Mike, the TC, and their mentor teachers, in which he also included Monica. These debrief emails contain data collected using observation protocols, detailed synopses of post-observation conferences between TC, mentor teacher, and supervisor, and additional thoughts and suggestions about how to improve. Another common email type was Mike reflecting on his practice and seeking feedback from Monica on how to support TCs in meeting programmatic requirements. After the TCs' quarterly performance-based assessments, Monica would also review these assessments and proactively email suggestions about areas for Mike to focus on next with his TCs.

Analysis of the emails and journal entries began with open-coding (Saldaña, 2016) to create a codebook, which led to categorizing the various email threads into seven broad types of support: logistic, programmatic, technological, mathematics pedagogy, teacher education pedagogy, teaching as a profession, and personal/rapport-building (subsequently renamed "emotional support"). These categories captured both how Mike supported his TCs and how Monica provided support to Mike. To address our second research question, within each category we tagged elements that were ERT-specific, such as navigating technologies for online instruction. Once we defined these categories, we made a second pass of open coding, focused on naming the specific supports and mechanisms of the mathematics pedagogy, teacher education pedagogy, and emotional support categories. The sub-themes that branched from mathematics pedagogy were explanation, building relationships with students, questioning, and student participation. Those that branched from teacher education pedagogy were supervisor experience, specific suggested actions, mentor expertise, and PDS coordinator expertise. We also refined our conceptual understanding of emotional support into elements related to personal life, emotional support and encouragement, and transparency between Mike and the TCs. Anthony and Krell (2022) explores many of these sub-themes in detail. Our goal throughout these analytical cycles was to find specific evidence that both motivated and confirmed the reflections that surfaced during our numerous post-hoc critical conversations and journaling exercises.

Outcomes

Our findings show that increased communication between PDS coordinator and supervisor resulted in transparency of each others' pedagogy. This transparency facilitated reflection between both teacher educators and enabled us to engage in creative problem-solving around how to support TCs to meet the programmatic requirements during ERT. We believe that our practices during ERT can inform the development of structures and support to improve the practices and pedagogies of PDS coordinators and supervisors, regardless of context.

PDS Coordinator Supporting the Supervisor During ERT

To address the question of how the PDS coordinator supported the development of the supervisor as a teacher educator, we began by examining how Monica herself was supported when she was a university field supervisor. As a novice PDS coordinator, she relied heavily on her experiences as a former mentor teacher and field supervisor. When reflecting on practice during data analysis she wrote:

> *I crafted and piece-mealed together my practices and policies based on what I had experienced as a supervisor working under the direction of four different [secondary mathematics] PDS coordinators during my time at [this institution], as well as leveraging the relationships that I had built with PDS coordinators from other content areas. These relationships began when I was a practicing teacher in [the local district] and then evolved further as I became more involved in supervisor training. At the initial meeting with my*

> *three supervisors, I basically showed them how I liked to do things as a supervisor, and requested that they do the same (journal entry, July 6, 2021).*

In refining her teacher education pedagogy as a PDS coordinator, Monica made a conscious effort to support supervisors in ways she wished she had been supported as a supervisor. The notion of "leading by non-example" finds a counterpart in Mike's reflection, who stated "I [modeled] a lot of my own supervision philosophy around making sure my teacher candidates' first experiences with teaching were as different from my own as possible" (journal entry, July 6, 2021). This common desire to do things differently perhaps laid the initial groundwork for the ethos of pedagogical care we describe in the discussion section below.

In regards to programmatic support, one support that Monica wished she had when supervising TCs was guidance on assessing TCs' performance. To address this, she co-created a "look fors" document to guide supervisors across content areas in gathering evidence for performance-based assessment items, given the circumstances of ERT. The purpose of this document was to address the question: how do I know if TCs are meeting the benchmarks? For example, one of the "meets expectations" benchmarks for the performance assessment states, "The teacher candidate has clearly established, efficient classroom routines and procedures resulting in minimal to no loss of instructional time." The potential evidence for this benchmark in the guide document includes:

The teacher candidate communicates explicit instructions for how students should participate during synchronous and/or asynchronous instructional time. During synchronous instruction, the teacher candidate moves between activities with little to no loss of instructional time. Asynchronous components, like the online course space, are organized and user friendly (i.e., students know where and how to access the course materials).

We see in our correspondence data that Mike utilized this evidence document as a guide for what to look for during virtual observations as well as in assessing whether TCs had met programmatic benchmarks. In addition, Monica would review the performance-based assessments and provide supervisors with her thoughts on TCs' areas of growth. Mike utilized these reviews to inform the structure and content of goal-setting meetings with TCs, as corroborated by the content of his post-evaluation conference correspondence with TCs and conversations with Monica. Each of these supports and scaffolds Monica provided were coded as PDS coordinator expertise and programmatic support. These supports form our basis for extending the concept of teacher pedagogue to the role of PDS coordinator by demonstrating how these coordinators can support the development of supervisors as teacher educators.

Mike included Monica in all of his correspondence with TCs, giving her a level of access to his pedagogy that she did not have with other supervisors. This extensive communication helped Monica to monitor and promote the developing pedagogies of both Mike and his TCs. Our consistent communication also resulted in developing rapport and friendship that extended beyond our roles, enabling us to minimize any power dynamics between coordinator and supervisor that may have impeded candor and honesty. Mike noted this rapport in his end-of-year journaling: "My conversations with Monica . . . had also made it clear that we saw eye-to-eye on most things as far as the job was concerned, and that she would be a net positive as I made things up as I went along" (journal entry, July 6, 2021). These interactions were among those coded as "emotional support."

Supervisor Support for TCs During ERT

Monica's emphasis on the expectations of the educator preparation program's performance-based assessment pushed Mike to think critically and creatively about these expectations. In particular, he considered how TCs could authentically meet these programmatic requirements during the altered circumstances of ERT. For example, by substituting asynchronous projects and reflections about, classroom elements that were impossible to practice (or observe) during ERT, such as designing and maintaining classroom routines and procedures, Mike attempted to "prime" TCs for the in-person work they would need to undertake when ERT ended.

Beyond the context of ERT, conversations and exchanges with Monica around programmatic expectations developed Mike's understanding of what counts when preparing TCs and to what degree. For example, Monica's suggestion to send emails recapping what was said during post-observation conferences was initially intended as a way to document

TCs' progress toward meeting programmatic expectations. However, the level of detail, analysis, and concrete suggestions in these emails transformed them into resources for TCs as they prepared their lessons and collected evidence for their portfolios. TCs' application of feedback led Mike to refine his ideas of how to use feedback to effectively coach TCs both during ERT and in general. Mike's reflections confirm that these emails would likely not have taken the shape they did under non-ERT circumstances, where he would have had the alternate channel of face-to-face communication. Thus, what had initially developed as a support for meeting programmatic expectations during ERT, evolved into an important tool for developing TCs' mathematics pedagogy.

Interestingly, the conditions of ERT appear to have significantly shaped the emotional support, honesty, and transparency between Mike and his TCs. Throughout our data, we found consistent evidence of Mike's transparency with TCs regarding his own limitations–a transparency "reciprocated by TCs, and which evolved into a sense of solidarity in teaching and learning during ERT" (Anthony & Krell, 2022, p. 27). Furthermore, we found numerous occasions in which Mike devoted time and energy to directly bolstering TCs' confidence in their own teaching. For example, worried he would be unable to provide a TC with feedback in a timely manner, Mike wrote: "You've shown evidence of very good teacher instincts, so I'm confident you'll do great with or without my input" (email, November 3, 2020, as cited in Anthony & Krell, 2022, p. 27). Although it is impossible to know whether Mike would have supported TCs' similarly under non-ERT conditions, it seems likely that the global sentiments of uncertainty and anxiety permeating life during ERT informed how purposefully and deliberately Mike cared for the emotional wellbeing of his TCs. We also suspect that the degree to which Mike evidenced care for his TCs heightened the impact of his pedagogical guidance and feedback.

The Role of Written Correspondence

Remote supervision during ERT resulted in an abundance of written documents and correspondence, in turn creating a large volume of communication and feedback between TCs and supervisor that may not have existed under other circumstances. The importance of this correspondence for Mike's support of TCs during ERT is a holistic finding, present in almost every code category.

As previously noted, Monica requested that supervisors not only debrief on camera with TCs and mentor teachers, but also send an email with notes taken during the observation along with notes from the meeting. These notes were to include the TC's strengths, areas for improvement, and long-term goals. Our data shows that TCs perceived Mike's detailed records as a useful support both in meeting programmatic expectations and in improving their craft more generally. For example, one TC's lesson plans included a section at the bottom of the plan containing excerpts from Mike's debrief emails that they found particularly helpful to use as a reminder during planning and teaching. Another TC directly communicated the usefulness of this written feedback:

> *Thank you for the detailed feedback (as always)! Part of the reason I've been able to come so far is because you've been very descriptive with your statements and given me plenty of examples when it comes to personal strengths and focus areas. That's been a huge help to me so thank you again (email, December 4, 2020).*

Likewise, the note accompanying a TC's end-of-the-year thank-you gift to Mike mentioned that they would "miss your detailed and lengthy emails" (May 21, 2021).

While correspondence between supervisor, TCs, and PDS coordinator serves as the data for our study, these email chains also functioned as coaching and mentoring tools, supporting the developing pedagogies of both the supervisor and TCs during ERT. Since Mike consistently included Monica on these email chains, she was able to monitor both the progress of the TCs and how Mike provided feedback to TCs about their mathematics pedagogy. Monica periodically replied to Mike's debrief emails to validate his feedback to TCs with comments like, "I totally agree with the suggestions you made to [TC]" (December 5, 2020) and "As always, beautiful, detailed notes! I like what I am seeing in the 'strengths' section and I totally agree with the focus areas" (February 1, 2021). These emails, in turn, reinforced various aspects of Mike's own teacher education pedagogy, again demonstrating how PDS coordinators can play a pedagogical role. In addition to the benefits of creating a written record described above, Mike found that he was able to be more complete

in his feedback to TCs about strengths and more targeted in his feedback about areas for improvement. Composing these emails after a period of reflection enabled Mike to go into more detail about, and provide more examples of, ideas and suggestions that he may only have touched on briefly during post-observation conferences. Thus, although this "supervision paper trail" was a product of the circumstances of ERT, its value extends beyond that specific set of conditions.

Discussion and Significance

The findings discussed above document how our pedagogies as novice teacher educators developed during ERT as the PDS coordinator provided guidance to the supervisor and as the supervisor, in turn, supported TCs in their year-long internships. During our retroactive self-study and reflection, we encountered Cuenca's (2010a) framework of supervision, which has made a profound impact on how we understand and describe our actions as teacher educators. In this framework, Cuenca draws from van Manen (1991) and Noddings (1992, 2003) to develop a way of understanding supervision as a pedagogical activity rooted in care, thoughtfulness, and tact. Both of us saw significant parallels between this framework and Mike's approach to supervision. Although we did not utilize Cuenca's (2010a) framework in our original data analysis, we have considered how this framework can be used to reframe and reposition our work as teacher pedagogues (Anthony & Krell, 2022) and are currently reanalyzing our original data in light of it. The purpose of revisiting our data is to operationalize how supervisors can enact this framework in practice. By linking Mike's actions to the framework, we hope to connect Cuenca's theories to concrete actions, thereby supporting supervisors in putting these pedagogical orientations into practice and alleviating some of the uncertainty of becoming a teacher educator (Murray & Male, 2005).

Mike has not supervised since 2020-21 but plans to do so again. In the meantime, he is teaching a math foundations course for undergraduate elementary education majors. Two ways in which the research and reflections above have helped him improve his practice as a teacher educator are an increased attention to the nature and delivery channel of feedback, and a more proactive and conscious cultivation of pedagogical care and tact (Cuenca, 2010a). As discussed above, Mike discovered the pedagogical power of written feedback during his experience supervising during ERT. The durability of such feedback appears to increase its impact substantially. Rather than strain to remember what their supervisor said at such-and-such time and place–feedback that will of necessity be filtered through TCs' own reconstruction of events (Jordan & Henderson, 1995)–written feedback gives TCs the time and space to digest it at their own pace, and preserves the unfiltered version of this feedback for such digestion. When coupled with a perspective on feedback that centers security and pedagogical love (van Manen, 1991), decenters supervisor experience, and responds to a TC's own specific circumstance (Cuenca, 2010a), this type of feedback has wide applicability to other situations of adult education, such as undergraduate foundations and methods courses.

Monica is no longer a PDS coordinator but continues to supervise TCs in their field experiences. Engaging in this self-study helped her to decompose her pedagogies as a supervisor and confront which of her actions were rooted in an apprenticeship of observation and which were rooted in research and theory. Similar to Mike, Monica recognizes the importance of pedagogical tact (Cuenca, 2010a) in providing verbal and written feedback to TCs, and in communicating that feedback in a way that will be "taken up" by the TC. In addition, being privy to Mike's email correspondence with TCs reinforced for Monica the importance of developing rapport and caring relationships with TCs. Without these personal connections, the supervisor cannot transition from evaluator to pedagogue as envisioned by Cuenca (2010b).

This experience helped us conceptualize and name important aspects of our practice. Throughout the findings above, we see a theme of empathizing with and supporting both each other and the TCs in our care. Although we came to it belatedly, Cuenca's (2010a) framework of care, thoughtfulness, and tact for supervision allowed us to name some of the most powerful common threads in our experience as teacher educators during ERT. Now, not only can we describe, track, and evaluate these elements in our practice but, looking forward, we will also engage in a more formal (non-post hoc) self-study aimed at analyzing and developing our orientation of care towards aspiring teachers, and its twin manifestations of pedagogical thoughtfulness and tact as described in his framework. Furthermore, we feel that this is a proper and fitting place to end the current study, in keeping with the theme of pausing at the threshold.

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Building and Modeling Warm Demander Teaching Identities

Laura C. Haniford, Valerie A. Allison, & Laurie A. Ramirez

Equity | Teacher Education | Warm Demander Pedagogy

This collaborative self-study interrogates two mid-career teacher educators' abilities to enact "warm demander" teacher identities with students in their licensure coursework. Each of the authors teaches in different types of programs in different locations within the U.S. Building on lessons learned through virtual instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, they seek to study the gaps between their espoused teaching identities and their practices. Using surveys, teaching journals, and dialogue based on critical friendship and collaboration, they describe what they learned from explicitly studying their pedagogical relationships with students. Their findings reveal an insight into the ways that being a warm demander is a necessary part of teacher education, particularly in schools that have a diverse student population.

Context

We are three mid-career teacher educators who have a history of working together to interrogate our practices. In previous work, we have sought to intentionally experiment with new instructional strategies (Allison et al., 2020, 2021a), learn from our challenging courses (Allison et al., 2021b), and articulate what we learned from leadership positions (Haniford et al., 2021; Ramirez et al., 2020). In this collaborative self-study, we build on our previous work while also confronting some of what we learned through our COVID-19 teaching experiences. Laura is an associate professor at a large research-one university in the southwestern United States. The students in her teacher preparation program are more diverse than national teacher demographics in the U.S. Valerie is an associate professor at a small, private, liberal arts institution in the northeast U.S. Her teacher candidates more closely match the national teacher demographics. Laurie, an associate professor at a mid-sized public university in the southeastern U.S., served as our critical friend.

Each of us has a clearly articulated teaching philosophy that values relationships and centers issues of equity and social justice. We strive to balance friendly, warm classroom environments and relationships with students with high expectations and rigor. In other words, we seek to be "warm demanders" (Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Hammond, 2014). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we each felt relatively successful in enacting a warm demander stance. Additionally, we each explicitly teach our preservice students the importance of being warm demanders. However, during the year of pandemic teaching, we came to question how effective we were with *all* students.

In reflecting with each other on our experiences during the 2020-2021 academic year, we kept returning to the challenges we faced with developing and maintaining strong relationships with our students. We found our ability to form the relationships necessary to be warm demanders were uneven at best in an online environment. As self-study

researchers oriented toward improving our teaching practice (LaBoskey, 2004), this realization inevitably resulted in questions about our face-to-face teaching as well. As a result, in this self-study, we explore the following questions:

- How did our understanding of what it means to be a warm demander change? In what ways do our teaching practices indicate we are enacting warm demander teaching identities?
- Where are we falling short and what can we learn from when and with whom we do not enact this teaching identity?

Theoretical Framework

Warm Demander

The concept of "warm demander" as a model for the effective teaching of diverse students was first coined by Judith Kleinfeld in 1975 in her analysis of strong teachers of Alaskan Indigenous students. Often the term has been used to describe teachers who teach in culturally responsive ways and who are successful with diverse student populations (e.g., Ford & Sassi, 2014; Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ware, 2006). The term itself suggests a teacher who exhibits personal warmth and care, combined with what Irvine and Fraser (1998) call "a tough minded, no nonsense, structured and disciplined classroom environment for kids whom society has psychologically and physically abandoned" (p. 1). For the purposes of our work, we rely on the definition provided by Zaretta Hammond (2014), "This unique combination of personal warmth and active demandingness earns the teacher the right to push for excellence and stretch the student beyond his comfort zone" (pp. 97-98).

As a facet of culturally responsive teaching (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ware, 2006), a warm demander stance has been most broadly studied and theorized in the context of white teachers working with African American students (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009). Because it is rooted in culturally responsive teaching, an explicit focus on social justice and equity is a critical component of teachers exhibiting a warm demander stance (Irvine & Fraser, 1998; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ware, 2006).

At the heart of a warm demander stance are the relationships between the teacher and their students. Zaretta Hammond (2014) articulates the different important components in what she terms the "learning partnership" between students and their teacher. These include: "Establish an authentic connection with students that builds mutual trust and respect;" "Leverage the trust bond to help students rise to higher expectations;" and "Hold students to high standards while offering them new intellectual challenges" (p. 19).

Despite research demonstrating the effectiveness of a warm demander stance on the learning of students of color (Kleinfeld, 1975; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Ware, 2006), it is an often misunderstood approach to teaching, particularly for white teacher candidates (Bondy et al., 2012). This is due to the fact that being a warm demander requires that teachers demonstrate care to their students in a way that students see as caring (Bondy et al., 2012; Noddings, 2002).

Despite evidence that a warm demander stance in the classroom supports historically marginalized students, in our literature search, we were only able to find one article exploring how two first-year teachers attempted to become warm demanders (Bondy et al., 2013). We aim to begin to address this gap in the literature.

Self-Study, Critical Friendship, and Collaboration

Two major tenets guiding this research are collaboration and critical reflection. As Kitchen, Berry, and Russell (2019) argued, "conversation and collaboration with peers can have a powerful impact" (p. 93). Aligning with Brookfield's (1995, 2009) conceptualization, we assert that reflection is critical when it is motivated by the desire to be just, fair, and compassionate and when it questions the criteria, power dynamics, and socio-political structures that frame our practice. Further, critical reflection includes framing problems from multiple perspectives, examining practice, and working toward change. This process occurs by questioning and analyzing taken-for-granted assumptions, routines, rationalizations, and unexamined explanations (Loughran, 2002; Rodgers, 2002). Through examining our pedagogical relationships with students, we strive for greater equity in our classrooms. One method we use to help us confront our assumptions and rationalizations is through our established critical friendship. Schuck and Russell (2005) maintained that "a critical friend acts as a sounding board, asks challenging questions, supports reframing of events, and joins in

the professional experience" (p. 107). Additionally, we rely on our critical friendship in order to help us build trustworthiness (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

Our collaboration was born of shared beliefs and a true friendship that was honed over time. As we first collectively collaborated in the self-study research venue, we found Tidwell's (2006) idea of nodal moments to be helpful - these are those moments that cause you to stop and reflect and result in the transformation of your practice. Further, LaBoskey (1998), Brookfield (1995), and Lighthall (2004) posit that enlisting colleagues to engage in collaborative study offers possibility, insight, and the opportunity to reframe practices. This study has been a rare chance for diverse women to come together from across the U.S. to identify commonality and divergence.

Data and Methods

For the study, Laura worked with the licensure class she teaches every fall to secondary education students (n=25). Valerie worked with a cohort of 11 secondary education students in two methods courses she teaches every fall.

Drawing on our theoretical frame articulating what makes a teacher a warm demander, at the beginning of the fall 2021 semester, we asked students to write about what trust/rapport looks like for them as learners. How do they know they have trust and rapport with a teacher? We analyzed these written statements for themes and to begin to identify students with whom it might be more challenging for us to develop the kind of "learning partnership" (Hammond, 2014) necessary to demand high academic performance.

Additionally, we tracked our interactions with students during each class session, focusing carefully on those students with whom we felt we were not developing the same sort of rapport as others. We each identified two focal students and in our teaching journals we focused on our interactions with these students, noting specific attempts to develop trust and rapport, whether those attempts were successful or not, and ultimately what we learned about teaching, teacher education, and ourselves as a result.

We met regularly via Zoom to share stories and strategies. We recorded and transcribed these meetings to use as additional data. Laurie, as our critical friend, asked us to uncover assumptions we were making about students, raised alternative perspectives, and helped us to consider additional strategies for developing strong learning partnerships. Sometimes she also simply reassured us that we were doing all we could.

Finally, we distributed an anonymous survey to all students at the end of the semester to measure their opinions about our ability to be warm demanders with each of them (see Appendix A). This survey contained questions eliciting their thoughts on our caring, our ability to develop learning partnerships and rapport with them, and whether we held high expectations for them.

We compared the writing students produced at the beginning of the semester about trust and rapport with the results of the survey, looking for instances of similarities and differences between what students articulated generally about teachers and what they said about their trust and rapport with us specifically. This data gave us information about where we were successful and where we fell short in our efforts to model for students a warm demander stance.

At semester's end, we immersed ourselves in our individual datasets in an iterative process, doing multiple readings to identify codes, emergent patterns, and questions for consideration as they relate to our initial research focus (Merriam, 1998; Samaras, 2011). In additional Zoom conferences, we discussed our individual findings, exchanged ideas, and established the broader patterns and divergent themes (Samaras & Freese, 2006). In preparing the final paper, we selected data excerpts that are representative of our datasets and illustrate the themes we collectively identified.

Findings

One of the indicators of a warm demander stance is high expectations and an explicit push for students to meet those expectations. Our struggles with developing relationships in a virtual environment raised questions for us about students' abilities to hide or simply tell us what they think we want to hear in our face-to-face classrooms. Our findings helped us understand both our past experiences and ways for us to move forward.

Coming to Better Understand a Warm Demander Stance

Early in this study, we frequently spoke of being a warm demander as existing on a continuum from warm to demanding. In fact, we even uploaded a photo on our shared drive of a fuel gauge in a car with warm on one end and demanding on the other. Over time, we came to more fully understand Hammond's (2014) definition quoted above. Relationships must be tended to and carefully nurtured in order for us to demand students rise to meet our expectations. Laura wrote in her final teaching journal:

> *Reading over their responses, something struck me that I think should have been obvious and is even written about in the literature but I'm not sure it's as clear as it can be. It isn't a continuum between warm and demander. They are the same thing. It is through the rapport and relationships that I build with students (the warmth) that I can demand. And, students actually demand more of themselves because they don't want to disappoint me or damage our relationship. (December 9, 2021)*

Some examples of the types of comments students made in their final survey that led to this realization were:

> *Among all my classes, I felt most guilty when I was absent in this one. I actually felt like pushing myself to not only arrive but also engage whereas in other classes I sometimes felt like skipping because I felt as though my time in class could just be subverted by turning my assignments in and dialing in my grade. The time in class here had no substitute.*

> *Yes, I think based on everything you shared with us, both the how and the why we were doing things, it made me more inclined to try. I felt like if I didn't do my end of the work, it would waste my (and your) time.*

> *I wanted to get my homework done because I genuinely wanted to hear your feedback, and it would give me something to talk about with you.*

Valerie also received similar feedback from her students:

> *Yes, I feel like we all held ourselves to a high standard because we not only did not want to disappoint you, but we didn't want to look bad in front of our peers.*

> *I did feel motivated. Honestly, I would be pretty upset to disappoint you as I have a great amount of respect for you and your opinion.*

> *Yes, I felt motivated to meet class expectations due to our established learning partnership. Once a personal connection was established early on, I felt inclined to give this course my best effort. Although I could also credit this motivation to the implications of this course (highly relevant to student teaching), the established rapport certainly helped completing assignments and participating in class I was personally inclined to give my all.*

As teacher educators, it is crucial that we have a deep understanding of what we are asking our students to do in their own classrooms. When we were teaching in middle and high schools, we were unfamiliar with the term "warm demander." We understood the importance of holding high expectations for all our students, but we did not have the language to describe how the relationships we build with students contribute to our abilities to push students to meet those expectations. The above comments from our students coupled with the experiences we had in our classes this semester shifted our understanding in profound ways.

Intentionality Matters

A second finding was that simply through the explicit focus on developing strong relationships with each student assisted us in being more mindful of checking in with every student, in every class. As Valerie said in a Zoom meeting on March 21, 2022, we "couldn't simply rely on our personalities." While both Laura and Valerie felt that developing strong relationships with students was one of our strengths, the process of focusing on our relationships with all of the students in our classes had an impact. Additionally, the fall of 2021 was the first semester that Laura's institution was back face-to-face (albeit masked), and it was exciting for Laura to see students in person again. As a result, she found

herself explicitly checking in with each of the 25 students each class session in a way that she perhaps did not prior to COVID. After the first day of class, Laura made a list of the students she felt she was already developing rapport with, and those with whom she did not make an immediate connection. The process of writing down students' names and thinking about whether she could picture them in her head and what type of interactions she had had with them caused her to focus on who she was going to attend to in the coming week. For example, the addition of masks made it more challenging than usual for Laura to recognize some faces. She had to extend what she paid attention to in order to learn some students' names, e.g. noting that one student always had beautifully manicured long nails.

Students noticed these efforts and spoke to them in their comments on the end-of-semester survey. A few examples are:

> *You always came to check in with me especially when I was sitting alone, which I really appreciate because it can be hard for me to be social, but I don't like to just sit by myself when everyone else is talking to each other.*

> *I can be pretty quiet sometimes and can keep to myself to a fault and every single day that I came into class you said hi to me and asked how things were going. That really meant a lot to me even when I responded with a quick "just fine". Also I have instant rapport with any Dr. Who fan.*

Because Valerie's program is much smaller, and she serves as an academic advisor to all students who declare they are pursuing secondary education certification beginning in their first semester, Valerie knew her students' names and a little about them before they became her students in the fall of their senior years. For her, engaging in this study meant thinking about which of her students she already knew well and which she did not. In the case of a few students, she began the semester (based on previous advising experiences with them) having some trepidation.

> *I sort of had a bad attitude about him before the semester began because he had previously stood me up for advising appointments and not apologized. I needed to let that irritation go because he really is a nice person who seems dedicated to becoming a teacher who cares about his students and not just his content area. (September 16, 2021)*

In her early journals of the fall 2021 semester, she systematically thought through how she was engaging with each student in her courses and where she needed to work to intentionally draw students into the classroom community. In writing about a couple of students who did not volunteer often in class discussions, Valerie wrote,

> *I'm being really mindful of encouraging and calling on them when the stakes are lower. I've also been doing more of getting students to develop and ask their own questions of the group/class. In that way I can get quieter students to ask their questions first. I'm also trying to be very mindful of calling on students by their names. (October 2, 2021)*

Of course, we each also made some missteps with individual students. For example, Valerie had one student who struggled throughout the semester to complete assignments on time and/or according to expectations. Additionally, the student had multiple absences and disclosed they were struggling with anxiety. At the end of the semester, Valerie met with the student and followed up with an email detailing what needed to be completed in order for the student to pass the courses and be eligible to student teach in the spring. In order to be in compliance with her institution's student management policies, she submitted an electronic alert to the Student Academic Success Committee. Alerts submitted trigger emails to the students they reference. Valerie's student was offended by the alert as evidenced by their response to the end-of-semester survey.

> *I feel there was no need to report me for "not responding to outreach" when I did talk to you and told you when I would submit the missing assignment.*

In hindsight, Valerie wished she had handled the situation differently. She believes simply letting the student know of her obligation to issue the alert would have gone a long way to helping the student not feel like they were being "tattled on." As teachers, her students are going to encounter similar situations where they have professional obligations to

record or report student concerns, and it would be beneficial to them to have a model for navigating those situations in a way that maintains rapport and does not result in students feeling shamed or disrespected.

Laura also realized that there are certain personality types she relates to more easily. There was one student in her class who was more quiet and less willing to have more personal conversations with her. At a certain point, you can't force a relationship with students. Also, one student left a comment on the survey that left her with additional questions. In the end of the semester survey, in response to the question asking students to explain whether or not they felt they had rapport with her, one student wrote: "I do not have many controversial beliefs by any stretch of the imagination, but I feel like if you actually knew me you would not like me very much." To Laura, this comment has several implications. First, she is concerned that this student did not feel they could be their full selves in the class. She doesn't know which beliefs the student has that made them think this, so it is challenging to know how to respond. Additionally, there are certain teaching dispositions that Laura feels are necessary to becoming a teacher and that she is very upfront about in her classes. These include a commitment to interrogating our own biases, working to change our classrooms to be more inclusive of all students, and advocating for those who have been historically marginalized in schools. While she is unwilling to lessen her insistence on these dispositions, she also wants to consider how students such as these could more fully engage in the course.

Unanswered Questions

Finally, at the conclusion of this study, we are left wondering what it means to be a warm demander in higher education with professional students at the end of their degrees. Students in our programs have chosen to become teachers and so to a certain degree, they are internally motivated to successfully complete our courses in order to obtain their teaching credentials.

Additionally, we noticed differences based on the fact that Laura's students are more diverse and have had more negative experiences in their own K-12 schooling experiences. Many students had not experienced the "warm demander" stance in their schooling, and there were many stories of students experiencing teachers with deficit perspectives of them, their families and communities, and their potential for success. Most students in Laura's classes could see and understand the importance of being warm demanders based on their own schooling experiences.

In contrast, most of Valerie's students are white and come from economically comfortable backgrounds. While they shared some negative stories of teachers who failed to develop rapport or who ruptured rapport with them; these stories were balanced by abundant memories of teachers taking interest in them and supporting them. However, the importance of being both warm and demanding was something we felt was important and necessary for our teacher education students, both for their own growth and for modeling for their future professional roles. Each of us are left with questions about how best to prepare teacher candidates to adopt a warm demander stance in their own classrooms, whatever their own schooling experiences have been.

Significance

Preparing teachers who are able to teach in culturally responsive or, more recently, culturally sustaining ways has always been imperative (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2021; Paris & Alim, 2014, 2017). This call has become even more critical in the wake of the uprisings in the U.S. in 2020 and as we move forward from the COVID-19 pandemic. Teaching in ways that are culturally sustaining means thinking about and modeling how to foster learning that views the "outcome of learning as additive rather than subtractive, as remaining whole rather than framed as broken" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 1). Those of us in teacher education have an opportunity to recommit to supporting teacher candidates who can construct warm demander teacher identities (Hammond, 2014) in order to develop supportive relationships with and hold rigorous expectations for all students. One unintentional realization we came to through this self-study was that while many of Laura's students had never experienced the kind of supportive classrooms led by warm demander teachers, Valerie's students, by and large, had although they would not describe their experiences as such. However, all teacher candidates need positive role models and experiences to draw from in order to later seek to build these same kinds of classroom communities and teaching identities. In order for our teacher candidates to develop these teacher identities, we must model this stance in our own classrooms. While we are pleased with the successes we experienced through this self-study, we are more keenly aware than ever of the importance of intentionally tracking

which students with whom we do and do not have strong learning partnerships. We invite our teacher education colleagues to think with us about how best to prepare all teacher candidates in becoming warm demanders in their own classrooms.

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Appendix A

1. Did you feel you had rapport with me this semester?

Yes No Maybe

2. Please explain

3. To what extent did I create a warm, welcoming classroom?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all All the time

4. To what extent did I create a personal learning partnership with you?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all All the time

5. To what extent did I genuinely care about your success in the class?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all All the time

6. To what extent did I establish a community of learners?

1 2 3 4 5

Not at all All the time

7. Did you feel I held high expectations for you?

Yes No Maybe

8. Please explain

9. Did I communicate me expectations for you clearly

Yes No Maybe

10. Please explain

11. Did you feel motivated to meet class expectations because of the learning partnership we had established?

Yes No Maybe

12. Please explain

13. Did you feel I was a warm demander as a professor?

Yes No Maybe

14. Please explain

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Perspectives on Trauma-Informed Practice During Pandemic Zoom Teaching

Elizabeth Hope Dorman & Elizabeth Grassi

Distance Learning | Trauma-informed | Relational Pedagogy | Pandemic

Many educator preparation programs are expected to instruct preservice educators in trauma-informed (TI) pedagogy, even though professors themselves may not have the background to help preservice educators become proficient in these approaches. Teaching Zoom classes during the pandemic created multiple opportunities to experience and analyze teaching from a TI framework. These unfamiliar instructional delivery modes were emotionally challenging, causing faculty to face their own difficulties while simultaneously holding space for student challenges. In this co/autoethnographic self-study, we (two experienced teacher education professors) aimed to understand the ways faculty and students were triggered during Zoom teaching by unpacking classroom critical incidents and connecting them to the TI literature. We investigate the following questions through narrative critical incident analyses: 1) what did we learn, from a trauma-informed perspective, about our attempts to translate our authentic teaching identities to the online platform and the ensuing student responses, and 2) how did reflections on classroom critical incidents help us better understand trauma-informed practice? The overarching finding is that we developed an "insider perspective" on trauma-informed pedagogy (TIP) and how to implement aspects of TIP, especially the cultivation of emotional safety and trustworthiness. By "insider perspective," we mean that we developed an embodied, empirical, practical understanding of some key aspects of TIP "from the inside out" because we lived these concepts experientially while also studying about them through literature and classes. The findings from this study have implications for educators at all levels as they engage in various delivery modes with diverse student populations.

Study Context

Many educator preparation programs are now expected to instruct prospective teachers in trauma-informed (TI) pedagogy (Patterson et al., 2020; Prewitt, 2016), and this call has been strengthened by the COVID-19 crisis (Center for Disease Control [CDC], 2019; Horesh & Brown, 2020). However, teacher educators themselves may not be familiar enough with TI approaches to help prospective teachers become proficient in them (Hobbs et al., 2019; Honsinger & Brown, 2019).

The current literature on TI practices for teacher candidates is scant (Brown et al., 2020), even though research indicates that up to 99% of undergraduate students have experienced traumatic events (Frazier et al., 2009). Additionally, despite calls to attend to the well-being and training of educators working with traumatized students (Brunzell et al., 2021; Carello & Butler, 2015), little research exists on what happens when the educators themselves get activated.

Pivoting suddenly to online classes during the pandemic created multiple opportunities to experience and analyze teaching from a TI framework. These unfamiliar instructional delivery modes were emotionally challenging, causing faculty to face their own difficulties while simultaneously holding space for student challenges. Furthermore, although scholarship is emerging on how faculty are adapting their practice to distance contexts (Abrams, 2021; Chapman, 2021; Well, 2021), studies are absent on how faculty respond to distance learning from a TI perspective. This research addresses this gap.

To make meaning of the ways faculty were triggered through Zoom teaching, we (two experienced teacher education professors) worked as critical friends to unpack classroom incidents and connect them to the TI literature. Responding to these teaching and learning challenges allowed us to reach new thresholds by stretching into reimagined pedagogical skills and ever-evolving identities. As McGonigal (2016) and others (Ballard, 2022; Holiday, 2014) argue, the difficulties and tensions in our Zoom classrooms provided opportunities for growth in both the professional and personal realms that continue to the present moment. This process better equipped us to understand and teach TI practice and thus contribute to closing the gap in the literature.

Trauma-informed practice (TIP) forms the conceptual framework for this self-study. Fallot and Harris (2009) named five core elements of trauma-informed practice (TIP): ensuring emotional and physical safety, establishing trustworthiness, maximizing choice, maximizing collaboration, and prioritizing empowerment. Carello and Butler (2015) argue that ensuring safety is the most basic, fundamental principle. We focus here on safety, along with trustworthiness, as they are essential to TIP for both professors and students.

The principles of safety and trustworthiness are well-aligned with Kitchen's relational teacher education pedagogy and "reciprocal approach" in which professors acknowledge their own struggles, engage students with empathy and respect around their struggles, and are receptive to growing in the context of teacher-student relationships (2002, 2005a, 2005b). Brown (2015) and Markowitz and Bouffard (2020) refer to this as reciprocal vulnerability where students and faculty get comfortable revealing their struggles and humanness. Taking the risk to express vulnerability requires cultivating a classroom culture in which students and faculty alike feel respected, valued, and emotionally and physically safe. A sense of trust can be built and strengthened as faculty model expressions of vulnerability, and eventually, over time as trust builds, students reciprocate. This reciprocal vulnerability deepens the sense of connection that is so central in TIP.

Emotions play a starring role in relational, trauma-informed pedagogy. While the teacher is responsible for doing what is possible within the classroom to establish a culture of physical and emotional safety for the students, the collective fear sparked by the pandemic may have exceeded the capacities of some educators. During pandemic Zoom classes, faculty often felt and brought into the virtual classroom the heightened emotions and sense of fear that pervaded society. As faculty monitored students for signs of trauma, faculty also had to recognize when their own trauma was triggered. When faculty enter classes with dysregulated nervous systems, especially without being aware of it, students pick up on this, and it can fuel the fire of their own respective activation (Imad, 2022).

Higher education institutions notoriously privilege cognitive ways of knowing rather than using emotions and the body as a path to understanding (Grassi & Dorman, 2020). To help higher education faculty understand the ways that "historical, social, racial, and personal trauma are held in the nervous system as patterns," Chari and Singh (2020) developed a course called "Embodying Your Curriculum" (EYC). Their trauma-informed approach "provides professors tools to work with the dysregulation that is *already present for almost everyone*, to acknowledge it, and to create resiliency and connection in the midst of it." Concepts and embodied practices from their EYC course played a significant role in our meaning making of the emotional difficulties that arose during pandemic Zoom teaching.

Aims/Objectives

The aim of this chapter is to reflect on and make meaning of our various challenges of pandemic Zoom teaching through a trauma-informed lens. This multifaceted learning experience was framed by these inquiry questions:

- What did we learn, from a trauma-informed perspective, about our attempts to translate our authentic teaching identities to the online platform and the ensuing student responses?
- How did reflections on classroom critical incidents help us better understand trauma-informed practice?

Methods

This self-study was initiated by two experienced teacher education professors who had never taught in an online platform until required by the pandemic. We sought a systematic method for making sense of how emotionally difficult and disorienting our pandemic Zoom teaching experiences were and to learn from them to improve our practice moving forward. We applied many of the principles from co/autoethnography, codified within the context of a longstanding collaborative critical friendship, demonstrating how self-study is both personal and interpersonal (Samaras, 2011).

Taylor and Coia (2019) acknowledge that co/autoethnography is often a non-linear, "complex, messy process" without predetermined, ordered steps (pp. 9-10). Our steps in this collaborative self-study followed this general flow. Throughout four terms of pandemic Zoom teaching, we both kept teaching journals. We talked and messaged weekly to tell each other our stories of various online teaching challenges. We converted selected stories into critical incident narratives that represented the most challenging situations we encountered. These written and oral data sources were central to our meaning making. We engaged in study of the TIP literature, participated in experiential learning (such as the EYC course noted above), and dialogued regularly, searching for insights and interpretations through the lens of TIP and our own personal histories.

Critical incidents were described in written and oral narratives and represent a major portion of our data set. Thus, narrative analysis (Fraser, 2004; Newby, 2014) was a logical analytic framework. Step 1 is interpretation: We searched for the most salient features of the various data sources through the lens of trauma-informed practice. Step 2 involved comparing key features of the narratives to our personal histories in a co/autoethnographic approach. For example, how did x critical incident bring us back to painful situations from our personal histories that caused us to get activated in the current moment? Step 3 involved searching for common themes and patterns across the narratives through the lens of TIP conceptual frameworks.

Through this collaborative analysis of the selected critical incidents (Williams & Berry, 2016), we attempted to bridge reflection and practice (Kitchen, 2005a) and make meaning of these difficult situations through the lens of TIP. Reflecting on, discussing, and analyzing the incidents, shaped by our conceptual and experiential learning about TIP, generated powerful insights. To enhance trustworthiness, we shared initial results of these analyses with other higher education colleagues and have incorporated their feedback into this chapter's findings.

Outcomes/Discussion

Teaching on Zoom during the pandemic presented myriad challenges to our practice as teacher educators. The distance learning environment constrained our abilities to enact a relational, embodied pedagogy, which is at the core of trauma-informed education and our own teaching identities. In addition to the societal stress and dysregulation of pandemic life, the challenges were exacerbated by limited in-person contact, the frequency of teaching to a sea of black boxes on Zoom (because so many students kept their video cameras off), inconsistent access to Internet connectivity and a suitable environment in which to participate in Zoom classes, and widespread videoconferencing fatigue (Ramachandran, 2021). Analyzing and reflecting on critical incidents related to these types of difficulties generated important insights towards the inquiry questions.

The overarching finding is that we developed an "insider perspective" on TIP, especially the cultivation of emotional safety and trustworthiness. By "insider perspective," we mean that we developed an embodied, empirical, practical understanding of some key aspects of TIP "from the inside out" because we lived these concepts experientially while also studying about them through literature and classes.

Critical incident analysis led to three main themes within this "insider perspective" which helped us better understand the impact of trauma in the classroom on faculty and students alike: intersecting dysregulation, double binds, and rupture as generative. Below we exemplify the themes through critical incident analysis.

Theme 1: Intersecting Dysregulation

> *Critical incident 1: I had another really hard Zoom class the other day where only one student had their camera on. At one point, I called on Sam's black box and asked to hear his responses to an issue we were discussing. "Sam? (pause) Sam, are you there? (pause) Sam, I'd love to hear your thoughts on this. Can you please unmute and share your ideas?" Radio silence as I sat there awkwardly and then said, after another anxiety-ridden pause, "Okay, well, who else has some input on this prompt?" That evening, I received an email from Sam. "Hey Professor! I heard you were calling on me in class today. I'm so sorry! I was in the laundromat moving my clothes into the dryer. That's the only place I can get Internet and be away from my loud roommate." This is just one example of how students appear to be attending Zoom class, but they are not truly present.*
>
> *My usual strategies of leveraging my relational skills just do not work as well as they work face-to-face. In person, there are so many informal opportunities to interact and build connections with students: walking to or from class across campus, spontaneous office drop ins, being able to see and hear the interaction and track comprehension both during whole class instruction and small group activities. I realize I am mourning that loss of effectiveness and connection.*
>
> *I had a huge aha today about why it is so hard for me to teach to a sea of black boxes. Normally in my teaching, I am frequently scanning the room for signs of the students attuning to me. I need to know that I and my teaching are being received by the students. If there is a disconnect, I have multiple strategies to apply from my decades of experience of relational pedagogy. However, I am really struggling with how to address this disconnect when their cameras are off (which is most of the time). My own anxiety and distress increases as I do not receive the acknowledgement I seek that students are following me. In these moments of not getting that attunement, that very young part of me that sought attunement but often did not receive it gets triggered. At first, I resort to an old strategy from childhood of trying really hard to fix the problem so that I would not be rejected. My unconscious then spirals into fear of being abandoned and the overwhelm of having to take care of myself as an infant.*
>
> *Because my own trauma and attachment history are getting activated when I have to teach to a group of students I literally cannot see, it is so much harder for me to remain balanced and embodied. I am taking personally these "failures to connect" and am blaming myself. And then that pulls me into a shame spiral of not being good enough and feeling like there is something wrong with me. This reminds me of Venet's (2021) caution that we need to have unconditional positive regard towards ourselves as well as towards our students. If I believe that "my value is in how much my students respond to me" (p. 99), I am vulnerable to getting my own trauma activated, taking interactions with students far too personally, and reacting in a less grounded way.*

Critical incident 1 illustrates what we mean by "intersecting dysregulation." Since our own personal trauma and attachment histories got repeatedly triggered due to various difficulties of pandemic Zoom teaching, we had to respond to that both within and outside the classroom environment. Simultaneously, students, too, were getting activated in various ways based on their own trauma histories. Thus, these dual and simultaneous challenges created a perfect storm of what Chari and Singh (2020) call "tension in the field." Experiencing our own dysregulation due to lack of attunement and connection, but also witnessing the students' experience, created an insider perspective of what happens in this "intersecting dysregulation." We learned first-hand what lack of co-regulation feels like in the classroom and how extremely challenging that was, given how central relationships are in our authentic teaching identities.

Although critical incident 1 does not show resolution of this tension, reflection and analysis on this incident through the lens of the TI literature led us to understandings that we can apply moving forward. For example, we now know that a crucial first step towards healing includes faculty self-awareness and recognition of their own triggers, especially awareness of taking things personally. An important second step is to acknowledge and orally name faculty and student dysregulation without judgment. This naming process requires faculty to embrace reciprocal vulnerability, no matter how difficult that feels. This reciprocal vulnerability between faculty and students helps to build a sense of trust

in the learning community so that relationships can be restored and strengthened. While learning about these concepts through the literature was important, experiencing them simultaneously helped us to develop an embodied understanding from the inside out.

Theme 2: Double Binds

> *Critical incident 2: The whole issue of whether or not to require students to have Zoom video cameras on during class certainly feels like a double bind. Providing choice and empowerment are key tenets of trauma-informed practice. So from that perspective, students should not be required to use their video—right? And I can't stop thinking about Venet's (2021) comment that "controlling the bodies of our students is trauma-inducing, not trauma-informed" (p. 69). I keep asking myself, "Is requiring Zoom videos to be on a form of controlling students' bodies?" I fear that it is. And yet at the same time, other sources say that asking students to keep their cameras on IS trauma-informed, because of the central role of connection and relationships in cultivating a safe, trusting learning environment. I am confused and absolutely feel that sense of being stuck between a rock and a hard place.*
>
> *In a recent anonymous survey, a number of students commented on the whole cameras on vs. off issue. One said that I should be "written up" for pressuring them to have their video cameras on. Another said, "I don't want you inspecting my face to try to see if I understand or am engaged." Whoa. These comments made me realize that even though I was saying it was not technically required to have cameras on, my energy around the issue came across as a strong demand. In my own desperation to get the connection and acknowledgement through social nervous system tools such as eye contact, attuned energetic contact, and verbal contact (Chari & Singh, 2020), I overdid it on pressuring them. Definitely a double bind.*
>
> *After getting that feedback, I reflected back to them some of the themes from the survey responses. I named the strong emotions that came through in some of their comments about the pressure they felt from me. I told them how grateful I was that they were able to tell me how they felt, and I shared very honestly how hard it was for me to feel connected to them or to be able to track their understanding when I could not see them. I have to say—it was quite ironic to be sharing in such a vulnerable way to, once again, the sea of black boxes.*
>
> *I then invited a broader discussion on why it might be a good idea to elicit anonymous formative feedback from one's students in the way I had done. I raised the question of how a teacher might respond when feedback across the class contained conflicting views, including opinions that essentially suggested that the teacher change their identity and authentic teaching style to match student preferences. For example, in that survey, I heard both: "Please lecture for the full 90-minute class period" alongside "Please put us in breakout rooms more often for group work." Right in the middle of this discussion point, one of the black boxes unmuted itself, interrupted me, and said in a loud voice, "THIS IS A WASTE OF TIME."*

As noted in critical incident 2, we gained an experiential understanding and insider perspective of double binds (Chari & Singh, 2020; Gist, 2016). A double bind is described as "being stuck between a rock and a hard place" resulting in "no good choices…that feel spacious or empowering." As learned in the EYC course, double bind classroom situations can be influenced by personal and intergenerational trauma histories of faculty and students and the intersections among them. Double binds usually cause a level of activation for facilitators as well as for students and often cause reactivity "through strong emotions of anger or fear." In critical incident 2, the discussion about camera presence created a double bind for both the professor and student, terminating in frustration and anger from the student.

During pandemic Zoom teaching, we needed and wanted to enact appropriate TI practice, yet we discovered that being ourselves and teaching in a way that aligned with our authenticity was sometimes resisted by students. We experienced teaching as "a daily exercise in vulnerability" (Palmer, 2007, p. 17), as both students and faculty had to learn and teach in unfamiliar ways, and often in uncomfortable environments. We often felt unsteady when our "normal" ways of enacting our core beliefs did not work.

Experiencing double binds required us to be willing to turn towards discomfort, and model reciprocal vulnerability, while doing our best to stay as balanced and embodied as possible. This required attuning to our own nervous systems first, before engaging with the social nervous system of the class. As we deepen our ability to sit with challenging conversations and situations, we "can gain insight, learn, grow, and develop our resiliency as individuals and as a community" (Chari & Singh, 2020). During Zoom teaching we gained practice in using these skills to respond when faced with double binds.

Theme 3: Ruptures can be generative

> *Critical incident 3: I was late to Zoom class one day last week because I received a text right before class time saying that I was eligible to receive the COVID vaccine and needed to sign up immediately or risk having to wait. I felt a huge sense of urgency due to living in fear for a year that I would get COVID and infect a high-risk family member. So, I took the time to register but then was a few minutes late getting the Zoom class up and running. As I frantically logged on, I could feel adrenaline coursing through my veins. My body and emotions were overflowing with relief and excitement. I apologized for being late and then impulsively gushed my news and excitement of the vaccine registration to the students, followed by an overly enthusiastic "Who else has gotten their vaccine or is signed up to get it soon?" I looked around at the Zoom boxes (about half had videos on at that point) and watched for responses. A few students raised their hands or gave a thumbs up. Others looked at me with blank stares or averted their eyes. Others turned their videos off.*
>
> *A few days later, I got the first shot and was at the grocery store afterwards. The cashier asked me in a very friendly tone how my day was going. "Oh, it's fantastic! I just got my COVID vaccine, and I feel SO relieved! Have you gotten yours yet?!" Suddenly, his tone changed, he looked away with a furrowed brow and said sternly, "That's a personal question that you shouldn't ask people." Immediately I realized he was totally right. I deeply apologized with shame in my heart. I thanked him for telling me that it felt so inappropriate to him.*
>
> *In our next Zoom class, as embarrassed as I felt, I came right out and said to the students, "I made a mistake in class the other day when I gushed about getting the vaccine and asked who among you had gotten it, too. That is a personal choice that we all make, and I was wrong to act as I did, especially as a professor in a position of authority with you. I am truly sorry for the impact my actions may have had on you and your feelings about being in this class and working with me." No students said anything to me then or afterwards about this incident, so I only have speculations about how it was received. However, I knew that attempting to repair with them was the ethical move, no matter how humiliated I felt.*

As noted in critical incident 3, we gained an embodied, experiential, insider perspective on the generative role of ruptures within the context of relational pedagogy. Applying what we learned from the TI literature to what we actually experienced helped us change our views on "ruptures." We learned that they are actually a sign of generative learning community health, not something to be feared (Chari & Singh, 2020). In the context of pandemic Zoom teaching when we constantly felt like novice teachers again, we naturally made some mistakes, both in our Zoom pedagogy and in our interactions with students. Feeling so vulnerable due to our mistakes being on full display was often extremely uncomfortable, especially when our fumbles caused harm or difficulty in some way. However, through study and reflection, we developed broader perspectives on the valuable role of ruptures. Chari and Singh (2020) teach that:

> *ruptures and breaches actually strengthen the container of the classroom when they are met with attuned contact and witnessing... Just the intention and conversation around repair can itself be a powerful corrective experience for those who've experienced trauma at various levels, and who may have never had the experience of someone making repair with them with integrity.*

It was a relief to learn that our mistakes, followed by attempts to make repair with humility and vulnerability, could actually promote resiliency and enhance the feeling of emotional safety and trust.

Conclusions/Implications

We originally conducted this study to reflect on and make meaning of our various challenges of pandemic Zoom teaching through a trauma-informed lens. This self-study resulted in valuable insights on implementing trauma-informed practices that are relevant for educators in any discipline, context, or delivery model. Through a cycle of reflection presented in critical incidents, informed by literature and professional development, we developed an insider's perspective of TI practice and how to engage it in our classrooms.

Trauma-informed practice centers relationships. The distance learning environment constrained our abilities to enact a relational, embodied pedagogy, as described in the critical incidents. As we tried to maintain integrity with our authenticity, we had to get comfortable with reciprocal vulnerability as part of building safe, trusting relationships with students. Our willingness to turn towards the pain of intersecting dysregulation, be aware of and sit with the paradox of double binds, and accept the generative nature of ruptures and repair led to a more powerful understanding of the inner workings of trauma-informed practice that has deeply shaped our relational teacher education pedagogy. Learning from these difficulties has strengthened our skills and resilience and allowed us to reimagine our developing practice as trauma-informed educators.

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Navigating Leadership With an Eye Toward Equity

Understanding My Practice and Experience As an Educational Administrator

Alicia R. Crowe

Equity | Diversity | Leadership | Associate Dean | Inclusion | Lived Experience

As an associate dean, I strive to lead in ways that reflect my values for diversity, equity, and inclusion. In this self-study, I sought to learn about and improve my own practice as well as capture the lived experience of leading with these values. Through analysis of the generated data, I describe it as an experience in many – many steps, many efforts, many priorities, many tensions. After explaining this, I provide a focused excerpt that illustrates the nuanced complexity in the act of deciding to send an email. These two items provide windows into the everyday, lived experience of an associate dean trying to lead with an eye towards equity. I found that the focus of the self-study helped me stay attuned to matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion across the many facets of my responsibilities. I posit that the focus and structure of engaging in a self-study can help an academic dean learn from their experience, refine their reflective practice, gain knowledge of themself as a leader, and develop skills as a leader, areas that Gmelch, Hopkins, and Damico (2011) argue need to be well-developed to become a strong academic leader.

Situating the Study

I am a White, cisgender woman who, as a social studies teacher educator, tried to model my commitments to democracy and diversity in her teaching. After 14 years at a large predominantly White public university in the Midwest region of the United States, I accepted the role of associate dean of undergraduate education in my college. I envisioned myself as a leader whose actions would reflect the values I held as a teacher educator. As I began my new role, I learned that the office I would lead was engaging in a multi-year, office-wide professional development series, with programming to deepen our capacity to work with diverse others. The series included workshops around microaggressions, religion, sexuality, gender violence, and ethical decision making. I saw this as aligned with my values of equity and diversity and thought I was on my way to being the leader I imagined myself to be.

Gmelch, Hopkins, and Damico (2011) describe the life of the dean in four seasons: spring, summer, fall, and winter. Spring, they explain, typically includes the first three years and is the time of getting started, setting agendas, building teams, and planting seeds. In those first three years, I felt good about what I was doing; I was confident in my work. I would have pointed to our professional development series and my role in the creation of a bridge program for students from underserved populations as evidence of my commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. Summer is from years

four to seven. It is a time when a dean should be "hitting [their] stride" (p. 29) and I would say I was hitting my stride in 2019, my fourth year. I was beginning to question whether my actions and practices were focused enough on diversity, equity, and inclusion. My growing unease with whether I was living my values seemed an opportunity I shouldn't let pass. I wanted to be a leader who noticed inequity and actively worked to make change. I wanted to be a leader who encouraged and supported others to be advocates who see and make change themselves. I was not there yet. I was not being as proactive as I wanted; I needed to do more. I was not sensitized to noticing at the level I expected from a leader (Mason, 2002) and had yet to truly learn how to lead others to consider questions of equity in our shared work at the university. I needed to be more deliberate about the work I was engaging in and understand more about the experience of becoming more deliberate and explicit in my equity work. In 2020, I began more earnestly to push myself to be the leader I wanted to be.

As a self-study researcher, I read self-study work of administrators before and after becoming an associate dean. I knew the role was fraught with tensions and complexity. Clift (2015) wrote specifically about being an associate dean. Her title, "at your service," resonated with me and my experiences thus far in the role. She found that her schedule involved collaborating with many others in and outside of the college. She wrote of being both proactive and reactive and I saw many connections between what I had experienced so far and what she described. I wanted to add to these descriptions for others in this role. Manke (2004) provided an early review of self-study research related to aspects of administration in teacher education contexts. At that time, she found themes across these studies around issues of power, community, and social justice. I had also seen these issues in my daily work in this role. Manke wrote that research related to administrative matters, "provides an unusual perspective on issues of leadership, styles of interaction, and the ways that the demands of administration affect individuals" (p. 1368). I agreed and I wanted to delve into the role of associate dean more. Allison and Ramirez (2020) revisited the literature since Manke's review. In their review of literature, they found that more recent studies explored how we, as administrators, came into our roles, how we learned in our roles, and the value of critical friends in our roles. My hope was that through self-study, I could both learn from and about my practice while providing an example of the lived experience of an associate dean leading with an eye on equity.

Study Aim

Taylor and Diamond (2020) asked, "How do we help to push ourselves as self-study researchers to move from talking about these commitments theoretically to taking them up and enacting them in our teacher education practices and research?" (p. 511). I wondered this too. I began this self-study wanting to examine my practice as I tried to be an inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist leader. This larger examination began, near the beginning of 2020. For this paper, I sought to capture the essence of the lived experience as I worked to live my values as a leader who values diversity, equity, and inclusion. I wanted to learn about and improve my own practice while also providing access to these experiences to others so they might consider their own practice and experience as an administrator. I considered these questions as guides to the inquiry: Who am I as an associate dean who wants to engage in inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist practices as a leader? What do I do as a leader? How do I experience this process?

Setting

Our college includes education, health, and human service majors for graduate and undergraduate students. We serve about 2600 undergraduate students; about half intend to become teachers. As associate dean, I am responsible for providing leadership around multiple aspects of undergraduate education including advising, curriculum, recruitment and retention, and student success. I am charged with leading our college's office of student services, a team of nearly 30 people (20-22 full-time staff, 3-6 graduate assistants, and 2-3 undergraduate student workers). The office includes areas such as advising, clinical experiences, data management and programming, the director of teacher education, educator licensure, recruitment and retention, and student success. Though I see diversity, equity, and inclusion as integral to my role, these are not explicitly named in any of my roles and responsibilities.

Methods

My wondering began in early 2020 and coalesced in our summer months (July/August). I did some initial documenting and meetings with a critical friend from August through December before settling on systematically documenting my

experiences for three months, mid-February – mid-May 2021. I hoped to capture and then convey the lived experience of an administrator trying to lead with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion (Van Manen, 1990, 2014). To generate data,

- I wrote about critical incidents as a leader (moments that I felt a tension of some sort related to leading with an eye towards equity and inclusion) that might later convey some of the in-the-moment experience as close to the time of an event as possible (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020).
- I wrote about experiences and sent them via email to my critical friend and they responded with questions that prompted further thinking (Berry & Crowe, 2009). This documented my thinking as I reconsidered the experiences.
- I engaged in dialogue-based data generation (East et al., 2009; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020) via online meetings with my critical friend every two to three weeks to discuss my experience. These captured some of my thinking and meaning making about the experiences temporally closer to specific events. These were video recorded and transcribed using otter.ai.
- I gathered and generated focused writings about my thinking on what diversity, equity, and inclusion meant to me as a leader before and during the three month period.

Analysis was inspired by Van Manen's (2014) description of thematic analysis in his work on phenomenology of practice (e.g., wholistic, selective, and detailed readings). I approached the texts as a whole, reading each item to gain an overall sense and naming an overall theme from that text. In a selective reading approach, I read the text multiple times discerning the statement that seems most revealing about the experience. With detailed readings, I read each line and asked what that portion said about my experience. This multi-leveled reading and analysis process brought me to consider my experience in a multitude of ways that I share below.

Understanding the Experience

Entering this endeavor, I wondered: Who am I as an associate dean who wants to engage in inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist practices as a leader? What do I do as a leader? How do I experience this process? Before documenting my experiences for three months, I sat to write a succinct statement of my commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion as an administrator in higher education. I wrote, I have a: "commitment to cultivating a just, equitable, and excellent educational experience for all. This commitment is fundamental to nurturing and supporting a more democratic society. … Higher education has a responsibility to the communities we serve. We must be active partners with them and work together for a more just society." I considered what I do as associate dean:

> *As a leader, I must look at barriers to access and inclusion, work towards eliminating barriers, and strive to cultivate a larger institutional culture where all members are respected and valued. For example, when making decisions I must work to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives are present in the process. But, I cannot stop there. I need to find ways to ensure that all voices and perspectives are valued, respected, and included. I should ask myself who might not feel safe to contribute and then how to work to change the climate so they do contribute. Ensuring that diverse perspectives are present and that the processes are as inclusive as possible is not enough. I also need to consider if the decision made will be equitable for different people with different histories and identities. Will the specific policy, practice, or procedure we are deciding [on] be equitable for all?*

After writing this, I finished the semester and connected with a critical friend to begin planning for data collection.

I realized, through this study, that I had expected that leading with an eye on equity and living my commitments, would have a coherent, coordinated, and systematic nature. However, the lived experience of my vision was not at all tidy. During the focused data collection period, I wondered more than once, "Am I doing anything to lead? Is there anything at all remotely tied to my values involved in what I am doing? Am I really working towards diversity, equity, and inclusion?" After the analysis, I can say yes, the data includes evidence of a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Across the period, I can point to examples of collaboration with our equity and inclusion team as we worked to ensure students' chosen name was used correctly and consistently throughout the college and beyond, my internal struggle and outward actions to ensure staff are treated equitably and feel they are treated equitably, or my contemplating ways to encourage

programs to “make their curriculum more culturally relevant, anti-racist, [and] inclusive.” However, the answer yes and a list of actions obscures the complexity of what the experience itself was like.

What I saw across this snapshot of time is an experience in many – *many* steps, *many* efforts, *many* priorities, *many* tensions. This should not be surprising since this describes the life of an associate dean in general. Within the data, across one week in late February, I wrote about 1) grappling with how to ensure a feeling of equity within our staff; a persistent issue I continue to actively think about, 2) sharing about diversity, equity, and inclusion events as a practice in leading, and 3) contemplating how to facilitate our equity and inclusion team group to be a true collaboration with me as a member instead of a group that implements my ideas as associate dean. In April, one day I documented a discussion that occurred at the university undergraduate dean’s meeting where I mentioned our work in the college on chosen name as part of an effort to push the conversation in multiple venues on campus. Three days later, I wrote about my frustration that I had yet to figure out how to move on my desire to make curriculum changes related to equity.

> *I have been wanting to do something for over a year now that asks our faculty/programs to think about ways to make their curriculum more culturally relevant, anti-racist, inclusive…So why haven’t I? …I’m still grappling with how, finding time to come up with a plan, and how to walk the line of curriculum is under the control of the faculty – but if I am supposed to be a leader then what does that mean? (April 16)*

When I analyzed what I wrote about, I rarely saw a specific topic revisited. In the moment, and in initial analysis, my efforts felt scattered and disconnected. With more sustained examination and when contemplating these efforts and their connections and contexts, what I saw was not disconnected but rather reflective of the many dimensions of my life as associate dean. The position itself involves varied responsibilities that require adjusting and sometimes competing priorities. In this snapshot of time, leading with an eye towards diversity, equity, and inclusion reflected the nature of the position itself, which meant that this work was not highly focused on single projects but rather was infused across my life as I shifted daily or even hourly based on the different aspects of my role that I was attending to at the moment (e.g., curriculum, analyzing data, working with staff).

Describing the variety of experiences across a period of time opens one window into the daily experiences of an associate dean, but so does exploring the depth and nuance within a single event. Focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion can be intense, exhausting, invigorating, frustrating, and rewarding, sometimes at the same time. I experienced frustration with myself, others, and institutional and societal systems multiple times. I often experienced multi-layered thought processes just to take an action that appears small or simple from the outside. After analyzing my writings and meetings with my critical friend, one particular event emerged that helps convey some of these complexities as lived.

On April 20, 2021, I sent an email message to our office team. Sending an email happens dozens of times a day. It is a seemingly simple action. This email emerged out of a confluence of larger socio-cultural events in the United States, events within the university, my focus on nurturing a climate of understanding, respect, and care in our team, and my frustration with myself and the university not doing enough. I wrote on the subject line: “A message from me to all of you” and sent this message to all members of our office:

> *As we watch for the results in the Derek Chauvin trial to come in, as we watch black and brown children like Adam Toledo be killed, as we see examples of systemic racism over and over, I want to acknowledge that some of us live with pain, grief, and fear in ways that others of us cannot understand. In an interaction or the flurry to get something accomplished, we may not even realize that someone else is bringing a whole lot [of] trauma with them to a meeting or a conversation. I will continue to remind myself of this and ask that we all keep[sic] try to keep this in mind this week and every week. As a team, we try to be here for our students and often think about how to support them. I also want folks to remember it is both ok and necessary to take care of ourselves. (April 20, 2021)*

I shared this email with my critical friend, Christina, as soon as I sent it to the office. In response, she asked: “What was the motivation for saying something? What were you thinking about when writing it?” The deliberation, time, and

emotion behind this email are hidden. What I replied helps convey some of the complexity of what I experienced before sending the email, providing another window into the experience of leading with an eye on equity. I replied:

> *Here's the oversimplified version.*
>
> *Had two minds of it. The leader /associate dean and Me as a colleague.*
>
> *As a colleague I wanted to reach out individually to my BIPOC [Black, Indigenous and People of Color] team members or those who have BIPOC family and children just because I again am reminded how much fear and stress they experience and I can't even fathom how these past few weeks have been – again. There's a lot [to consider] here and I didn't want to reach out just because of how I felt. Like some kind of white person sharing my feelings is important.*
>
> *Leader/associate dean – I want to make sure that everyone on the team feels supported and I also know that there are people who still don't understand that others have pain that they don't experience. I know some just don't think about it. It isn't at the level of not thinking it exists but just not seeing the trauma of systemic racism on folks.*
>
> *I am not sure how long [this has festered], maybe it came out of yesterday but the impetus came today. While I was trying to figure out what to do, I was feeling confusion, pain, angst, because I know so much is going on and things aren't changing in noticeable ways. And, I found out a couple things yesterday about people leaving the institution, again because of race, which upset, irritated me – why can we not move so people who are awesome stay here? Why can't we make people who repeatedly perpetuate micro and macro aggressions change? I know it is not always intentional but you would think we would have gotten better at knowing when we do things or, when others do things then we say/do something. Honestly I was frustrated that we as a college hadn't said anything about the killings and the trial or as a university (though the president sent a message before I sent mine but not when I started aching). We had a big statement when the [US 2020 presidential] election happened to help students who were stressed depending on the results.*
>
> *I was feeling all this, then, I had a staff meeting this morning and I didn't say anything, nothing! And I was angry with myself. How freaking hard would it have been to just say something! A moment of silence even, but then I was silent – I didn't speak anything, which speaks volumes.*
>
> *I swirled some today after that, around meetings, trying to write something, deciding what to do, starting and stopping of writing. I started to email the [Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion], the dean, actually started drafting messages. I finally asked [the] Director of Diversity Outreach and Development [in our college] if we could talk. We did. But I didn't want to ask him. because he's a BIPOC colleague and I knew he would be hurting too, but I needed to turn to someone. When we spoke, I told him that too – I wanted his DEI expert brain but I knew the conversation might be painful and I apologized for asking him to do it. He thanked me for apologizing – for the acknowledgement that what I was asking was painful. We talked. I shared some of this. Then I more clearly drafted and sent it. I revised several times. I didn't want it to cause more stress for some, I wanted it to be stated though, so they know someone thinks about these things. I also wanted to make sure that those who aren't thinking about how [these events] hurt others do think about it once in a while. I will say the way I felt today was all full of doubt and emotion. (April 20, 2021)*

As a leader, I had many varied thoughts and emotions while trying to decide whether to write this email, all while completing other work and making other decisions. As an individual, I had my own frustrations that institutional change was slow and concerns about the state of the country as a whole with regards to social justice. I weighed those against my roles as an academic and team leader and my place in the university hierarchy. As the leader of our office team, I was concerned about the stressors some members of our team were experiencing more directly related to racial justice in the USA in 2020-2021 because they or loved ones were Black - three of our staff identified as Black and were parents

of Black children and at least two White staff members had Black or multiracial children. As a leader, I wanted to cultivate a safe space where all feel valued. As an associate dean, I am a direct connection to the dean and there are only two people between my position and the president of the university. I know that what I say or do not say matters and reflects on the larger institution. So deciding when to speak, what to say, and how to say it are key decisions to make. Not recognizing and speaking to the moment, would have sent a message and one that I decided would have damaged my long term ability to work towards equity and inclusion. This moment provides a small glimpse into a single lived experience of an associate dean trying to lead with an eye towards equity.

Concluding Thoughts

As I conclude this paper, I know I have grown since the moments captured in the data over those three months. Gmelch, Hopkins, and Damico (2011) shared that a dean should develop in three interconnected areas to become a strong academic leader. The three areas are "a) conceptual understanding of the unique roles and responsibilities encompassed in the deanship, b) the skills necessary to achieve the results through working with faculty, staff, students, constituents, and campus leaders; and c) reflective practice to learn from past experiences and perfect the art of leadership" (p. 8). I grew in all three areas through this time. Though not a process that ever ends, I have become more explicit in my practice about my values, the choices I make, and the reasons why I make them. I have become clearer in how and what I communicate to others and I have deepened my understanding of the role I play on my team and within the larger institution. The practices of self-study helped me become more deliberate about the work I engage in, and I honed my ability to notice in the day-to-day of my practice. It brought my attention to my values, my actions, and my decisions. I became increasingly skilled in how I act and how I make decisions with attention to questions of who has voice, who is included, who is not included, and who or what am I not thinking about.

Gmelch and Buller (2015) provide a variety of strategies for leadership development for deans that support growth of conceptual understanding, skills, and reflective practice across three levels (the personal, institutional, and professional). Self-study does not appear by name but strategies we use in self-study do, including "journaling," "reflective practice," "values clarification," and "consultations with mentors and confidants" (p. 119). The focus and structure that self-study brings helps an academic dean learn from their experience, refine their reflective practice at the personal level, gain knowledge of themself as a leader, and develop skills as a leader. Considering Gmelch and Buller's model, I recommend self-study not only as a method of engaging in reflective practice but also as a means to continually develop skills, knowledge, and reflective practice as a dean and to find renewal as an academic leader.

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Listening Pedagogies

Teacher Silence As the Threshold to Responsive Teaching

Jane McIntosh Cooper, Christine Beaudry, & Leslie M. Gauna

Teacher Education | Listening Pedagogy | Responsive Pedagogy

This study demonstrates findings from a year-long investigation of pedagogies of listening in an urban teacher education program in the Southwest of the United States. Instigated by a provocation during pandemic on-line teaching, this study's goals were to instigate and improve pedagogy to privilege student voice and enhance instructor listening. Findings demonstrate how one invites students to tell, listens to what is said, and acts upon these hearings. The data is told through description of pedagogies student and teacher impressions during and after the study.

Introduction

This research stems from a provocation (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009) that occurred in a teacher education course in spring 2021. Teaching online, during the pandemic, created a sense of relational loss and disconnection from students. To combat these feelings, I added end-of-semester one-on-one meetings with my students, who I had only seen online during the semester.

> *Yesterday, during my final conference with Marcella (pseudonym), I learned that several student teachers are working at a middle school campus where their students are doing 'independent learning,' code for module-based online courses. The students never see teacher-directed teaching at all, and the only real lessons Marcella saw were the four that she gave to fulfill the student teaching requirements. Marcella was worried because the school wanted to offer her a job, and she was afraid she might not enjoy being a monitor rather than a teacher (adapted from journal, May 2021).*

I was distressed about how little I had known about this (and other) student's lived experiences as student teachers during the pandemic. This challenged my teacher identity, as I prided myself on relational pedagogy (Cooper et al., 2019). From this critical incident (Kelchtermans & Hamilton, 2004) and others that resonated (Conle, 1996), I started investigating what it would mean to fully listen to my students in a purposeful and systematic way.

Literature

During summer 2021, I started investigating a pedagogy of listening to prepare for my upcoming fall classes. Pedagogies of listening have been addressed in the work of Leonard Waks (2015) and Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon (2010) among others. Stemming from student-centered approaches like Reggio Emelia (Rinaldi, 2004), Freire's critical pedagogy (Rice, 2015), and experiential learning (Waks, 2015), listening pedagogy defines and theorizes classroom

practices that can enhance a variety of learning experiences. I determined that my prioritization of listening would have the goal to limit my talk to learn about "students' interests, and adjust instruction" (Waks, 2015, p. 5), a key component of self-study.

I immediately recognized that 'Listening Pedagogy', or pedagogy of listening, and its goals were connected to other communicative endeavors that occur and are studied in classrooms. I saw alignment with the intellectual scaffolding that occurs in 'noticing' mathematics achievement of students (Ball & Forzani, 2009) and in rigorous feedback practices (Gauna et al., 2020) with listening. Social justice aims are also forwarded and aligned with listening pedagogies. The culturally responsive practice (Gay, 2010) of privileging student voice and culture (Hammond, 2015) attend to both the promotion of intellectual growth (Tomlinson, 2015), as well as classroom environments that promote democratic schooling efforts (Gutmann, 1999). The philosophical foundations of social justice, critical pedagogy, and equity that undergird these practices are philosophical frameworks that spurred my professional group "Las Chicas Criticas" to engage in the work of self-study for the past decade (Cooper et al., 2016; Cooper et al., 2018; Cooper et al., 2020; Gauna et al., 2020). By bringing Listening Pedagogies to my classes as a way to improve instruction and attend carefully to my students and myself in a reflexive manner (Schön, 1984), align with the visions of equity and self-study.

Methodology

In Fall, 2021 and throughout the academic year, I adopted and adapted Sophie Haroutunian-Gordon's (2003) descriptive framework or rationales for listening, adopted from Plato's Theaetetus, in order to engage myself and my students on an investigation into listening. The framework included listening in order to 1) seek understanding, 2) resolve a question and 3) fashion a solution to a quandry (p. 10). This framework resonated with me, as I recognized that I often responded to students with an answer, when often I should have sought understanding. I began to fashion classroom instruction in which I highlighted listening as a soft skill weekly alongside the content being taught.

As a classroom community, we diagnosed the three different types of listening and practiced various skills and practices that set up listening as a priority. I modeled skills of active listening for understanding using responsive listening with dialogue protocols (Gauna et al., 2020) and practiced questioning strategies to engage in students' quandaries. I practiced modifying my wait times, refraining from answering questions too quickly (a cultural habit), and being transparent (Cooper et al., 2018) about my attempts towards a stronger pedagogy of listening with my students. Whole class discussions, scheduled one-on-one conversations, cycles of written and verbal feedback, and face-to-face classroom experiences all became planned spaces for investigating listening.

Course artifacts including exit tickets, course evaluations, student journal prompts, and class observations (Martin & Russell, 2005) were collected and reflected upon through my journals, written after each class. Journal responses were shared weekly with Las Chicas Criticas, a long-standing knowledge community (Craig, 1997) to deconstruct nascent meaning and monitor adjustment and refinement of thinking and practice. Data from researcher journals and student artifacts were coded and theorized in an iterative and inductive manner seeking resonances (Charmaz, 2010) between and among data sets. Interim texts were storied and re-storied experiences, which ground the working in theoretical framing and pragmatic explanation. Resonances with the collaborative group and joint analyses (LaBoskey, 2004) supported triangulation of data sources. Data from both students and the instructor are shared narratively as experience-based exemplars (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002). The examples included come from my work teaching differentiated instruction to seniors in a teacher education program, during the 2021-2022 academic school year at a Tier 1 urban university in the Southwest United States.

Findings

Findings revolve around three components of listening pedagogy as I implemented it in my courses: 1) inviting telling, 2) listening to what is said, and 3) responding to what was heard.

Inviting the Telling

In Fall 2021, my University returned to face-to-face instruction for undergraduate classes. I observed many students struggling to reacclimate to the face-to-face classroom culture including peer conversations and co-constructions of complex ideas. Students shared in reflections that "I wish you pushed us to talk more" and that they felt "out of practice"

having conversations. Student insecurity for my students (mostly seniors) was not new, but its extent felt very new to me.

> *Only two people even volunteered to answer an opening question in class yesterday, about what their biggest issues in their student teaching this semester. When I realized that they would not talk in whole-group, I moved to make the question a turn-and-talk. Still, people were very reluctant to share (Instructor's journal Fall, 2021)*

Modeling vulnerability was an approach that allowed students to slowly open up throughout the semester. One strategy, which I call "the semester train" begins with me drawing train tracks across the board, and a train along the tracks. I placed myself, as a stick figure, somewhere along the middle of the train, and explained that as the semester begins, I am driving that train, but as the semester progresses, I fall further behind on the train, and sometimes, I am hanging off the end of the train. I then encourage students to come aboard the train, placing themselves to represent how they are feeling about their progress in class. As a listening activity, this allows me to gauge the temperature of the room, without directly engaging with them about coursework, which could elicit feelings of guilt or shame.

Another vulnerability practice includes my sharing "less-than-proud teaching stories." I relate that I was a classroom teacher who punished the entire class for my inability to realize that off-task behavior was occurring. After days of frustration and anger, I realized that the children, even tenth grade students, were seeking my attention. By highlighting the frustrations that occur in my former and current teaching, my undergraduate students can accept their own perceived feelings of inadequacy. As an instructor, it is often difficult to share ongoing vulnerabilities with students. After sharing the teaching story above, I let students know that I am able to tell this story because I have come to terms with this story and that I make so many mistakes teaching that some are too difficult to express to others. One student suggested that "Your willingness to share your thoughts, feelings and experiences made it possible for me to share what was going on in my life" (Fall, 2021). Another expressed that the activity like the semester train and "real talk moments made me feel supported", that they felt the class was "gentle, guiding us through a very hectic time" (Spring, 2022). For listening pedagogies to succeed, students must want to be part of a conversation, sharing vulnerabilities is a way to encourage students to connect to the classroom. Some students saw that teachers' feelings and vulnerabilities "need to be shared honestly to build a relationship with students to create a positive classroom environment" (Spring 2022). Practicing vulnerability is essential for establishing trust (Curtis et al., 2016) for collaboration, therefore modeling vulnerability invite students to engage.

Listening to What Is Said

I began to strengthen and build upon previous relational practices (Cooper et al., 2019) to enhance ways to listen to my students. Embedding and practicing a more rigorous use of a dialogue protocol to confirm that students felt heard in class discussions became the cornerstone of classroom practice for all students, along with other informal and formal class components.

Dialogue Protocol and Beyond

The use of a dialogue protocol to sustain and elicit dialogue is a key tool to demonstrate 'being heard' by others (Hendrix et al., 2015; Gauna et al., 2020). The use of this tool is one way I modeled hearing students in whole class discussions. This technique is a simple retelling or rephrasing of what another says by repeating or rephrasing what is said or asked while adding in the appropriate academic vocabulary in the rephrasing. The point of this is to make the teller feel 'heard'. This protocol can be an important tool for novice teachers when working with K-12 students. This technique needs to be practiced, so creating guidelines and practicing this in small groups was a cornerstone of transfer.

Another adaptation of the listening protocol was to use students' statements or questions in exit tickets or course work to incorporate or restate in class discussions, while attributing it to the student who wrote it. One example of the use of exit tickets and the dialogue protocol was during a week we were discussing creating small groups in middle school classrooms. One student stated in an exit ticket that "I created small groups in my class, but it didn't go well and my mentor teacher doesn't want me to do that again" (Fall, 2021) The next class we had, I created a mini-lesson over

strategies to scaffold behavior of middle school students to work in small groups. I transparently share with my students that their exit tickets are conversations, where I privilege their words, through the development of a curriculum, which is responsive listening pedagogy.

Students, overall, saw this strategy of embedding listening and being heard as one that could increase their engagement in the classroom community. One student said that using the protocol was a strategy where they 'could build up the courage to talk more' after a 'repetition of what we said' (Fall, 2021). Another stated that the protocol 'supports learning together', and makes the classroom a place where one can 'confide genuinely one-on-one with another person' and know that 'we're all in the same both learning together, which makes me feel not so overwhelmed" (Spring, 2022).

Informal Listening

While building listening pedagogies, I was challenged to make sure that I was connecting with *every* student. I began to embed systematic listening strategies throughout my lesson planning. These included scheduled one-on-ones, longer small groups so I could check in informally, with embedded scaffolds and prompts to engage with all the students.

The first fifteen minutes of all classes was a 'warm-up' time where students-teachers made connections between their field experiences and the topic of the day. This has always been an opportunity for me to take attendance and check-in with students and veer the conversation in the group back to the topic at hand. This semester, forwarding listening pedagogy, I walked with a clipboard, taking running-records of students I stopped and listened to. I stopped guiding off-topic conversation back to the prompt, and only asked probing questions about their discussions, like "tell me more about that." I noticed that:

> *More students seem to be participating in the conversations now that I have stopped interjecting new questions and/or ideas when the group is off topic. I always thought that having them make connections to the main concepts of the course would set up deep learning, and perhaps it does, but it seems like from their body language that many more are engaged in the conversation (Instructor's journal, Fall 2021).*

By privileging their experiences, I started seeing 'off-topic' discussions opportunities to hear what students valued and as tools to support listening pedagogies. Other strategies used to ensure that more of my students felt listened to included marking off who I spoke to personally throughout classtime, and noting these in my attendance sheet, then making sure I attended to all students every class. I also made concerted efforts to use the words and language of those who did not seem to be as connected to the class as others more often. Other strategies to encourage all students to speak and be heard included the use of poker chips to encourage whole class participation, or require all students to tell me one great thing before or after class. These small pedagogical tasks to encourage engagement were recognized by most students. One student teacher described me as an instructor "who has engaged with each and every one of us" (Spring, 2022), and another noticed that I "made it a point to visit every single class" (Fall, 2021).

Formal Listening

As evidenced in this article's opening story, I started one-on-one meetings with students before this study began (for more information see Beaurdry et al., 2023). Due to the nature of this investigation, the purpose, structure and frequency of these changed. These meetings started as a way to give difficult formative feedback about their approximation towards lesson-planning learning goals. Students would submit their draft of their assignments. I would set up stations in my college classroom, where one of the stations was to meet with me. In small groups, I would give verbal feedback and suggestions for improvement for the final draft. During Covid, I added an 'exit interview' where the students would meet with me to receive feedback about their learning goals over the semester. I would also give 'mock interviews' if desired, to help them practice for real life.

During the course of this investigation, I changed my meetings with the students to three times a semester, one near the beginning of the semester, within the first three weeks. This meeting is one where my only goal is to get to know my students' personal professional landscape. I created a journal, where I take notes about personal, practical and professional sharing that the student shares with me. Using the dialogue protocol listed above, I ask about their student

teaching, their goals for the semester and their lives. Mid-term and exit interviews were also scheduled in lieu of exams. These became student, not instructor-directed and allowed for their expression of and reflection over their exams.

As an instructor, getting to know your students' one-on-one is an inspirational journey that is not often attained in large classrooms. Instituting regular meetings to engage with students personal-practical-knowledge has allowed me to watch a struggling widow with three small children, move from unsure freshman, to a certified teacher who can now support her family. These small details that used to be ones that I would gain sporadically are now embedded into my practice. The notes I kept on students from one meeting to the next, about personal as well as academic data, allowed me to ask about students' families, their children and pets, the things that really matter in a life. I was also able to see their growth as a through line from the beginning to the end. By placing the personal before the academic, students as well as colleagues feel more valued and can become more adept at engaging in challenging and rigorous work (Cooper et al., 2019). On challenging students, who would 'disappear' during the semester, said in his last reflection "I didn't deserve the respect I got from her, but she still reached out to me personally to check on how I was doing" (Spring 2022). This student failed the class. The time it takes to set up and participate in multiple one-on-ones' with all students is a daunting and time consuming task. Using parts of class time, office hours and final exam scheduling and benefits of the time saved to give feedback verbally instead of in writing all offset these time demands. The enjoyment of continuing and building relationships with my students and pride seeing them grow over time far outweighs any negatives, even with my large classes.

Preparing students to be listened to is a scaffolding experience that not all students come to naturally when they enter a classroom. Efforts to make my students feel cared for (Noddings, 2015) by embedding low-pressure opportunities for pedagogical listening into classes has improved my relationship with my students and allowed me to watch them grow over time.

Responding to What Is Heard

Through my, and my group Las Chicas Criticas' involvement with the S-STEP research community over the last several years, I have become used to consistently adapting my curriculum based on research findings, as well as using my classroom as an inquiry space. I have attempted and looked for evidence of transfer of these same goals to my students as a way to engage in self-directed professional growth and improvement to counteract often time disconnected top-down directed professional development. My efforts during this study has been to share and model my practice of trying new pedagogies and creating responsive pedagogies based on students' needs and experiences.

Modeling responsive pedagogy, or adapting classroom instruction based on 'listening' to students, whether verbally or in written feedback was core to my classroom practices. Goals of undergraduate classrooms are to prepare teachers to act. How well students saw my modeled actions was and is always a question. Students noticed that I would "monitor the room, writing down what we said and shared them during class discussions" (Fall, 2021). They also noticed how I "brought back students' situations in their field placements in the lesson" (Spring 2022), and how I "consistently asked for feedback from the students in the class" (Spring, 2022). Their feedback seemed to demonstrate that they noticed these listening practices and how I used them to alter the curriculum.

Other types of responsive differentiation included modifying content, process and product. Throughout this study, an alternative text were solicited to support an individuals' difficulty with the chosen one, another student was given the opportunity to express knowledge in bullet points rather than solely in paragraph form based on her struggle writing, final projects could be done in small group or individually to support those living far from the university. These modifications were supported and learned about through the constant requests for student feedback and meetings with students one-on-one. Students recognized that these practices were 'appreciated' and that I 'took the classes' experiences into account when making curriculum decisions.

While efforts were made to listen to the needs of all students, in a large diverse class, I did not always act to alter curriculum. In one particular instance, several students were frustrated by the fact that I did not give them enough 'notes' for the class. One student reflected in her final evaluation about the class, that 'even though we kept telling her we wanted more formal notes, she refused to offer them' (Spring, 2022). While I addressed student calls for formal

notes through discussion and transparently discussed that I had student-created notes to model and engage students and connected this practice back to goals of co-construction, individualized and small-group project-based learning, this demand was recurring throughout the semester. I gave her other options and texts that she could engage with to support note taking if she preferred. She still was not satisfied. This was challenging for me.

> *I have discussed almost every class for the last several weeks about why this course is not set up for 'notes' as I model and enact differentiated instruction. I feel like she would never ask her physics faculty to create student-led lectures. I think because I say I am responsive to students, that I should respond to every demand, Cloze notes based on my direct instruction are the furthest away from my teaching philosophy (Instructor Journal, Spring, 2022).*

I also faced extreme vulnerability when I tried a new-to-me method, the Harkness Method (Backer, 2015). This method is a student-led whole group discussion, in which the instructor does not participate in any way, except perhaps by assigning a shared reading or provocation.

Students create a 'shared question', and the instructor becomes a recorder of what occurs within the conversation. I, as the instructor, struggled with the comparatively blank lesson plan. While responsive teaching has long been a core teaching value, the cognitive dissonance of implementing an untried method that required no planning was jarring. During the class conversation, I was slowly put at ease as all but three students engaged in the fifty-minute class discussion. The questions were thoughtful, related to their student teaching practices and connected to major course goals. After the discussion I shared my discomfort with the lack of 'control' over the conversation and then praised all the learning I observed and discussed with students how this type of activity could be adapted for their own classrooms. Upon reflection, I was surprised how uncomfortable it was, but how much better I empathize with my students, as it had been a long time since I had felt like a 'new teacher', and encouraged me to find more opportunities to try new practices, or grow professionally. Adjusting my teaching to respond to students' needs and trying new pedagogies after more than a decade of teaching college students can be both rewarding and challenging.

Conclusion

Goals I had going into this research was to spend more time listening to my students, in order to connect with them both intellectually and personally. I created a stronger listening pedagogy by playing with ways that students could open up to be listened to. I then created structures that privileged student voices individually and collectively in the classroom in both formal and informal ways. I then began to explore individualizing instruction based on what I heard, and tried new listening activities that would further connect to students and create stronger transfer as my students engaged in their own classrooms. Listening practices that attend to the personal, practical (professional) and academic, are not random happenings, but carefully planned events that take time and some level of risk on the part of the instructor.

The investigation into listening pedagogies has demonstrated an alignment towards culturally responsiveness (Ladson-Billings, 2021) and relational teacher education (Kitchen, 2009, Cooper et al., 2019). Students' responses to these listening pedagogies demonstrated that they noticed some of the efforts made, and for the most part acknowledged feeling cared for (Noddings, 2015). This investigation has further demonstrated to me that being vulnerable with students or 'walking the walk' with them can make me more empathetic to their circumstances. Having more knowledge of their personal knowledge landscapes can continually deepen relational practice with our students (Kitchen, 2009). Through the implementation of listening pedagogy and transparently connecting these to humanizing, responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), improved my practice and can also improve the teaching of our students. Those that might find students struggling to open up, find difficulty in achieving student engagement , or want to find inspiration and joy in their teaching might try listening.

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Discovering the Value of Ticket Out of Class as Critical Reflection and Formative Assessment

Self-Study in Teacher Education

Hafdís Guðjónsdóttir & Svanborg Rannveig Jónsdóttir

Collaborative Self-study | Critical Reflection | Formative Assessment | Ticket Out of Class (TOC)

Teacher education is both complex and multi-layered and it is important that teacher educators go beyond technical models of pedagogy and open a learning space for student teachers to critically reflect and question actions in practice. We are two teacher educators at the University of Iceland who have collaborated for a decade on self-study and teaching, pausing regularly and critically reflecting on our practice, identifying pedagogic turning points and learning opportunities in our practice. The purpose of this paper is to show how student formative reflection through TOCs influences our teaching and their learning. The study is a critical collaborative self-study and is a part of our ongoing professional development. We build on data collection and analysis for ten years. The other participants were our co-teachers and students participating in a course on inclusive education and collaborative group supervision of master projects' from 2011 to 2021. Our findings show that using TOCs constructively helped to create a space for student resources and formative assessment. It provided learning moments for us and students as we constructed a discursive space for constantly listening and responding to students' requests. The findings point to the importance of creating responsive learning spaces for students and of analyzing learning through critical reflection and formative assessment.

Context of the Study

The multi-layered pedagogy of teacher education differs from other pedagogies in that it involves being aware of how to respond to the nature of teaching. Teacher education pedagogy is based on knowledge about teaching about teaching, needing a shared language of learning about teaching (Loughran, 2007, 2014). Technical models of teaching are often thought to solve the problems that arise in teaching. However, it is important for teacher educators to go beyond the technical models, constantly question their teaching, and instill in student teachers the fundamental importance of reflecting upon and questioning their teaching (Korthagen, 2001; Loughran, 2007). Using inquiry into practice for student teachers opens a space for them to see, reflect, and discuss so they can understand that teaching is more than rehearsed scripts and routines, or just "doing teaching." Teaching is also about critically reflecting, questioning actions, and coming to understand how actions educate students and make learning happen. Enacting the pedagogy of teacher education means asking students to describe their learning, how the teacher educator affected their learning, and listening to them as teacher educators develop the next steps in their teaching (Russel, 2007).

We are two teacher educators at the University of Iceland who have collaborated on self-study and teaching in teacher education for a decade, pausing regularly and critically reflecting on our practice. We have co-taught several graduate-level classes. By looking back to identify pedagogic turning points that provide learning opportunities to enhance our understanding of our practice, we can begin to construct new possibilities and discourses (Hamilton et al., 2020).

At our university we send out mid-term and end-of-term evaluations to all students to assess the quality of each course. This is meant for teachers to use to make their courses better and for administrators to monitor how students evaluate different courses and the teachers´ performance. While we always scrutinize these findings, we have found that they have limited value in enabling us to improve the on-going course. This requires a more sophisticated form of assessment.

Formative assessment is a planned, ongoing process that can be used by students and teachers to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve learning outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2018; Hattie, 2009). Formative assessment can improve instruction and impact the teaching-learning process by enhancing students' understanding and control over their own learning (Brookhart, 2013). Regular feedback to students is a key (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Hattie, 2009).

Tickets out of class (TOC) are a type of formative assessment that can be used to elicit critical reflection (Marzano, 2012) by allowing teachers to collect information on what student teachers learn from lessons and respond accordingly (Brookhart, 2013). TOCs afford opportunities for students to clarify and consolidate their learning and can be a vehicle for student self-reflection and self-assessment (Brookhart, 2013). TOCs build on theories of critical reflection and formative assessment (Brookhart, 2013; Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Marzano, 2012). TOCs require students to synthesize lesson content and organization, challenging them to actively analyse their learning (Edge & Olan, 2020) rather than waiting for knowledge to be delivered (Brookhart, 2013; Danley et al., 2016; Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2017).

However, while reflection is widely used in teacher education, it does not always lead to optimal learning or intended professional development outcomes (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2010). Various epistemological challenges, including reasoning and sense-making, are often overlooked (Russell & Martin, 2017). Reflection is more complex than a linear process of identifying challenges and responding to them (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2010). This is because teachers are not only guided by cognitive thinking, but also by emotions and personal views (Korthagen et al., 2013; Russell & Martin, 2017), which are often overlooked (Korthagen et al., 2013; Zembylas & Schutz, 2009). Analyzing and critically reflecting on one's feelings in practice offers teachers new insights and paves the way for recognizing the transformative power of emotion for personal transformation and professional development (Zembylas & Schutz, 2009). Failing to consider the complexity of reflection can reduce reflective practice to a mere technical tool to achieve quick solutions to problems that are defined only superficially (Russell & Martin, 2017).

The purpose of this study is to show how student formative reflection in the form of TOCs influences teaching and learning. The research question is: How do we use TOCs to understand and develop our practice in teacher education? Answering this question will help us generate constructive and interactive ways to make teaching more student-centered.

Methods

This is a critical collaborative self-study and is a part of our ongoing professional development as teacher educators (Schuck & Brandenburg, 2020). The self-study methodology helps us examine our work and implications of our experience; to think about and discuss our practice (Tidwell & Staples, 2017). Through data collection and analysis for ten years in different courses we noticed the special contribution TOCs made in supporting students' learning. The other participants were our co-teachers and students participating in a course on inclusive education and collaborative group supervision of master projects´ from 2011 to 2021. All students signed a consent form allowing data collection.

Both Hafdís and Svanborg were general classroom teachers for almost 30 years before moving into teacher education. Hafdís's main fields are inclusive pedagogy, responsive practice and learner-centered education; Svanborg's are

innovation and entrepreneurial education, curriculum theory and school change. We both believe in a pedagogy that emphasizes student resources and education that empowers students to participate in society.

Data sources consist of anonymous TOCs collected after each lesson in the inclusive education course and group supervisory meeting. We used index cards in the beginning, but switched to on-line programs three years ago. Students are asked to respond to two questions: what they take with them from the lesson, and what they would like to focus on during the next lesson. Other data sources include our research journals, which contain our emotional responses and personal reflections, and notes from planning meetings. We each noted down concerns, issues and activities related to the attributes the TOCs provided.

Analysis was ongoing alongside data gathering. Reading the TOCs regularly, we used the findings to respond to students' voices. After each meeting or lesson, we collect the TOCs, read them, and group them according to how we plan to respond to them in our teaching: respond right away, explain our reaction, or respond to later. Content consists of both what is working well but also things we need to consider. At the beginning of the next meeting or lesson, we go through the groups and tell students how we will respond to their requests. We present our analyses of the TOCs to the students on slides, and the teacher team members take turns introducing our findings from each lesson. For this research we grouped and analyzed our ten years of accumulated data according to themes. At the same time, we also looked through our research journals to find a deeper understanding of what was going on. We explored the reflection the process afforded us and students, using the TOCs to understand students' learning needs. We also regularly discussed our understandings and interpretations. We focused on the needs, attitudes and views expressed by students, tried to understand the messages in a larger context, and examined our own feelings and attitudes and how they influenced our responses.

Constructive criticism is important in self-study to inform the researchers and help them assess their practice (Schuck and Russell, 2005). Working on the research collaboratively, we were each other's critical friends, using our different experiences and views to discover issues and understandings the other one missed. We seek to honestly express what we learned from our experiences and acknowledge that we are always "becoming" as professionals in teacher education (Hamilton et al., 2020).

Creating Responsive Learning Spaces for Students

Through the years the TOCs have influenced our teaching. We made sure to ask the students to fill out the TOCs at the end of each lesson. We are usually enthusiastic about reading what the students learn from each lesson and what they want to understand better. Often, we manage to sit down right after lessons and read through the TOCs together. At the next planning meeting, we read them carefully to see how we can adapt our teaching according to how students evaluate their learning and learning needs. We ask students to analyze their own learning rather than focusing on our performance as teachers. This way we get useful information to evaluate our own teaching and to identify how we can adjust teaching towards deeper student learning and reflection.

Discursive Space for Formative Assessment

Using the TOCs has opened up a discursive space where students reflect on their learning, share what they are learning in each lesson, and ask us questions. In response, we regularly start lessons by presenting to students the main learning they shared and the core of what they want to be covered next time, providing direct quotes from their TOCs. We sometimes respond directly to their requests in these response sessions or tell them how we plan to respond. Most often we accede to their wishes, but sometimes we determine it is not pedagogically appropriate to meet their requests -- for example, when they express that they prefer small group work to be with students form the same school level. In that case, we explain that we want them to be grouped with teachers or students from different school levels to get to know a wider variety of viewpoints.

Often, we were quite pleased after reading the TOCs, but sometimes they leave us with lingering doubts. For example, in our second lesson in 2019 in the inclusive practice course, Svanborg had given a workshop on innovation education (IE) approaches. After reading the TOCs, Svanborg wrote in her journal:

> *I was pleased to read the TOCs. Some students expressed surprise about IE, many are interested, and some want clarifications. I can gladly meet those responses next time. A few expressed bewilderment over using IE in a course on inclusive education. I hope that they will gradually learn how constructive this approach is.*

We discussed Svanborg´s concerns about what the TOCs revealed about students' attitudes toward IE at the next planning meeting. As the course progressed, we saw how creative ways of working helped students get out of the rut of seeing only "more money" or "more assistants" as solutions to offer inclusive education. Gradually we have become more at ease when we get TOCs that express doubts about IE early in the course, as we have seen that many students need time to connect with their own conditions and explore how the IE process can help them approach inclusive education with creative and solution-oriented thinking.

As we scrutinized the TOCs from students, we realized that using this channel to monitor students' understanding and questions helped us in responding to their learning. It opens a learning space for students to reflect on their learning, a space for them to reflect and try to understand what they are learning and how. It has become a way to engage in formative assessment to inform and influence both students' learning process and our own teaching. The TOCs have thus become a sort of a "sounding board" where we listen to students' voices and respond by strengthening their learning and empowering them to become agents in their profession.

By using this discursive space to listen to students' voices, we have identified an effective process and made progress in the inclusive course. In the beginning of each course, many students expressed doubts about the inclusive policy and found it unrealistic to put into practice (TOCs). We discussed the issues that emerged in students TOCs after each lesson and agreed that the development of pedagogical expertise is a learning process that combines theory and practice in ways that help build knowledge. We wanted to emphasize that teaching is not just about *doing*, but also about informing practice by reflecting on actions in the effort to learn from the experience. In a preparation meeting (2017), we realized that this kind of empowerment required many of the students to take several steps, and that they were at different levels of readiness to embrace the inclusive pedagogy and to reflect and develop a deep understanding of their practice.

As the course progresses each year, students show signs of a developing professionalism that embraces the role of the inclusive teacher. The TOCs show that students often expressed a thirst for acquiring more tools and methods for teaching. Many examples emerged of such wishes, including:

> *Evidence based methods to respond to learners with ADHD and other learning challenges.*
>
> *How to meet learning needs of gifted children.*
>
> *Get more tools for teaching in inclusive education.*
>
> *I want the tools, the methods, not just the theories.*
>
> *I would like to learn more about "special education in inclusive education. (TOCs, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019)*

We discussed these requests from students for technical solutions in inclusive education and concluded that we did not want the course to become a toolbox of ready-made recipes. We decided to make our own teaching methods more clearly visible by ending each lesson by asking the students to identify and name the teaching methods we had applied that day. To do so, they needed to understand what kind of pedagogy each of our approaches reflected. We learnt that by identifying them, students became more aware of the versatile methods and approaches we used in our teaching of their diverse group (preparation meeting, October 2016). We continued to present different methods as a part of our practice in action; we also created a space for students themselves to apply the teaching and learning methods in different projects and tasks. This seemed to work, and we saw many cases in TOCs where students expressed their appreciation of this emphasis, such as this example from 2013: "I believe it was good for us to actually try cooperative learning and participate collaborating in the lesson. I like it when we try things out instead of just hearing about them." We discussed this repeatedly, concluding that by giving students an opportunity to experience first-hand what we were

presenting and applying, and by giving them a space to analyze what they were learning, we would strengthen the core of their professionalism rather than merely adding to “toolbox” of instruments and methods that can be applied in teaching.

Developing the use of TOCs – acknowledging emotions

> *We had recently started using TOCs (in 2012) when I came to a turning point as I overheard a student’s comment at a group supervision session: “I don't see a point in doing this task because the teachers never do anything about it.” The student had been used to the university’s midterm and final-term on-line evaluations, but this kind of regular reflective evaluations as the TOCs offered were new to her. When I [Hafdís] overheard her comment, I could feel my tensions, how upset I became, or even hurt that the student assumed I would not listen to them.*

At the next planning meeting Hafdís suggested we would begin each lesson by discussing the TOCs. Little by little we learned that giving ourselves and the students space to discuss the learning, we began to develop both deeper and more critical reflections on learning.

In the course on inclusive education, we tried out different approaches. One such approach was to offer students opportunities to use artistic and hands-on methods to scrutinize and interpret readings or overall learning in the course. Among these creative tasks were watching films they chose about teachers and teaching and then critically reflecting on discussing in groups the main messages of their chosen film. After these discussions, they were to select recyclable materials and make a 3-D artifact that represented their understanding of the film. Initially some of the students had reservations, but they on it anyway. When presenting their artifacts and in the TOCs many of them shared that the process had been surprisingly enjoyable and constructive. We were always very excited to read the TOCs and students’ analysis of their learning in each lesson, not least when we had experimented with creative approaches. A few times we got messages in TOCs that indicated that students found these methods to be “childish” and beneath their intellectual maturity. One student shared in autumn 2016: “I am disappointed in having to stoop to pre-school level work. I expected to do graduate level work where I would gain theoretical and serious knowledge.” However, we mostly received constructive responses in TOCs and other conversations with students in which they shared that the artistic work often helped them make sense of that “theoretical and serious knowledge.”

In a TOC in autumn 2018, a student expressed hurt feelings, describing how the experienced teachers in the course talked down to the inexperienced student teachers and belittled them. At our preparation meeting we read this TOC with the other responses from the lesson that had just finished. Our reaction was at first emotional. Hafdís said, “I cannot stand this; they are working against everything the course stands for. We are teaching about inclusion and then our group is excluding their classmates and talking down to them.” We decided to react to this behavior, and at the beginning of the next lesson we discussed this with the students. Hafdís gave an inspired brief talk, without anger or judgment, but pointing out the ethical component such behavior entailed. Then students had an opportunity to discuss the matter. At the end of the course that fall, we received a TOC expressing that the behavior had disappeared.

In the course on inclusive education, we emphasize how theory is used to understand or strengthen our beliefs or our practice. Through the years we have learnt that many of our students find this challenging or view it as unnecessary and would rather spend time to learn something “just practical.” We have developed our course accordingly, giving practice and theory a space for discussion and critical reflections while also looking for innovative ways for students to understand the relationship of theory and practice. Analyzing the TOCs, we found many occasions where students reflected on how theory was redundant and that knowledge about practical topics matters more. Sometimes we felt quite emotional reading students’ reflections as our experience has shown us the value of being able to reflect our practice in theories. At the end of one lesson in fall 2021, one student wrote: “As for teaching methods, they are often just natural to you, probably due to influences from your childhood, there are so many things that you just know without being able to connect them to any theory.” Another student was irritated and even angry in the discussions on theory and practice and wrote:

> *Are we teachers really not professionals if we do not remember exactly which scholar said what, and don't know exactly where the basis of what we are working with comes from? I think it is sad because I do not have these qualities to remember what came from where and let alone have the time to look for articles to figure it out. So, I am not a professional in my job? I'm a good teacher.*

As she read this TOC, Hafdís felt her emotions come to the surface, feeling both surprised and sad. She knew she had to respond and discuss this sensitive topic, but also that she had to do that very carefully. She assumed that this TOC came from an experienced teacher working on the master's degree. This kind of expression is common among teachers. Hafdís wrote in her journal autumn 2021:

> *As I read the message on the TOC, I can feel how the blood pressure rises, relating to my own experience when I believed it was only about practice and then little by little, I came to understand the importance of theories behind the practice, understand there is a reason behind everything, and nothing is created in a vacuum. Learning how important in many ways theories and research is for teachers and education. We need to respond to this.*

At the beginning of the next lesson, we made time for conversation about theories and teacher practice. We shared with students:

> *We want to correct that theory is not about knowing the names of academics by heart - but that it is being respectful to and recognize those who have influenced our profession, who have impacted us, refer to their ideas and work by referring to them. No one is tested or assessed on their knowledge of scholars or the lack of it but asked for references and a reference list to show that what they present is not based on mere feelings or experience, but on research.*

The third example of student response to theory-practice discussions was practical rather than emotional, not as emotional and just needed more time: “I would have liked more time or focus on the discussions about connecting my practice to the theory”. Often students have come across the theory behind what they are doing and become surprised and happy when they can relate their practice to theory. Hafdís wrote in her journal:

> *For me rejecting theory calls for frustration. I have for more than two decades worked on this with my students and it confuses me why it still challenges me and makes me feel sad for the profession that teachers reject theories. We want to respect their beliefs but at the same time we find it very important to know the theories behind their professional work.*

Although we allowed ourselves to express our feelings at our preparation meetings, we did not show our disappointment to students. We often allowed ourselves to express our enthusiasm in lessons for our work and the knowledge we shared but had a practical component to our responses to the TOCS by letting students experience themselves what we were presenting and applying, and by giving them a space to analyze what they were learning we would strengthen the core of their professionalism.

Discussion and Conclusions

Self-study has been the foundation for our determination to enact reflective and critical pedagogy in teacher education by looking at our teaching as more complex than a simple technical endeavor (Korthagen, 2001; Loughran, 2007, 2014; Russel, 2007). This collaborative self-study has helped us to look critically at our own professional development as teacher educators (Schuck & Brandenburg, 2020) and specifically to elicit the affordances of using TOCs to enhance students´ reflexivity (Brookhart, 2013) and channel our responsiveness. Our study indicates that using the TOCs constructively shows how a simple task can be effective to create a space for student resources and formative assessment (Kosnik & Beck, 2008; Marzano, 2012). TOCs provided learning moments for us and students as we constructed a discursive space for constantly listening and responding to students’ requests. Through this self-study, we realized how our data analysis methods translated to our teaching methods. We also realized how the TOCs and the information they contained could be emotional for us, even as they channeled students’ emotions and attitudes. We realized that emotions are an important element in teachers' work. Giving them space to emerge helped us realize their

power (Korthagen et al., 2013; Zembylas & Schutz, 2009). Analyzing and critically reflecting on our feelings in practice offered us new insights, and instead of repressing them or minimizing their power, we saw that they were an important element for us personally and for our professional growth (Zembylas & Schutz, 2009).

This self-study provides insights significant to the larger field of scholarship. The findings point to the importance of creating responsive learning spaces for students (Dalmau & Guðjónsdóttir, 2017), of analyzing learning through critical reflection and formative assessment (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), and of creating opportunities for teacher educators to adapt their teaching based on data from students (Guðjónsdóttir et al., 2017).

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In Pursuit of Quality Teaching and Learning

Self-Study of an Online Teaching Experience

Ian A. Matheson & Tom Russell

Epistemological Beliefs | Cognitive Principles | Pre-service Teacher Education

This self-study focused on the teaching and student learning within a compulsory teacher education course about connecting learning in practicum experiences with on-campus experiences. With the help of a critical friend with significant experience in teacher education, Ian aimed to explore the essential features of quality teaching and learning in a pre-service teacher education course. Guided by three of Willingham's cognitive principles, as well as Schommer's work on epistemological beliefs, Tom helped Ian with analyzing his experiences in planning and debriefing classes, examining students' assignments and feedback, as well as events within each class. Themes emerged from this analysis that were focused on how the class was used and by whom, as well as the exercises of analyzing one's own teaching practices and beliefs about teaching and learning. Changes to Ian's teaching as a result of the self study are discussed, and focus on how time is used within teacher education classes, and how we make decisions about what topics we discuss, and how we engage in learning.

Introduction

In pre-service teacher education programs, we often emphasize reflection and critical analysis, yet our manner of teaching often provides little modeling or illustration of the processes and benefits of reflection and critical analysis. As a result, it comes as no surprise that many students fail to learn to apply such analysis to their own teaching practices. Understanding their beliefs about teacher education is critical to inform how teacher educators can respond to their epistemological positions and, ultimately, provide quality teaching and learning opportunities in the teacher education classroom. This self-study with a critical friend generated significant insights that enriched both authors' understanding of how to pursue quality teaching and learning in teacher education courses.

Context of the Study

During the 2020-2021 academic year, Ian conducted a self-study of his teaching and students' learning in a required teacher education course focused on preparing students for and supporting their learning in their practicum placements. As the course focused on connecting learning through practicum experiences with on-campus experiences, learning evolved to resemble a homeroom class where teacher candidates could discuss their ongoing learning and thinking about anything related to teacher education.

In the first month of Ian's appointment, at the beginning of Tom's final year, he and Tom discovered shared interests in the complexities of teacher education, and thus began a relationship that focused on quality teaching and learning in teacher education. At the time of this self-study, Ian was in his third year of a tenure-track appointment. Tom had recently retired after 42 years as a teacher educator, with a research program focused on teacher education and self-study. We agreed that the course focused on learning in the practicum would serve as an opportunity for Ian to engage in his first self-study, with Tom serving as a critical friend. It was Ian's first time teaching the course, which was taught online because of the pandemic.

The authors engaged in weekly dialogue to analyze Ian's evolving understanding of how students' beliefs can impact the value they seek in teacher education courses and how conditions for learning influenced teaching and learning, both within and surrounding the course. Prior to beginning the self-study, ethical clearance was acquired from the university's ethics review board. At the first class, the self-study was explained to the 12 students and they were invited to be participants in Ian's study of his teaching; all agreed to sign the consent form.

Aim/Objectives

The aim of this self-study was to enable Ian to explore the question "What are the essential features of quality teaching and learning in a pre-service teacher education course?" Drawing on the experiences of both authors and on student feedback throughout the course, Ian designed lessons for the twelve 90-minute classes (spread over eight months of the 16-month program) and focused on three of Willingham's (2009) cognitive principles:

> *Principle 1: People are naturally curious, but we are not naturally good thinkers; unless the cognitive conditions are right, we will avoid thinking. (p. 3)*
>
> *Principle 3: Memory is the residue of thought. (p. 41)*
>
> *Principle 4: We understand new things in the context of things we already know, and most of what we know is concrete. (p. 67)*

Notable practices and ideas introduced early and revisited often included:

1. Asking students to consider what they stand to learn from the content, as well as the delivery of content, within their teacher education courses; students were asked to pay attention to instructional practices modeled within their program.
2. Encouraging students to take increasing ownership of the direction of in-class discussions.
3. Inviting students to offer comments related to Ian's self-study.

Methods

Guided by the self-study methods (LaBoskey, 2004), we identified patterns and themes within data sources, which included audio recordings (of classes and our discussions before and after each class), students' anonymous comments throughout the course (from both formal efforts to collect feedback and unprompted messages), excerpts from students' assignments (quoted anonymously with permission), and journal notes recorded throughout the course. Each data set is outlined below. The following points summarize our practices as self-study researcher and critical friend.

- Ian and Tom met before and after each class. Discussions prior to each class focused on the agenda for the class, and rationale behind it. Discussions following each class focused on students' events and reactions.
- The twelve 90-minute classes were recorded. As critical friend, Tom attended all classes.
- Ian and Tom both took notes to record critical moments and insights gained throughout the self-study, and to revisit in discussions.
- Ian recorded feedback received from students. Formal feedback was requested twice; students were asked to respond anonymously to questions about their learning within the course at the mid-point and at the conclusion of the course. Some students sent messages privately to Ian at various points.
- Ian kept all assignments that provided evidence of students' epistemological beliefs about learning in teacher education and of their evolving sense of what it means to be a teacher.

This self-study is informed by Schommer's (1990) concept of an epistemological beliefs system and Willingham's (2009) nine cognitive principles. Schommer's (1990) concept served as an interpretive tool to analyze recorded lessons and meetings, as well as notes, feedback, and assignments. Specifically, evidence of students' epistemological expectations for learning became evident in conversations and exchanges within and outside class. As Redish (2021) suggests, "students' epistemological expectations can have profound effects on what they hear and how they think about what they're learning" (p. 316). In order to identify the essential features of quality in a teacher education course, Ian, with Tom's help, aimed to identify students' epistemological beliefs and expectations and make connections to their perceived value of the course. His goal was to improve the quality of his teaching in order to improve the quality of his students' learning.

Outcomes

Following analysis of each data set, the authors identified four broad themes necessary for quality in teacher education courses. Each theme is described and supported by data in the sections that follow. Most data entries were prompted by Tom's questions and comments before and after each class. Unsolicited data from students appear in italics.

The Value of a Homeroom

At the outset, Ian did not introduce or even recognize that the course could or should be seen as a program homeroom where students could share and discuss ideas and issues in the program that did not seem to fit in any other courses. The value of a program homeroom became apparent as students began to open up and share in increasingly vulnerable ways and to make connections across courses to consolidate big ideas and lessons about teaching. To cultivate a safe environment for conversations, Ian learned the importance of discussing honestly and openly the challenges of teaching, including his own. The following insights were prompted by Tom's questions in his role as critical friend:

- I learned what is possible when you have a group as small as this class. There is an opportunity for discussing topics that require vulnerability and honesty.
- I learned the importance of a space to discuss what is not being covered in other courses.
- I learned the importance of a "homeroom to discuss things that don't come up in other courses but deserve discussion. Students need a space for a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in our program if we are to reasonably expect them to use this practice in their careers.
- I was trying to be guided by their epistemological expectations.

One student offered thoughts about the value of a space where students could openly share and discuss concerns and challenges:

> *I was overcome with emotion in today's class, so I want to re-express how much this class meant to me this year. I struggled to actively participate and keep my camera on this year in my other classes, and I think that's because I didn't feel like I made a difference in what was happening in those spaces. Our class was the contrary, and I think that's because you . . . prioritized us through the content you provided and the choice of discussion topics, and by being very understanding and accommodating when we needed it. For the first time in the program, my experiences, worries, and struggles were validated because you normalized that our teaching journey is not (and should not be) perfect. Being online this year was difficult,*

but I'm grateful that there was a space where I felt connected with my peers and even made some pals. (email to Ian).

A Shift in Ownership

Students were expected to meet in their schools once per week during practicum placements to discuss pre-determined questions provided in the course syllabus. Ian began to realize that, if students were to recognize the value of a PLC, they should experience one, as questions generated by the group itself better reflect the potential of a PLC. Here quality teaching seemed to involve asking questions relevant for the group. Again, insights were inspired by Tom's comments:

- · I learned that the best questions aren't necessarily going to come from me; this means I need to help cultivate the kind of environment where we feel like colleagues within a PLC.
- I think I experienced some of the discomfort students must feel when taking a risk to share something, based on how it felt to extend wait time.
- Establish the idea that we are a PLC earlier on.
- I seem to be building some sense of what works and what falls flat. When we draw on practice and experience, it feels more like a meeting than a class, but I seem to need to ask the right question for this to succeed.
- Given the opportunity, students can generate the most important discussion questions. I learned to consider how I could be getting in the way as their teacher, while making the assumptions that I need to have everything planned out and then guide conversation.
-

One student provided perspective on the value of discussing issues generated by the group:

> *I really enjoy the easy-going nature of our discussions. I found that I was more reflective during the week when given the open-ended question from [another student]. I would like to continue receiving these questions to think about throughout the week. Also, perhaps we could dedicate some time to asking Tom some questions regarding his teaching experiences. I would enjoy this. (Feedback from a student when asked about future discussion topics).*

Modelling Thinking Like a Teacher

While students in teacher education can learn a great deal by observing practice (both on practicum and on campus), it is essential to learn by understanding the thinking processes that come with good teaching. He made a concerted effort throughout the course to share his own thoughts and concerns. It became clear that, if the teacher were to recommend taking calculated risks during practicum, then this should be modelled within the course. Thus Ian needed to leave his comfort zone and share his thinking. Here again, questions from Tom helped to generate insights:

- I talked to the students about my self-study experience.
- I had someone to talk to about the experience (Tom).
- Tom encouraged me to stick to my plan of continuing to experiment. At this point I'd likely be sticking more to the script because of difficulties encountered generating strong discussions. With Tom's encouragement, I was reminded each week that I had a great deal of autonomy.
- I learned the value of longer-term investments in practices. Trying something may not lead to immediate results.
- Trying to model thinking encouraged me to be more honest with students about my struggles. It went a long way to communicate with them about my disappointment in not getting the kind of "buy-in" I hoped for, and then to share my desire to keep trying and to reconsider why I might be facing the issue in the first place.

Examining Beliefs and Expectations About Teaching and Learning

If students are to be asked to examine critically their beliefs and expectations about teaching, it seems reasonable that teacher educators would value this habit enough to engage in it themselves. Leading by example allows students to observe an activity that we value as a mark of quality teaching and learning and, at best, participate in the activity with the group as a means of gradual learning and habituation. These insights emerged from questions posed by Tom:

- Someone mentioned the other day having struggled with critical incident analysis because they weren't sure if their incident was "critical enough." Tom and I tried to unpack this, but it left me with a few thoughts. One was that *perhaps students were seeing the assignment as just another box to check off*, and therefore this comment reflected a desire to know if they'd met the criteria. Another was that it suggested the student didn't have a good sense of what we mean by critical. My own thought is that this should come from ourselves—I would say *something is critical if it left an impression and left me thinking about my own beliefs and approaches to teaching.* This happens to me regularly, and perhaps I took it for granted. For all the grief students give us for overusing that "R" word [reflection], have we ensured that *somewhere in our program, we talk through the process of analyzing our own teaching?* Do my colleagues and I share an understanding of "critical reflection"?
- If my critical friend had given me any feedback that felt negative, things might feel very different. *I really don't know how I'd respond if he had pointed out something that he felt didn't go well.* There's *a great deal of trust* in a critical friend relationship, and I cannot think of anyone else that I'd be comfortable doing this with. I am *making lesson plans with a great deal of intention* and I think, because of this, that I have not once been uncomfortable with Tom's presence. I think at some point in graduate school, I said to myself: "If I put enough thought into the design of my lessons, and if I believe in what I am doing, what reason do I have to be nervous if the principal were to randomly drop in?" Perhaps I am taking the same approach here. Though I don't have a lot of experience teaching in teacher education, I have a sense of what seems to work and what doesn't, and I think I can explain why. For these reasons, I might be comfortable with any one of my colleagues attending class, but the difference lies in the analysis post-class. Not once has my critical friend suggested a "better approach." My critical friend's style is to help me to *consider what happened and why it might have happened that way*. Tom's suggestions have been *presented as things to consider rather than "better approaches."* It feels more like "here's another perspective on what is happening" than "you should try doing this." I'm feeling left to chart the course, which is what I wanted to do, but I have the benefit of a great deal of wisdom to draw from in considering what to do.
- Class size alone is not going to eliminate some students' unwillingness or inability to contribute to discussion.

Near the midpoint of the course, students were asked to anonymously suggest topics to be addressed in the remainder of the course. One student responded at length:

> *I enjoy addressing topics and issues related to the teaching profession that are rarely, if ever, addressed in other classes. I enjoy that our class feels judgement-free as we try to be vulnerable talking about real experiences. I believe Ian's methods for leading the class to be very effective. Thank you for asking open questions, giving us ample time to reflect after asking questions, and empowering us by allowing our insights to drive class topics and discussion. Because you do this, I don't feel pressured to think or feel a particular way, and this allows me to be more introspective about who I am as a teacher. I think it means a lot to our class that you model all the things you are encouraging us to do, such as being honest about your own thoughts and insecurities. Also, completing the work before it is assigned to us tells us that you see the value in the work you are asking us to do—something I've never seen a teacher do in my entire schooling career. Because of the way our class is led, I feel like I am closer to figuring out my teaching philosophy, my beliefs and my general values as an educator. Thank you for a great first term!*

After some discussion, Ian and Tom decided to complete the same assignments expected of students prior to the deadline that was given to students in order to share the experience and offer their thinking as a model. Ian commented:

> *We could include examples of what we did, and I think this ties to their feedback. I realize so many of these individual things can fit under multiple themes, but the fact that we completed assignments to demonstrate the value we saw in them, and then also talked about their value, probably encouraged students to question their epistemological beliefs and expectations concerning the value of assignments in teacher education.*

How This Self-Study Will Change Ian's Future Teaching

Research typically seeks both understanding and improvement. The presence of the same critical friend at all 12 online classes generated significant opportunities for reframing of teaching practices. This self-study inspired at least four changes to Ian's future teaching.

Adding a New Dimension to Wait Time During Classes

Ian began the course with the perception that wait time had value when it was used after the teacher asked a question. Wait time provided all students with an opportunity to think through the question and begin to generate an answer, rather than having their thinking interrupted by a student who was quicker to generate a response. Early in the course, Tom challenged Ian to consider the value that wait time might provide when it is used after a student responds. This was an entirely new idea to Ian, and the authors discussed how this approach might encourage students to respond to each other. In line with Ian's emerging understanding that teacher education courses can and should model what professional learning communities can accomplish for teachers, Ian began to experiment with wait time following student responses. As the course progressed, there seemed to be a shift in ownership of the class, with certain students taking the lead to ask questions and provide answers to each other—precisely how professional learning communities within teaching are intended to function. In this new school year, Ian is currently talking with students about the idea of ownership within teacher education courses and is actively using wait time following students' responses in order to cultivate a learning environment and culture that is more student-led.

A New Use for Time Near the End of Class

Another idea encouraged by Tom involved protecting time at the conclusion of each class to explore what and how students had learned in class. This idea aligns with Ian's epistemological belief about teacher education that students should focus not only on what they are learning from the content of their courses but also on what they are learning by paying attention to how they are being taught. This represented a risk for Ian and was initially experienced as a tense period of time with a notable absence from the students of any willingness to share ideas. Tom, through discussions with Ian surrounding each class, encouraged Ian to continue to take risks if they appeared to have value, and also to talk about these risks with the students. As the course progressed, likely due to students' increasing comfort with each other and expectations of this conclusion to each class, the quality and quantity of what students were willing to share improved.

Negotiating the Curriculum with Students

With Tom's encouragement, Ian began to reduce the number of activities within each lesson to focus on acknowledging the work students were completing within the course and having deeper and longer discussions about issues within each week's topic that seemed to interest students most. Ian began to realize that curriculum must be negotiated to some degree with the students in response to their experiences and thinking. In line with Willingham's (2009, p. 67) fourth principle ("We understand new things in the context of things we already know, and most of what we know is concrete"), valuable lessons seemed to be those that contextualized topics within familiar territory for students. Ian has since adopted the belief that students will indicate when a conversation or discussion about a topic is finished, and thus he has begun to write more flexible lesson plans that allow for negotiation and direction from students.

Negotiating Assignments With Students

In conversation with students, Ian has begun to negotiate and generate assignments, thereby recognizing the value of meaningful assignments and remembering that teacher education students take many courses, each with its own set of assignments. After seeing the challenges that some students had in viewing assignments as anything more than "boxes to check off," Ian has begun to draft more flexible syllabi that allow for negotiation and construction with students to design the nature, specifics, and even feedback that their teacher should provide.

Trustworthiness

As critical friend (see Schuck & Russell, 2005, for discussion of this term), Tom contributed to the trustworthiness of this self-study. His continuous presence was highly productive; this extended commitment seemed a great

improvement on the idea of a critical friend who attends only once. Beyond Tom's listening to what Ian saw as interesting, discussions with Tom generated data that drove the study forward.

> *If our overall assessment of a study's trustworthiness is high enough for us to act on it, we are granting the findings a sufficient degree of validity to invest our own time and energy, and to put at risk our reputations as competent investigators. (Mishler, 1990, p. 419).*

Shenton (2004) argues that trustworthiness should be addressed in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This self-study's credibility has been enhanced by multiple data sources and the perspectives of the critical friend.

Conclusion

This self-study suggests to us that pre-service teachers are calling on teacher educators to rethink the learning environments that they design for them by developing greater alignment between the central value of critically reflective analysis and the teaching strategies we use to help them learn about quality teaching and learning in on-campus classes. Pedagogical change is not easy for us or for them, but we are preparing our students for careers, not just their first year of teaching. We must prepare future teachers for change and show them how to learn from their own teaching experiences. Encouraging pre-service teachers to view activities within class, assignments, and courses as parts of the process of learning to teach, rather than expectations for the process, may be a shift in epistemological beliefs that is essential in preparing for change. While self-study served an immediate purpose for Ian to improve the learning environment within a course, he concludes the experience with the belief that self-study should be a pedagogical tool for teaching students about quality teaching and learning. Revisiting Willingham's (2009) three principles that helped to focus this research, sharing the self-study experience with students allowed for the exploration and encouragement of productive thinking in contexts that were familiar to them and led to real change in subsequent classroom experiences. Students' interactions with Ian and with each other, their comments related to his self-study, and his discussions with Tom, as a critical friend, guided Ian in developing his teaching from class to class in ways that improved the quality of students' learning and generated valuable insights for his future teaching. Both Ian and Tom gained powerful insights into the potential of critical friendship when the critical friend is actively involved in all classes.

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Pedagogy in Progress

Self-Study of a Novice Teacher Educator

Gretchen M. Whitman

Pedagogy | Teacher Education | Self-Study | Caring

The purpose of self-study research is not merely to reflect on one's own practice but to make this experience public. This self-study aims to add to the understanding of becoming a teacher educator. The purpose was to identify and examine my personal pedagogy of teacher education. I began this study in the Fall of 2019 when I started my first job as an assistant professor of teacher education. The focus of the study was first, to identify my teaching pedagogy and second, to determine how effective I was at enacting this pedagogy. The study was conducted in graduate and undergraduate courses spanning six semesters at a mid-size university in the Midwestern United States. The study was informed by the work of John Dewey and Nel Noddings, specifically in terms of defining good teaching. Data collection included a self-study journal, course syllabi, lesson plans, teaching slides, student emails, and term teaching evaluations. Analysis of critical incidents contained in the journal, email communications with students, and other data sources showed me that my personal pedagogy of teacher education was rooted in a specific understanding of content, communication, and caring. With the help of a critical friend, I identified instances where I both struggled with and effectively implemented this pedagogy. Struggles were primarily due to unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the politicization of school curricula. Effectiveness was demonstrated through conversations with students and acknowledged growth over time. The data from this study will provide avenues for future self-study work.

Context of the Study

In Fall 2019, I became an assistant professor of teacher education. My only preparation was being given a set of syllabi. To teach with a syllabus I did not write, use a book I did not select, assign assessments I did not create, I needed my own pedagogy to guide me. While my doctoral program prepared me well for educational research, the notion of teacher education was still elusive. According to John Loughran (2006), a pedagogy of teacher education is an explicit understanding of both "teaching about teaching and learning about teaching" (p. 3). The purpose of this self-study was to identify and enact my own pedagogy of teacher education.

In the United States, it is common knowledge that most teachers are white, middle-aged women. I fit this description. In addition, as a middle-class person from the Midwest, most of the students I worked with during this self-study could identify with me. For this reason, it was imperative to me that I model both best practices and cultural sensitivity. I hoped that if my students could see me as a caring, culturally responsive teacher, they would follow my lead.

Theoretical Framework

The work of Dewey and Noddings guides this inquiry into my teaching practices. I approached this study under the auspices of an interpretive/constructivist lens in which “knowledge, particularly in social research, must be seen as actively constructed” (Howe, 2001, p. 202). I believe that meaning is constructed through interaction and that caring relationships aid student learning. These ideas align with the interpretivist and constructivist perspectives, which provided a lens through which I designed and interpreted this study.

In John Dewey’s 1897 essay "My Pedagogic Creed", he outlined his thoughts on the purpose of education, the structure of schooling, subject matter, teaching methods, and school reform. Ultimately, he concluded that education was an ongoing process shaped by an individual’s interests and experiences. To support this process, Dewey asserted that a teacher’s responsibility was to use every possible resource to plan engaging lessons while making activities highly educative to the point that the students reach a new “plane of consciousness” (Dewey, 2010, p. 75).

A century later, Nel Noddings extended much of Dewey’s work into the 21st century. Noddings (2013) agrees with Dewey that rather than setting a prescribed list of subjects for students to master, students should be able to study a wide range of topics according to their interests and abilities. According to Noddings (2006, 2013, 2015), good teachers ask frequent questions, find ways to turn students’ whims into valuable learning opportunities and think critically and reflectively about their instructional choices (Noddings, 2006, 2013). Good teachers tell stories, listen to complaints, offer choices, promote respectful conversation about controversial topics, and build upon students’ interests (Noddings, 2013). Like good teachers, caring teachers engage in receptive listening, help students make good choices, plan lessons according to students’ needs and promote intrinsic motivation (Noddings, 1995, 2003, 2004, 2006, 2012). Based on my understanding of Dewey and Noddings’ work, I have approached my own teaching and research with the intent to identify, train, and nurture preservice teachers to become the “good teachers” described here.

Research Literature

A teacher educator is a facilitator whose responsibility is to assess and unpack students’ prior experiences as they become new teachers (Crowe & Whitlock, 1999). Teacher educators teach who they are; therefore, their experiences are embedded in their personal philosophies, and it is their responsibility to uncover, explore, and understand such experiences (Bullock, 2014). Being a teacher educator means supporting “the notion that assuming the identity and role of teacher educator is a ‘process of becoming’ that must regularly be negotiated” (Ritter, 2007, p. 7). Teacher educators are life-long learners who continually engage in reflective practice and the study of their own practice through self-study (Ritter, 2011). A teacher educator is one who seeks out support from colleagues to challenge long-held assumptions and addresses these tensions in his or her practice (Williams et al., 2012).

As practitioners move from teaching in a K-12 context to higher education, they may experience confusion and insecurity about their new role often resulting in imposter syndrome (Boyd & Harris, 2010; Grierson, 2010; Ritter & Quiñones, 2020). Through journaling, critical conversations, and analysis of critical incidents (Brandenburg, 2021) teacher educators can rely on the self-study process to discover how their personal beliefs and past experiences influence their practice on a journey to achieving balance between what they teach and how they perceive themselves (Berry & Russell, 2012). According to Loughran (2006), teacher educators must learn “to re-embrace the creativity, experimentation and risk-taking that so shapes developing understanding of pedagogy” (p.18). In this study, pedagogy is understood as the dialogic interplay between knowledge and social interaction that “points to the agency that joins teaching and learning” (Britzman, 2003, p. 54).

Self-study research has been a choice of several practitioners hoping to study the transition to teacher education and in developing their personal pedagogy, teaching vision, and identity as teacher educators (Andrew et al., 2017; Grant & Butler, 2018; North, 2017; Rice et al., 2015; Ritter & Quiñones, 2020). The vulnerability and discomfort that result from self-study inform teaching practices (Berry & Russell, 2016) as well as document, confront, and embrace change (Berry & Kitchen, 2020). Additionally, self-study uncovers the complexity of beliefs and experiences that teachers and students exchange while negotiating meaning (Bullock, 2014; Hordvik et al., 2020) of complicated issues. To facilitate such conversations, teacher educators must understand their own cultural backgrounds (Ragoonaden, 2015). Doing so can

diffuse tension and foster the dispositions preservice teachers need to teach in a culturally responsive, antiracist manner (Ohito, 2020; Swarz, 2003).

Physical Context

My self-study began in Fall 2019 and reached data saturation in Spring 2022. The study is based on my work at a mid-size university in the Midwestern United States. The courses taught during this time included two undergraduate courses (Introduction to Teaching & Foundations of Diversity and Equity), middle school methods, and two graduate research courses. Throughout the six semesters of the study, I taught 22 different sections with a total of 443 students (ages 19-48, English speaking, 89% White, 85% female, working class to middle-class, 30% first-generation college student). Class sizes averaged 20 students. All courses were involved in the self-study, but the most poignant data was gathered from the Diversity and Equity course.

Aims/Objectives

As a novice assistant professor, I was concerned I would have difficulty transitioning from K-12 teaching. It has been argued that there is scant preparation and support for K-12 teachers transitioning to teacher education (Bullock, 2014; Loughran, 2007; Ritter, 2011; Williams & Ritter, 2010; Williams et al., 2012). The purpose of this self-study was to define and enact my personal pedagogy of teacher education. The research questions for this study were:

1. What is my pedagogy for teacher education?
2. How effectively am I enacting this pedagogy for teacher education?

Methods

Practitioner inquiry situates the practitioner as a knower, a generator of knowledge, and an agent of educational change. It is perhaps one of the best avenues of educational reform that exist in today's current educational reform climate (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As a future teacher of teachers, it is my responsibility to understand my own practice so that I might model best practices for my students. By researching my practice within my own context, I can reflect on and change "the discrepancies between what is intended and what occurs" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 42). By positioning myself as both teacher and researcher, I am better able to meet the needs of my students as they, too, grapple with becoming part of a community of professional, life-long learners.

As the focus of the self-study, I was the primary participant of the study. Since the interactions with my students are integral to my role, they are also included as an anonymous whole. I secured approval from the Institutional Review Board to make sure my use of student comments and emails was ethical. Each data source was collected with purpose and care to ensure that their inclusion in the study would help me fully understand and assess the impact of my research (Samaras, 2011).

The primary data collection method was my journal in which I detailed critical incidents, summarized activities, and described conversations with students. Analysis of critical events is a key aspect of self-study (Brandenburg, 2021; Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). In keeping with Goodell's (2006) definition of critical incidents, "an everyday event encountered by a teacher in his or her practice that makes the teacher question the decisions that were made" (p. 224), my critical incidents became turning points in my practice. Other data sources included email communications with students, syllabi, teaching slides, mid-semester check-in surveys, and formal end-of-term teaching evaluations.

Critical friends are an integral part of the self-study process. A critical friend can "provide an important alternative perspective which enhances the rigor" (North, 2017, p. 93) of the study, offer critique through journaling (Grant & Butler, 2018, p. 320), and offer support throughout the data collection and analysis process (Garbett et al., 2018). My critical friend was a former classmate from graduate school. Just as she did while writing our dissertations, she acted as a sounding board while I determined my research questions. We texted frequently about my study and met virtually to discuss my journal data. She provided insight during the coding process as well as helped me to articulate my findings. The involvement of my trusted, critical friend was an important data source, an integral part of the data analysis, and key to maintaining trustworthiness.

While data analysis may seem like a logical step to take after data collection, data analysis during my self-study was an ongoing process that began the moment data was collected (Maxwell, 2013). Before writing each new journal entry, I read previous entries to better understand patterns, timelines, and changes in my thinking. I used a two-stage open coding process in which I looked for recurring ideas and key events (Maxwell, 2013) across all data sources. During the initial phase, I read through all data, assigning codes based on keywords and topics(i.e. compassion, apprehension, caring). The second stage of coding occurred after my critical friend independently coded my journal. I used her codes (i.e. communication, apprehension, connection) combined with my own to analyze the journal, syllabi, emails, teaching slides, and teaching evaluations. To keep track of my analysis I created an Excel spreadsheet. I listed each code, its definition, and data examples. The spreadsheet helped me to identify key themes across all data sources.

Outcomes

My first research question asked: What is my pedagogy of teacher education? Analysis of the lesson plans and teaching slides from the first week of class in my foundations and methods courses revealed a recurring pattern. My lesson for the first day was consistently the same. I showed a short video compilation of teachers in pop culture (Gallagher, 2014). After watching the video, I used a think, pair, share activity in which students thought about their worst teacher. This activity always elicited animated responses and various horror stories of bad teaching. The next step was to work with a partner on a Venn diagram. Each partner completed their circle with adjectives describing their favorite teacher. Students then compiled a list of similarities where the circles of the diagram overlapped. As students called out different adjectives, I wrote them on the board. Using different colored white board markers, I drew circles around adjectives that related similar ideas. I did this lesson in every class for six semesters. Every time I did this activity the same patterns emerged, calling to mind a passage from Nel Noddings (2015), “When we think about what to do in our classrooms, we could do worse than explore the ‘seven Cs’: Choice, critical thinking, caring, connectedness, continuity, collegiality, and creativity” (p. 150). My students’ adjectives could always be grouped into three overarching categories: content, communication, and caring. In repeatedly doing this lesson, I solidified my personal pedagogy of teacher education. I believe teachers must be content area experts so they can pivot in their teaching while attending to daily classroom challenges, communicate effectively with students, colleagues, and parents, and build genuine, caring relationships with students.

The second research question in this study was: How effectively am I enacting this pedagogy of teacher education? There were three key events that occurred during this study that made an impact on my pedagogy. While they do not meet the definition of a “critical incident” because they were not everyday events, they were critical to the way I related to my students. These events were: my being assigned to teach a course that I was not prepared for, the shift to virtual learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the increasing politicization of school curriculum. The answer to this second question lies in the journal data, email communications with students, and my teaching evaluations. Conversations with my critical friend helped me to determine how to organize my findings for this question. Our codes mirrored the same pattern as did my first day lesson on good/bad teachers. Therefore, I chose to focus on content, communication, and caring as the themes for enacting this very pedagogy.

Content

To understand the term “content”, my critical friend and I revisited our doctoral studies to arrive at a workable definition. For us, content is the fusion of subject area knowledge and pedagogical knowledge which allows a teacher to demonstrate “dialectical reasoning and good judgment” (Henderson, 1987, p. 25). When I started my job, I was provided with syllabi, objectives, outcomes, and textbooks over which I had little control. Much of my time was spent supplementing the content so it reflected my expertise and experiences. The second semester in my new position I was assigned to teach three sections of the Foundations of Diversity and Equity in Education course. I was told that with my background in language teaching and having lived abroad, I was the person best suited to fill this gap. I was not hired for this, and I was not feeling confident in my abilities. At the end of the first week I wrote in my journal,

> *I feel unprepared for this. I know the material and know the “current” thinking on this, but as a white, upper middle-class female I feel woefully inadequate to teach this course. Do I just focus on the readings and depend on them to convey the right message? What can I really share with the students other than my*

> *time living abroad? I can rock the English Learners unit. But the race and sexual orientation units? Who am I to tell these students what to think? I feel like I really need to rely on other voices, so I am looking for TED Talks and guest speakers. I have already told students that it boils down to not being an asshole, but does it really? (January 28, 2020).*

In the journal data, I identified a critical incident that happened less than two weeks into the semester. A student expressed concern that the tone of the author of one of our textbooks felt demeaning. She said, "it is obvious that the author is a person of color and that is fine, but when the author writes about some of her experiences working with white teachers, she makes the white teachers sound dumb" (Journal Entry February 6, 2020). The text she was referring to was used to help students challenge their biases and gain a deeper understanding of their background. This comment was upsetting because I wanted to validate her feelings but help her see that her own bias was making her feel that way. In the same journal entry I described the adapted version of the "Where I am From Poem" (Lyon, 1999) we had just completed. This day's entry shows that I was beginning to understand how to handle this content. I wrote in my journal,

> *I have SO much in common with these students. Many of us share a Nordic ancestry and grew up in the Midwest. This makes me think that perhaps I AM the right person to convey the importance of diversity and equity. The students see me as one of them and if I say this mindset is imperative, perhaps they will believe me (Journal Entry February 6, 2020).*

Throughout the course, when I felt topics might be too politically polarizing, I focused on a teacher's responsibility to provide an equitable education for all learners. At the end of one contentious semester (Fall 2021) in which students were vocal about racial protests, transgender athletes, and whether schools were teaching Critical Race Theory, I was relieved to see a comment on my teaching evaluations that read: "I liked that I had Gretchen for a teacher. She made it easier to learn the material even though I disagreed with a lot of it. She listened to my opinions and didn't cut me off or disregard my opinions" (Student Evaluations Fall 2021).

By the final semester that I taught this course I was feeling more confident about my content knowledge. I had spent summers reading and continued to add new resources to the syllabus. I felt as though I had successfully "devoted myself to constructing a pedagogy of teacher education to which diversity and democratic citizenship are not just topics of study, but ways of life to be embraced and embodied" (Brubaker, 2016, p. 174).

Communication

One of the dispositions that many teacher education programs require for preservice teachers is communication. To find a definition we agreed on for communication, my critical friend and I looked at definitions from several universities. We agreed on the one from Purdue University (n.d.),

> *Candidates engage in effective and professional communication. They use professional language in all situations ensuring that communications are free from bias and meet the needs of diverse learners. Candidates also effectively and accurately communicate their ideas (oral and written) and engage in active listening.*

The use of syllabi, email, and debriefing conversations were the key components of communication. After reading Berry's (2008) process of debriefing with her preservice teachers during peer teaching, I adapted her format to model the process of being a reflective practitioner. At the end of my Introduction to Teaching and Middle School Methods courses I conducted a debrief of my lessons using the following questions:

- *What activities did we do today, and which ones worked for you?*
- *What activities do you see yourself doing in your own classroom?*
- *What should I do next class to build on this lesson?*
- *If I were to teach this lesson again, what should I change?*
- *Do I feel like it the lesson went well? Why or why not? (Teaching Slides, 2020-2022).*

Students were hesitant at first because they were not used to critiquing a professor face-to-face, especially the freshmen in the introductory course. Communicating with students in this way gave them space to connect with me on a more professional level. They could also see that I was listening to them and responding to their suggestions. A critical incident occurred during the debrief in the methods course on October 22, 2020. Students told me one of my activities was "hectic … too hard to read through and retain information" and they "felt exhausted" (Journal Entry). The following semester I adjusted the activity making sure to explain beforehand how I had changed it based on student feedback.

Caring

To care in this study means "educators must recognize that caring for students is fundamental in teaching and that developing people with a strong capacity for care is a major objective of responsible education" (Noddings, 1995, p. 678). Email and classroom conversation were the primary data sources for showing care. In March 2020 when the university announced it would be taking a three week break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I sent the following email to my students:

> *Hi Everyone,*
>
> *I know this is scary. Take time to grieve those lost due to illness but know that it is also important to grieve the loss of time with friends, leaving campus, and cancellations of trips and sporting events. I will be in touch soon with a new plan for the semester. Taking care of yourselves right now, mentally and physically, is what is most important (Email March 12, 2020).*

After this email was sent out, I received several responses from students thanking me for providing time and space for them to adjust.

The following semester, Fall 2020, instructors were given the option to teach fully online or hybrid. I chose the hybrid model. For a M-W-F class this meant splitting up the 30 students so they had one face-to-face, socially distanced day and two days online asynchronously. It was a difficult semester, but I received positive feedback from students stating they were glad to be on campus. For most, mine was their only face-to-face class. One student shared, "every day you ask us how we are doing and how our mental health is. This means a lot to me, and it makes me want to do better because you put in all this effort to help me succeed" (Journal Entry December 9, 2020).

Throughout the subsequent pandemic semesters, I struggled with maintaining high expectations while caring for students' mental health and well-being. Journal entries reflected a concern over providing too many accommodations for students and not being sure when, or if, students were taking advantage of the situation. I was "flexible with due dates and very patient with questions as well as answering emails quickly" (Journal Entry May 6, 2020), but then found myself getting annoyed when students who enrolled in a hybrid course opted to join online. I wrote,

> *COVID-19 lesson learned. I gave people the option to join remotely to be flexible and all, but it was counterproductive because some people are just not coming to class and joining online. This is not a true hybrid experience and is not fair to me, or the other students (Journal Entry November 4, 2020).*

I also found myself second guessing my expectations. I had two students score poorly on part of their final paper because they misunderstood a key point. In frustration I wrote, "I have a hard time with this, I want to take care of my students so badly that I don't let them fail when maybe they should. I fear I am using the pandemic as an excuse" (Journal Entry December 9, 2020).

As the semesters progressed, I learned to be more of a "warm-demander" – being just while expecting students to meet their responsibilities (Hammond, 2015). My core beliefs in social constructivism told me that in-person learning was best for my student population so by September 2021 "I learned early to be firm in making sure the virtual option was for COVD-19 protocols only" (Journal Entry September 14, 2021). However, I had to eschew some other personal beliefs to maintain care for my students' academic needs:

I bent over backwards to get some students a field placement where I knew they didn't need to be vaccinated. I had to support these students and their educational goals; all while being disgusted that they were refusing to get vaccinated (Journal Entry September 14, 2021).

Conclusion

This self-study aimed to identify my pedagogy of teacher education and determine how effectively I was enacting it. Data analysis helped me to identify a personal pedagogy based on genuine caring, thorough content knowledge, and effective communication. Further analysis helped me to realize that even while facing difficulties I was true to my beliefs. I effectively modeled genuine caring to teacher candidates during conflict, increasing the likelihood they will in turn care for their future students (Bracho, 2020). The purpose of self-study is to reflect on one's own practice and to make this experience public. In doing so, I have modeled the process of self-study for other novice teacher educators as well as highlighted how to define a personal pedagogy of teacher education.

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Threshold Inertia

Fearful to Move Without Redefining Pedagogy and Elucidating Praxis

Margaret Mnayer & Pamela Schmidt

Praxis | Reflexivity | Student Incivility | Helicopter Teaching

Abstract As a Ph.D. candidate and graduate teaching assistant in the final year of my program, I had to reevaluate my teaching practice and discern how I had become a helicopter teacher/ instructor. I had to lean into my community of practice and I had to re-evaluate and objectively examine my teaching practice and pedagogies enacted. I had to adjust my course to meet the unique needs of students educated during COVID. In the process, my resiliency, my self-efficacy, and my identity as both a teacher educator and academic were challenged, realigned, and then redefined by my shift in identity from a secondary educator into a postsecondary educator and scholar.

> *"A major threshold is passed when you mature enough to acknowledge what drives you, and to take the wheel and steer it." ~ Andrew Stanton*

Context of the Study

As a social justice teacher educator (Goodwin & Darity, 2019) and literacy GTA in a midwestern teaching university, I taught the cross-disciplinary literacy methods course required for pre-service teachers. As my identity as a teacher educator and praxis pedagogy (Arnold & Mundy, 2020) has evolved, I have enacted a pedagogy of preparation (Brower et al., 2021) to maintain my course's applicability and relevance for my students (Kitchen & Berry, 2020; Martin, 2018, 2020). According to Brower et al. (2021), preparative pedagogy encourages a community of learners in which students express their understandings and take academic risks and scaffolds preservice teachers as they master the content and skills required to be successful. Additionally, students view their agentive roles as teachers and the exigence of an informed and ethical civic engagement required for a healthy democracy.

As a self-study teacher educator and graduate teaching assistant, I am constantly in a state of reflexivity and proactively exploring approaches to improve my practice, enhance my literacy methods course, and increase my sense of self-efficacy as an instructor (Craig & Curtis, 2020; Trout, 2018). I view engaging in self-study as an ongoing, purposeful, and strategic form of individualized professional development as I negotiate becoming a professional teacher educator (Ritter, 2017; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2016). Moreover, Martin (2018) states that the process of becoming and evolving as a teacher educator is "Ultimately, productive and enabling identities (including teacher identity and teacher educator identity) will emerge and reemerge through flows of becoming" (p. 264).

My progress in becoming a teacher educator and identity formation as one appeared to be on a normal trajectory until the fall of 2021. That semester, exacerbated by the demands of COVID-forced program changes and unrealistic student demands, I was confronted by a threshold in my pedagogy and my identity as a teacher educator. It had become salient that although I intended to honor my students' feedback and adjusted my course in response to their suggestions, I had slowly morphed into a helicopter teacher educator. Houser et al. (2020) state that helicopter teachers provide explicit step-by-step instructions and templates to eliminate any ambiguity or do for students what students can and should do for themselves, such as keeping track of assignments and course deadlines. McAllum (2016) adds that students substitute "helicopter parents with helicopter professors" (p. 364). As students have changed over the years, many teacher educators have become uncertain of the best instructional practices to meet students' increasing emotional needs while providing the skills necessary to become effective teachers prepared to enter the field (Leach, 2019; Lynch et al., 2018). Although many teacher educators manage to appropriately scaffold students, if their teaching practice crosses over into helicopter teaching, they may prevent students' authentic learning (Grant, 2017).

Compounding the issues are Generation Z students and their unique characteristics. Researchers have found Gen Z students often exhibit: 1) an attachment to technology at the expense of learning, 2) a fear of making mistakes, 3) a procrastination of assignment completion until necessary, 4) a low attention span, 5) a need for constant reinforcement and approval, 6) a need for frequent reminders of upcoming academic tasks, 7) the requirement of an explicit connection between content and how it is relevant to their immediate situation, and 8) a high rate of mental illness or diagnosed anxiety disorder (Houser et al., 2020; McCoy, 2020; Schwieger & Ladwig, 2018). Consequently, Grant (2017) argues that some faculty are so cognizant of the emotional fragility of their students that their shift to helicopter teaching has become an unintended outcome.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this self-study were to review previous semesters' course feedback, the fall of 2021 student emails, and the alterations to my course over five years to identify where and when my teaching practice morphed from a pedagogy of preparedness to one of helicopter teaching. I had come to a crossroads. I knew I could not move forward if that semester and many of the students in that course were representatives of how I would have to teach. I knew, at a visceral level, that I would not be preparing them to be effective practitioners. My belief in the nobility of teaching would not allow me to accept that as an option. Either I figured out how it occurred and how to avoid it recurring or I needed to re-evaluate my non-teaching options once I graduated.

I revisited and examined my course documents and discerned where my intentions of addressing the needs of my students had evolved into removing the expectation that my students could be independent, self-directed, and engaged learners. In the four previous years, there were a small number of students that pushed back against having to take a literacy course to teach their discipline; however, in the fall of 2021 class, it was the opposite. There were only a few who acknowledged how it could improve their teaching and increase student learning. I confronted several of my long-held assumptions about preservice teachers, re-evaluated my practice, determined where to readjust my teaching practice and praxis pedagogy, and re-aligned it all with my pedagogical beliefs. As a new graduate applying for my first faculty position, it was imperative that I examined my curricular choices and determined if I could still develop courses that were both rigorous enough to prepare teacher education students to enter the field while still managing the unique characteristics of Gen Z preservice teachers.

Methods

As this study intended to evaluate my teaching practice and discern if I could make the changes necessary to remain in the field of teacher education, this is a personal history self-study. Samaras et al., state "personal history-the formative, contextualized experiences of our lives that influence how we think about and practice our teaching-provides a powerful mechanism for teachers wanting to discern how their lived lives impact their ability to teach or learn" (2004, p. 905). LaBoskey's (2004) five methodological considerations for conducting self-study directed my choices: it must be self-initiated and self-focused with the intention of improving teacher education, it must apply qualitative methods, must be interactive, and it must be validated through the construction, testing, and sharing of teaching practices (Pithouse-Morgan, 2022).

The data collected and analyzed included semester syllabi (8), student emails from the fall of 2021 (178), anonymous semester student evaluation of teaching summaries (8), department meeting notes (3), and graduate supervisor teaching observation feedback forms (8) collected from August of 2017-December of 2021. The qualitative procedures applied were content analysis, grounded theory thematic analysis, and constant comparative method (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2019).

A critical friend was included in the study (Russell & Schuck, 2004). She examined the data gathered objectively as she did not know the students and could read and interpret the data without the interference of my interactions and unknown biases. Both of us separately read the data, identified patterns as they emerged, decided on themes, and then compared our findings. There were multiple times that I had to re-think how I was interpreting the data and recognize that my personal feelings were interfering with my analysis. For example, when I read one student's email that was short and to the point, I interpreted it and coded it as disrespectful (their in-class behavior was disrespectful). However, when she read it (without the influence of classroom interactions), she coded it as formal and brief. Her questioning how I decided what my codes and themes were based on the data, and her argument that she did not see the same codes or themes, forced me to revisit my analysis and reflect more deeply on how I interpreted, coded, and developed my themes. The independent analysis and coding processes and subsequent discussions, debates, and revisions of the codes and themes into the final versions increased the likelihood of our findings being more authentic and valid. The final codes, outcomes, and themes are in Table 1.

Findings

Table 1

Findings

Coded Categories	Outcome	Theme
Academic Entitlement/AE Dimensions	An adversarial relationship between students and instructor, and student-student	Students and I view our respective responsibilities to each other differently.
Classroom Incivility: -Disrespect/Lack of participation	Learning environment was unsafe and sharing personal insights or experiences would not be respected	Students believe class discussions and activities are unnecessary and irrelevant.
Class Terrorism: -Lack of attendance/attention -Demand justification deducted points	Learning opportunities during class were limited due to student absences and lack of preparation	Students do not see the relevance of the course in their teacher education development.
Cyberbullying	Increased sense of student hostility from a few students	Students feel I need to meet their expectations, or they will complain to supervisors.
Academic Contra Power Harassment -Complaining to Dept Chair or Dean	Teaching practices questioned and embarrassment over false claims	Students want to punish me because of high expectations.

Consumerist Attitudes/Instructor as Servant -Expect courses to cater to preferences	Undermined student-teacher relationships and lack of respect for the instructor's knowledge or position	Students believe they should decide if course content is relevant to them on their terms.
Cyber-slacking, Cyberloafing/Multitasking/Extraneous Processing.	Lack of interaction and lack of attention	Students do not believe course content is important to their development as teachers.
Helicopter classrooms -Students expect safe spaces to avoid conflicting views -Students did not exhibit emotional control	Fear of holding students responsible for remaining civil during class discussions over controversial topics could lead to negative course evaluations and additional complaints to supervisors	Students' unrealistic expectations of course could be used against me and prevent me from getting a faculty position.

As doctoral students progress over each program threshold, they are concurrently engaging in communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 2001), being enculturated into academia by their department and graduate student advisors (Lynch et al., 2018), and internalizing and forming their identities as teacher educators and scholars (Wenger, 2010; Wegner & Nückles, 2015). Moreover, Wilcox and Leger (2013) used Meyer and Land's (2003, 2005) conceptualization of thresholds as transitions in postsecondary teaching as working through a series of threshold concepts. They state "A threshold concept can be considered as akin to a portal, opening up a new and previously inaccessible way of thinking about something. It represents a transformed way of understanding, interpreting, or viewing something without which the learner cannot progress." (p.1). The conceptualized thresholds are a) transformative, b) troublesome, c) irreversible, d) integrative, e) bounded, f) re-constitutive of self, and g) discursive. These threshold concepts will guide the organization of this paper as I grappled with how my teaching practice devolved into becoming a helicopter teacher, my realization that it had occurred, confronted my fears of becoming an ineffective teacher educator and inert, re-oriented my praxis pedagogy and recommitted to being a teacher educator.

Threshold As Transformative: It Leads to a Significant Shift or Transformation of Personal Identity

According to Hordvik et al. (2020) "We encourage teacher educators to acknowledge the relatively uncontrollable, relational, and ambiguous environment of teacher education practice and learning, and in this way embrace orchestration as a way of conceptualizing their practice and learning." (p.9). The fall of 2021 left me no choice but to acknowledge the relatively uncontrollable, relational, and ambiguous reality of teacher education practice. As a GTA and developing academic and teacher educator, I ran straight into the wall of unintentional changes in my practice and not for the betterment of either my teaching or my preservice teachers' learning. My identity and self-efficacy as a teacher educator were challenged.

Threshold As Troublesome: It Is Troubling As New Knowledge May Seem Counterintuitive/Wrong

As a Nationally Board Certified Teacher, I was conditioned to continuously, critically evaluate, and examine my teaching practice and adjust my practice to deepen my students' learning. In my MA.E, I segued to self-study, further cementing my belief in the power of self-study to function as a personalized professional development (Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2016). Additionally, I conducted a self-study of my practice as a beginning teacher educator during my first three years as a literacy GTA. I was applying what I knew to be effective college teaching practices and felt comfortable in my maturation as a college instructor (Hu, 2020). That study indicated my teaching practice was developing and evolving and the students indicated I was meeting their learning goals. My pedagogies of care and of preparation were providing them with the skills needed to head confidently into their student teaching placements. My self-efficacy was high, and my teacher-educator identity was coalescing into a strong sense of purpose and confidence in my teaching abilities.

However, in the fall of 2021, the two classes I taught shook me to my foundations and almost convinced me to leave teacher education altogether. I knew I could not continue to teach if that semester was an indicator of what it meant to be a professor. I questioned finishing my program, and for the first time since becoming an educator, I dreaded teaching. I could not move forward with any confidence. I was inert and I knew it.

Threshold As Irreversible: It Cannot be Forgotten or Unlearned

In my attempts to understand the chaos in my classes, I learned a new lexicon. I learned about academic entitlement (Kinney et al., 2022; Laverghetta, 2018), academic contra power harassment (Burke et al., 2020; King, 2019; Lampman et al., 2009), classroom terrorism (Turnipseed & Landay, 2018; Vural & Bacioglu, 2020), classroom incivility (Alexander-Snow, 2004; Frey, 2009; May & Tenzek, 2018), cyberloafing (Reysen et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022) and nomophobia (McCoy, 2020) and how all of them can sabotage a classroom, hijack the instructor's intended classroom climate, and wreak havoc on a graduate teaching assistant's sense of purpose and beliefs in student learning abilities and teacher dispositions. I discovered that preservice teachers are not always focused on learning, they are not always committed to becoming effective educators, and they are not always committed to the teaching profession. I learned that some preservice teachers are purposefully unkind and that academic entitlement, addictions to technology, and allowances made during COVID-19 did more harm than good. I learned that student evaluations of teaching are unreliable reflections of an instructor's teaching practice (Leach, 2019; Rollett et al., 2021). I was demoralized and experienced a sense of disequilibrium that I found shocking. My response was to immediately engage in a focused self-study of my practice in order to discover how I got to such a state and figure out how to change it.

Threshold As Integrative: It Exposes Previously Hidden Interrelated Concepts Allowing for the Reintegration of Previous Knowledge

As my critical friend and I reviewed the data, several patterns began emerging. Our analysis of the syllabi, course assignments, materials used, and course organization over five years revealed the critical junctures that changed how I taught my courses, re-designed my syllabus, and adjusted my teaching practice to meet the needs of my preservice teachers in response to their feedback. I recognized where my understanding of how my students learned and the scaffolding I believed they needed from me had crossed over from supportive to enabling. I was becoming a helicopter teacher. I identified those moments and re-evaluated my curricular choices. It became progressively clearer the more I adjusted my course and expectations to reflect student suggestions, the less ownership they took of their learning. I had adjusted my course and my teaching practices believing I was honoring their feedback and deepening their learning by focusing more on the key course goals. Instead, I removed the expectation or accountability that they would be self-directed learners.

In my attempts to live my praxis pedagogy, and ensure I was addressing the needs of my students, I made it impossible for them to fail. We found that over time, instead of looking at the syllabus, the class website, the assignment directions, rubrics, and models, or coming to class prepared to engage in the content, many came to class unprepared. However, the fall of the 2021 class was my breaking point. There were a few that were invested in the class, but the majority were not. Most were on their tech and did not engage with the class on any level. They would email me before looking at their syllabus or course calendar. I had provided them with binders with hard copies of the syllabus, the course study guide, and assignments and rubrics. I kept trying to problem-solve and figure out what I was doing wrong. The more I tried to increase engagement, the less engaged they became. I had enabled them to become passive and then expected them to be attentive and active learners.

Threshold As Bounded: It Denotes What Are Unique Characteristics of the Subject

By the end of September, it was excruciatingly obvious that my attempts to connect with my students were ineffective, resulting in a meeting with my advisor and department chair. Both observed my class multiple times and provided explicit feedback. Both shared that I was doing most of the work because I feared my students had not completed the out-of-class readings required for in-class activities and discussions. I was advised to hold students accountable with quizzes and activities that assessed their understanding of assigned readings, and I was not to allow absent students to make up work without proof of illness. I was not to allow students to Zoom into our face-to-face class without a medical excuse. They shared that many other GTA's and faculty were experiencing similar issues with high

absenteeism, a lack of class preparation, increased negative student interactions with peers and faculty, and the same preoccupation with tech, even during lectures. I learned that many of our students were entering our classes with high levels of academic entitlement (Reysen et al., 2021) and several were experienced, classroom terrorists (Weger, 2018) and had driven several other instructors nearly to tears. Instead of providing my students with high expectations and the pedagogy of preparedness, as I believed I was, I diminished their sense of responsibility for their learning. I was doing more, and they were doing less. I knew that I could not continue to violate my praxis pedagogy. I questioned my decision to become a teacher educator.

Threshold as Re-Constitutive of Self: It Shifts the Perspective Enabling Repositioning of Self

Analyzing all the data made it obvious how and when my practice had changed. Then, I had an a-ha moment in the middle of October (Tidwell & Jónsdóttir, 2020). I had provided students with folders, hard copies of the syllabus, the interactive study guide, and the rubrics for each assignment, and then one of the students asked if I could type a list of all the assignments remaining for the semester and post it on our class site. They had completely stopped using any of the tools they were provided or materials I had given them. I had become a helicopter teacher. Something had to change.

That evening, I purposefully determined to re-evaluate my teaching practice and re-align it with my pedagogy and praxis pedagogy and continue my program (Arnold & Mundy, 2020). I had to do the uncomfortable work of acknowledging that I was arrogant in my assumption that I could mature as a teacher educator independent of my community of practice in my department. My hubris prevented me from sharing negative experiences with my students with others sooner. If I had been transparent with my struggles, they could have provided me with much-needed balance, reassurance, and support. I re-examined the characteristics of praxis as pedagogy and confronted myself with what I believed and what I had been practicing (Kemmis et al., 2020). I questioned if I was" seeing teaching as a form of praxis because it aims towards the good for each person and the good for humankind" (p. 109). The data analysis made it salient that regardless of my intentions, my choices were not facilitating my students' growth and development as teachers, and, more importantly, I was not modeling effective teaching practices, nor was I living out my praxis pedagogy.

Threshold As Discursive: It Shifts Perspective and Provides Ways of Approaching a Concept

I met with my department chair and graduate advisor and requested recommendations enabling me to regain my perspective and balance as a teacher educator. They observed my teaching and provided helpful insights and practical suggestions on how I could teach my classes and return the responsibility for learning back to my students. They advised me to change my teaching persona into a more formal and postsecondary approach and create more distance between my students and me. There was a time and place to be warm and informal, but this class was neither. I focused our class discussion on mastering course objectives and applying course readings to teaching simulations they would face and held students accountable for being current in their assignments. If they sent an email requesting information about topics covered in the syllabus, I redirected them to the syllabus and the explicit guidelines for missed classes, late work, and requests to change assignment due dates. I stopped allowing a handful of students to establish the classroom climate for the rest of the students. I refused to re-answer questions that were covered in either the assigned readings or the class discussions. I did not respond to emails after 8 pm. I stopped being a helicopter teacher and returned to practicing a pedagogy of preparedness. I focused on the students that were committed to being effective teachers and remembered why I was enthusiastic about literacy teacher education.

Final Thoughts: My Experience As a Cautionary Tale

As this semester started unraveling before me and all of my previous experiences, strategies, and methods as a teacher-educator were ineffective in creating the classroom climate and learning community that had always been a hallmark of my teaching, I turned inward instead of outward. I independently tried to address the disconnections between the students and me. I believed that if I was proactively changing my approach, I would eventually figure out how to salvage our semester. What I should have done instead, was to reach out to others for support and guidance. I could have asked another GTA or professor for guidance as to how much credence I should allow the course evaluations to have instead of continuing to decrease my expectations. I could have met with my advisor, or other professor, the first week of school when it was apparent the students in my classes were not taking the course seriously

and would not disengage from technology and participate in class in any way. I could have asked if anyone else was experiencing the same issues and behaviors. Had I done so, I would have discovered that others were having similar issues with their students and I was not an isolated case. I could have been provided the tools to redirect the class to more productive ends earlier and had fewer negative interactions. When other graduate teaching assistants are navigating the journey from k-12 classroom teacher to postsecondary academic teacher educator, I hope they are wiser than I was and lean into the support and community of practice that surrounds them. I hope they do not reach the depths of discouragement that I did because I did not realize most faculty were facing the same frustrations and it was not just because I had become a helicopter teacher. That was a large part of the problem, but not the only reason. However, because I did take advantage of the support of my community of practice and did heed their suggestions, I was able to move forward again. I did not feel inert any longer. I regained my sense of self-efficacy as a teacher educator, I returned to my pedagogy of preparedness and praxis pedagogy, and I felt empowered to cross the threshold of graduate student over to an assistant professor of literacy teacher educator.

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Pedagogical Care

Considerations of COVID and Care in Middle Grades ELA Methods Instruction

Melanie Shoffner

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In this paper, an ELA teacher educator turns to self-study to explore how the pandemic has repositioned her teaching – both what she does and how she does it – and how that repositioning has reframed understandings and expectations of both students and self. Two research questions guide the study: 1) In what ways has my pedagogy changed in the ELA middle grades methods class through navigating the COVID-19 pandemic? 2) How have these changes reframed my pedagogical understandings and expectations? The self-study uses the lens of pedagogical care to engage with these questions, revealing that altered approaches to attendance, course feedback, and instructional questioning reflect both relational care (e.g., Noddings, 2012) and relational teacher education (e.g., Kitchen, 2005).

Introduction

Recently, a colleague stopped by my office with a question: How was I dealing with student absences this semester? An ill student had emailed her, asking whether it was possible to Zoom into her methods course; as it happened, I had received a similar request earlier that morning. The conversation revealed our common approach: We preferred students who were sick to be absent – physically and virtually – when they were ill, and we would work with them when they returned if they were behind. As she left my office, however, my colleague mused, "Am I being more flexible now or do I just not care enough?"

In theory, life has returned to some semblance of normalcy now but it's clear that the COVID-19 pandemic will ripple through all aspects of our lives and our classrooms for years to come. As my colleague's question captures, we do things differently now and we're not quite sure why: because we've rethought our pedagogy or reconsidered student needs or redefined what's important? I frequently wonder how the pandemic has repositioned my teaching – both what I do and how I do it – and how that repositioning has reframed understandings and expectations of my students and myself. I have turned before to self-study to examine my teaching and professorial growth (e.g., Shoffner, 2016, 2018, 2020) so it makes sense to do so again as I unpack those questions.

The Pedagogical Context

As an English Language Arts teacher educator, I regularly teach a middle grades (6th-8th) ELA methods course (note: adolescents are typically between 12-15 years old in United States' middle schools). While I teach other courses, the

middle grades (MG) methods course is the most frequent: In the last five years, I have taught it seven times and I am teaching it in both semesters of the 2022-2023 academic year. While the course typically meets twice a week for 90 minutes, it is sometimes offered once a week in a three-hour block.

Through the years, I have revised specific elements of the course and my instruction in response to different factors: student feedback (e.g., Shoffner, 2020), current events (e.g., Shoffner, 2019a), pressing issues (e.g., Shoffner, 2019b). For example, after considering how to offer students more latitude in directing their own learning, I created reading banks for the Spring 2022 iteration of the course. Each bank offers 18-20 different articles/chapters addressing a component of MG ELA (e.g., reading, writing, language, technology). Students choose readings of interest from the appropriate bank for the classes in which we focus on the given component.

My reframing of the larger context of the course offers a second example. While MG methods still focuses on developing students' understanding of and skill with MG ELA adolescents, curriculum, and instruction, I now orient students' learning using three overarching questions: What does it mean to be a good middle school ELA teacher? How can ELA curriculum and instruction challenge adolescents' learning? Why are pedagogical choices always issues of equity and justice?

Both of these examples illustrate the results of reflective consideration over time. Like faculty around the world, however, I was required to revisit every aspect of my teaching immediately when COVID-19 descended mid-semester in Spring 2020. Where previously I rethought elements of MG methods throughout the semester or during the summer, I was now forced to reconsider every aspect of the course immediately: my pedagogical reliance on class discussion and in-class group work, my required readings and assignments, and even my interactions with students.

With the return to what is now regular university life, I am again teaching MG methods in a classroom down the hall from my office. Some students still wear masks; some do not; all engage in class discussion and in-class group work again. Some readings have been changed; some assignments have been revised; some topics have been reframed – typical alterations that occur every semester. However, MG methods is somehow not the same as it was prior to the pandemic. It feels different, from my classroom instruction to my interactions with students to my approaches to the material.

I firmly believe Cochran-Smith's (2003) assertion that good teaching requires both professional competence and personal connection – and previous self-studies have helped me to explore this combination of pedagogical expertise and relational interaction (e.g., Shoffner, 2014). The pandemic's disruption reinforced the importance of care in the classroom, which Rogers and Webb (1991) identify as a component of good teaching. While I do not question the quality of my teaching (any more than I typically do), I do question how it has changed in response to our virological upheaval and what that means for my teaching in the methods course. As such, this self-study uses the lens of pedagogical care to engage with these questions.

The Framework of Pedagogical Care

Learning, motivation, and engagement are interconnected foundational elements of the classroom (Bundick et al, 2014); in order for students to learn, they must see meaningful connections between the material and their own interests or goals. Likewise, care is an integral part of teaching and learning. Though care in teaching can take many different forms (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006), it is grounded in teachers' relationships with, acceptance of, and responsiveness to students (e.g., Gay, 2010; Noddings, 2005) – for example, responding to expressed versus assumed needs (Noddings, 2012) or grounding interactions in love, well-being, and joy (Love, 2019).

Care is also located in the pedagogical. Pedagogical care is situated within personal, professional, and institutional relationships, found in the actions and behaviors that support students' emotional and intellectual development (Hawk & Lyons, 2008). While pedagogical in action, such care occurs in ways that allow students to "feel valued, listened to, and recognized" (Nicol et al, 2010, p. 241) in their efforts to learn. As such, pedagogical care encompasses the

> *skills and dispositions that enhance the pedagogical relationship…activities that offer guided participation and practice, and…approaches to help our students become more competent in the content and skills of*

> *the course, more self-directed in their learning, more cultivating of the value of relationships, and more capable in modeling an ethic of care to others. (Hawk & Lyons, 2008, p. 324).*

The framework of pedagogical care allows me to consider my instructional practices, course materials, and relationships with and expectations of students through a different lens. It also offers a lens by which to consider my teaching in the context of the pandemic. Using the framework of pedagogical care in this self-study, then, supports my efforts to "achieve a more conscious mode of professional activity [in my teaching], in contrast to action based on habit, tradition, and impulse" (Samaras, 2002, p. xxiv).

Methods

Framed through pedagogical care, this self-study sought to answer two questions: 1) In what ways has my pedagogy changed in the ELA MG methods class through navigating the COVID-19 pandemic? 2) How have these changes reframed my pedagogical understandings and expectations?

The primary data for this self-study consist of syllabi and lesson plans for the MG methods course from three specific semesters: fall 2017, fall 2020, and spring 2022. The 2017 course represents my initial teaching of MG methods; eight students were enrolled in the course. The 2020 course represents my teaching during the pandemic; ten students were enrolled in this course. The 2022 course is representative of my current teaching of MG methods; in this year, 14 students were enrolled.

A point of clarification may be useful in understanding my choice of data for this self-study. To explore my personal pedagogy, I have chosen to analyze only personal pedagogical materials – specifically syllabi and lesson plans – that were developed from my individual pedagogical understandings and expectations. They capture, as best they can, my pedagogy at the time. These are in contrast to materials that were created in response to my pedagogy, such as students' submitted assignments or informal evaluations from class. Student-produced materials are a rich source of data for further examinations of my pedagogy, however, so I will draw from them during my presentation at the Castle Conference.

While this self-study is focused on my individual instruction, the "involvement of others [is needed] so that the learning outcomes are much more than personal constructions of meaning" (Loughran, 2005, p. 6). Accordingly, I worked with a student research assistant in the fall of 2022 to analyze the primary data. Using qualitative content analysis (Patton, 2002), the research assistant examined the three sets of syllabi and lesson plans for agreements, disagreements, and repeating patterns. Regular check-ins ascertained the trajectory of the analysis and confirmed initial findings.

This analysis identified established, new, revised, and deleted elements of the syllabi and lesson plans. These were collected in a spreadsheet organized by the given categories. For example, an established element was the professor's contact information on the first page of the syllabi and the students' full names on the first page of the lesson plans. In the 2022 syllabus, my office phone number was not included and my pronouns were first added; in the 2022 lesson plans, I first included notes on students' expressed learning needs, as provided on a questionnaire.

Additionally, my self-study was supported through collaboration with a critical friend (Schuck & Russell, 2005), a fellow teacher educator who also teaches methods courses, although in a different subject area. We frequently discuss our respective practices and chosen curriculum, as well as student responses to these elements; within the last years, our conversations have also included considerations of care. During the Fall 2022 semester, these conversations were more intentionally focused on asking questions of and offering perspectives on pedagogical care. My scribbled notes following these conversations captured my CF's questions and conclusions, which both supported and challenged the ongoing analysis and my own understandings (Costa & Kallick, 1993).

Of note, however, is the additional insight offered by the student research assistant. This student had previously taken an adolescent literature course with me so, while not familiar with the MG methods course, he was familiar with my instruction and personality, and this familiarity added to our discussions of the data analysis. While I did not consider him a critical friend at the time, he did take on many qualities of that role: asking direct questions, complicating

understandings, and offering perspectives. Stolle et al.'s (2018) examination of what constitutes a critical friend reminds us that "complicated terms require complex characteristics" (p. 149).

Instructional Changes

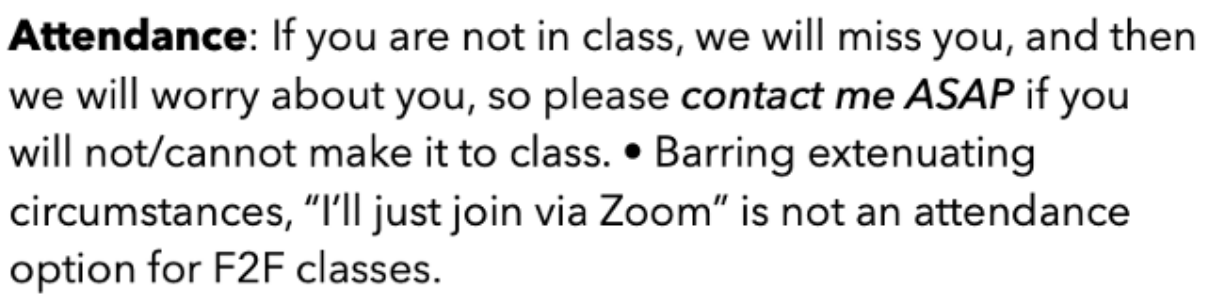
My first question asks in what ways my pedagogy changed in MG methods through navigating the COVID-19 pandemic. My second question considers how these changes speak to my altered pedagogical understandings and expectations. Some changes were clear, some became clear only through further study, and all pointed to my – and my students' – experience of the pandemic as a catalyst to rethink instruction and learning.

Attendance

While attendance became a flexible situation by necessity during the pandemic, my approach to attendance clearly changed over the last five years. In 2017, my syllabus stated that attendance was required and assessed, with students allowed only one absence without penalty. In 2020, I asked students to speak to me if there was an issue with their attendance so we could discuss how best to address the issue in a proactive and positive way. By 2022, my attendance statement had evolved further, as demonstrated in the syllabus language below (Figure 1):

Figure 1

Attendance Statement in Fall 2022 Syllabus



With less officious and more personal language, I reminded students that they belonged to a community that would miss them. Communication with my students became the focus rather than the absence itself – and the students did communicate. Rarely did a student miss class without sending an email to alert me to their absence, giving me the chance to respond to their specific situation and direct them to next steps (e.g., stop by during my office hours, review the class Google doc for the day's discussion).

In their emails, students frequently asked if they could or should attend class online if we were meeting face-to-face. In 2020, I worked to accommodate those requests, often setting up my own laptop in the classroom to interact with students directly. In 2022, I did not. As my CF and I often mused, students were ill before COVID and clearly not expected to come to class; having the technology to do so now did not mean it was best for them to do so. Instead, I encouraged students to focus on their mental and physical health so they could return to class rested and ready. I then worked with them on an individual basis to determine what was needed to keep them on track—from truncating assignments to moving due dates—rather than expecting them to simply catch up once they returned.

Course Feedback

I have always made an effort to collect some form of feedback from students, in addition to the university's course evaluations. Whether through exit tickets or an online question form, I want to know what is working in the course and what needs to improve for their learning. In 2017, I collected this feedback mid-semester and end-of-semester. I collected feedback more often in 2020, usually in response to our constantly changing circumstances.

As my lesson plans revealed, in 2022, I gathered feedback roughly every four weeks, using some form of the same three questions each time: What is working well? What needs improvement? What else would you like me to know? While I used students' feedback to make adjustments as I could – by clarifying a rubric or explaining a concept – the feedback was more often used to revise the course for the following semester – by altering an assignment or dropping a reading. With more frequent checks in 2022, I had the opportunity to make adjustments throughout the semester, such as providing more wait time during discussions, capturing key points of class discussion on the board, or meeting with a student about a specific concern.

Perhaps the most informative aspect of this feedback, however, was what students shared in response to the third question. Answers ranged from the comical to the serious, yet students frequently had something they wanted to share: their enjoyment of a specific reading, their anxiety about an upcoming assignment, their happiness with an anticipated weekend event. Whatever they offered, this insight into the personal provided me with context for their learning in MG methods. For example, knowing they were not disengaged with the course material but exhausted from navigating their busy lives helped guide adjustments I could make to the course, such as moving a due date, rethinking an assignment, or taking time in the next class to share what was happening in their lives.

Questioning

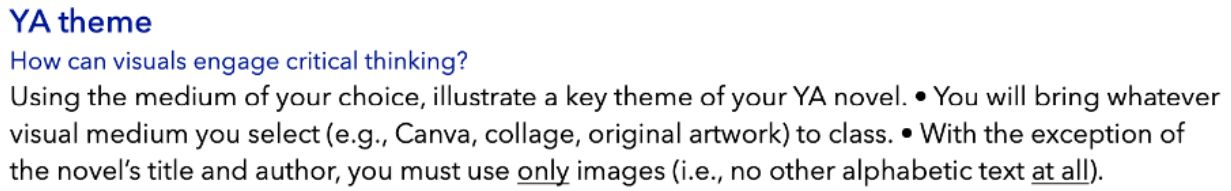
Lesson plans cannot capture everything that happens in a classroom; as Posner (2004) notes, the official curriculum rarely matches the enacted. This was especially true through the pandemic, with planned lessons frequently pivoting between face-to-face and virtual instruction. However, syllabi and lesson plans indicate both a change in the questions asked of my students and the ways in which those questions engaged students with the material.

For example, I tend to open class with a brief activity of some sort, such as a written response or a quick question and answer. Depending on the instructional environment, these might be completed on a notecard, in an online app, or on the classroom whiteboard. Often, these activities reference the day's readings in some way. Over time, these opening activities moved away from comprehension-type questions (e.g., What were the author's main points in today's readings? What are two questions you have after reading?) to more open-ended questions (e.g., How might you apply something from the readings in your practicum classroom?). They also moved away from the readings entirely: Students might complete a quick freewrite (e.g., What is one way you will turn off during spring break?) or respond aloud to a topic (e.g., share something interesting from your practicum).

I also began to incorporate more big picture questioning into MG methods. Starting in 2020, I added an overarching question to each assignment's description in the syllabus. For example, in 2022, I asked "How can visuals engage critical thinking?" for an assignment that required students to illustrate an adolescent novel's theme (see Figure 2). For a curriculum rationale of that same novel, I asked "What does this text offer to student learners?" These questions were not directly addressed, i.e., I did not require students to write a response to them, but they guided my teaching of the concepts under study and, ideally, the students' engagement with those concepts.

Figure 2

Example of an Assignment's Overarching Question in Fall 2022 Syllabus



The 2020 syllabus revealed the addition of intentional reflective questioning with a summative reflection assignment. In this assignment, students were asked to reflect on their development as a teacher using five provided questions. Three of these related to the course's overarching questions; one addressed personal growth; the last addressed the

pandemic. I altered this assignment in 2022, making it a face-to-face conversation with the professor rather than a written paper. Students were provided with a short list of topics – such as one class reading you disliked or one way you developed as a learner – as a foundation for the meeting but our conversations varied according to the students' responses and their own questions. These 20-minute conversations, held in my office throughout finals week, were more informal than a paper yet provided a deeper understanding of students' thinking with the opportunity for clarification and explanation.

Pedagogical Care

Examining my MS methods course before, during, and after COVID through the lens of pedagogical care offers the opportunity to better understand not only how my instruction has changed but why it may have done so. I have always cared about my students – even if manifestations of that care looked different than students might expect (e.g., Shoffner, 2014) – but this self-study offers insight into how I have adjusted my teaching to care for my students.

Some adjustments are clearly in response to the pandemic. The 2020 syllabus, for example, added information about student assistance options on campus and specifically addressed students' mental health. That information is also included in 2022 (and will remain in my syllabi going forward). Adjustments to my lesson plans are not so clearly connected yet, upon reflection, have likely evolved from my experiences with students through the pandemic. For example, each semester's lesson plans are a continuous document; each document starts with a list of students' names and pronunciations. My lesson plans in 2022 also included notes on students' individual needs as learners, gathered from an introductory survey and my own observations. These notes range from "diagnosed with ADHD" to "prefers hard copies of materials" to "needs time to think before class discussion."

The changes in my approach to attendance, my collection of course feedback, and my reconsideration of the types of questions used in class reveal pedagogical care for my students. They are more student-centered in tone and language; they respond more clearly to students as individuals; they connect the MG methods course to issues beyond the classroom. They are also better aligned with my efforts to create a constructivist learning environment (Richardson, 1997), where students are involved in a collaborative community to direct and engage in their own learning.

More broadly, these changes reflect consideration of Noddings' (2012) tenets of relational care: the need to listen to students, think critically about enactments of care, create a caring classroom, and connect care to life beyond the classroom. While not expressions of pedagogical care, per so, these tenets identify actions that shape care in the classroom and, by extension, guide pedagogical care. These changes are also indicative of relational teacher education (e.g., Kitchen, 2005), which is grounded in "respect for adult learners and…a genuine belief that each prospective teacher must construct [their] own meaning as a curriculum maker" (p. 201).

Conclusion

As the pandemic has emphasized, we need to listen to our students in order to (try to) respond to their needs, whether academic, personal, relational, or emotional in nature. Responding to students as individuals and adults – albeit developing ones – helps to create a caring instructional environment, one that considers students' lives beyond the classroom as relevant input on pedagogical actions.

The question that opened this paper – "Am I being more flexible now or do I just not care enough?" – was offered by my colleague (and CF), admittedly somewhat flippantly. However, it captures an important point: She was questioning not whether we care for our students but whether we care about our teaching.

In responding pedagogically to both events and students throughout (and, eventually, after) this pandemic, our courses and our teaching have changed. We have changed. We check in more frequently with our students: at the beginning of class, in the hallway, and via email. We are more flexible with absent students, late assignments, and missed deadlines. We revise our assignments, as well as our expectations, in response to more issues than before. So, when my colleague and I compare our teaching now with that in the before times, we find ourselves wondering: Are we wasting instructional time? Have we lowered our expectations? Do we care less about teaching than we used to?

Pedagogical care assures us that we are not, have not, and do not. While not always successful, I am responding to where my students and I find ourselves now rather than before. I am adjusting my efforts to define, engage, and model necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions in an intentionally caring environment. I am rethinking how to develop students' competency with their course content while responding to them as individuals with lives outside my classroom. These are ongoing efforts, of course, that will continue to be shaped by any number of factors (hopefully none of them on the scale of COVID-19). My examination of these efforts through self-study, however, ensures that I can "proactively consider and plan not only for the academic and professional learning of my students, but also for the socio-emotional aspects of my classroom" (Martin, 2020, p. 320). In doing so, I may be able to build "authentic relationships [that] are reciprocal and foster growth and change for [all] those involved" (Trout, 2018, p. 44).

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Kristina J. Doubet

Assessment | Feedback | Standards-based Grading | Student Growth

Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is the practice of assigning and reporting grades "…based on student achievement by standard rather than… traditional letter grades (Westerberg, 2016, p.5). Unlike traditional grading practice – typically collecting grades for assignments measuring multiple (sometimes non-academic) criteria – SBG advocates chronicling only students' mastery of key standards. As a teacher-educator, I endorse SBG in K-12 education because of its potential to promote equity in grading practices (Munoz & Guskey, 2015). Unlike most of my pedagogy, however, I do not fully implement SBG – or practice what I preach - in my own assessment courses. A feeling of hypocrisy over this disconnect weighs on me as the schools with whom I partner ask for my help implementing SBG. In an effort to quell that unease, I embarked on this self-study to implement SBG in my assessment course with the goal of discovering if I truly believed in its merits enough to recommend it for both university and K-12 settings. My findings indicate that I do find it worthwhile and I do recommend if for both settings; however, I recommend caution in implementation as it is a high-order change that brings with it disruption to norms and practices for both instructor and students.

Introduction

Standards-Based Grading (SBG) is the practice of assigning and reporting grades "…based on student achievement by *standard* rather than, or in addition to, traditional *letter grades* [emphasis added]" (Westerberg, 2016, p.5). It transforms the classic gradebook – typically featuring grades for assignments measuring multiple criteria, including non-academic factors such as late or missing work – into one that chronicles students' mastery of individual key standards. A standards-based gradebook may still report student performance on an assignment, but that assignment will be broken down into the standards it encompasses, with student performance on each of those standards reported in terms of level of mastery rather than simply as points (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; O'Connor, 2018). Imbedded in the system of SBG is a "mastery" approach to learning, which provides students with timely feedback on their performance and the chance to submit (or resubmit) work that demonstrates growth in that particular standard (O'Connor, 2018). Because a standards-based grade reflects the most recent evidence of student mastery while eliminating compliance and behavior from the equation, it is regarded as a more valid, reliable, and equitable evaluation of student performance than a traditional grade (Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Muñoz & Guskey, 2015; O'Connor, 2017; O'Connor et al., 2018; Welsh, 2019). While I *say* I believe in the promise of SBG and include it as a topic of study in my university assessment course, I have not yet used

it myself. This dissonance between my professed values and my explicit practices has prompted me to wonder: "Do I, indeed, believe in standards-based grading? Can I say I support a system when that system is not reflected by my own evaluation practices?"

Context

I teach graduate and undergraduate courses in differentiation and assessment for preservice teachers at my university and have authored numerous publications/ consulted with practicing teachers on topics such as formative assessment and performance-based assessment. Although my assignments and rubrics for all courses – and for the examples I feature in my publications and consultations – are aligned to standards, I have yet to truly embrace standards-based evaluation in my gradebook, study how systematically I address my professional InTASC (Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium) standards in my assignments or invite my students to reflect on their own mastery of those standards. I assign one grade for multiple competencies rather than separate marks for distinct performance factors. In addition, I include a professionalism grade (reflecting completion of readings and other compliance-based factors) in my evaluation of student performance, which – in K-12 teaching – would "contaminate" the grade by including "non-achievement factors" (O'Connor, 2017, p.1).

Aims

In 2021, a school with whom I partner as an instructional coach asked me to provide staff development around SBG for a pilot-group of teachers the following year. This gave me pause. Although I knew a great deal about SBG, and believed in its worth *in theory*, I lacked personal experience with its implementation. This left me feeling insecure about advocating for a system I had yet to adopt myself. Perhaps this is because I feel compelled to *model* the practices I advocate; I believe that if I want the pre-service and classroom teachers with whom I work to understand something, I must create opportunities for them to experience it first-hand (Hogg & Yates, 2013). This approach works with the curricular aspects of assessment; I can model the use of formative assessment to drive instruction, discuss the triumphs and pitfalls of designing performance-based assessment and rubrics to evaluate progress, and so on. I cannot, however, effectively model or champion SBG if I have not engaged in it myself.

This disconnect between my beliefs and practices shook my confidence in my ability to lead teachers in their work – I turned down the opportunity to provide staff development in SBG – but it awakened within me a desire to fully adopt SBG, to experiment with it in my own teaching. I believed it to be a more equitable approach to evaluating student achievement, as it assesses student mastery and eliminates non-academic factors that perpetuate bias and inequities for students of color and students from low socio-economic backgrounds (Muñoz & Guskey, 2015). I also understood it would entail a great deal of work to transform my traditional practices into this more progressive approach. I wondered, "Are my beliefs robust enough to withstand the extra time and effort it would take to implement this system?" Hence, for this self-study, I examined the fortitude of my beliefs and practices about SBG by implementing it in my undergraduate assessment course (for pre-service teachers) to discover whether I indeed held it worthy of advocacy for use both with university students and with practicing teachers in K-12 schools.

Methods

Because this self-study focused on examining my own beliefs and practices, my primary data sources included 1) artifacts I created for my class (e.g., a revised syllabus, new assignments and rubrics explicitly aligned to standards) and 2) a reflective journal I kept regarding the effectiveness of changes to those artifacts. In this journal, I recorded the changes I made each week regarding both assignments and assessments. I also debriefed in this journal about informal, in-class student reactions to being evaluated in standards-based fashion. The third source of data for the study consisted of more formal student reactions and reflections, (e.g., end of course reflections and conferences, student work). To facilitate the critical conversations necessary to self-study (Loughran, 2006), two colleagues from my department served as "critical friends" (Schuck & Russell, 2005), asking questions, introducing new perspectives, and challenging my interpretations.

Using qualitative content analysis (Patton, 2002), journal entries were divided into three groups: those referencing changes perceived as effective by the instructor, those referencing changes perceived as ineffective by the instructor,

and those simply reflecting on the instructor's growth or process (e.g., entries referencing confidence, doubt). Likewise, student reflections and work were separated into three groups: those reflecting favorable reactions from students, those reflecting critical reactions from students, and those reflecting unexpected impacts on student attitudes and progress. The next step was to sort data of both types into patterns that emerged. Guided by the themes surfacing from my analysis, I exited this self-study equipped to consider whether moving to SBG is a worthwhile pursuit for me at the university level.

Findings

Four clear themes emerged from my analysis of the data and constitute my findings: 1) the need to acknowledge and accommodate for the disruptive nature of change SBG entails for both instructor and students, 2) the importance of modeling SBG for pre-service teachers, 3) the feelings that the costs of SBG are worth the rewards, and 4) the need to re-evaluate SBG's notion of "non-academic factors" in the university setting.

Finding 1 - SBG Is Disruptive

The first theme emerging from my analysis is that SBG disrupts the traditional cycle of teaching and learning for both instructor and students; as such, both parties need to be able to process their feelings and frustrations as they navigate this significant change in practice.

I realized I would need encouragement to persist in this process the moment I began working on the syllabus. Typically, my assignment overview simply listed the major assignments along with their points and due dates (Figure 1). My SBG syllabus required me to breakdown assignments according to the standards to which they aligned and report how those standards would be assessed (a portion is depicted in Table 1).

Figure 1

Assignment Overview in Traditional Syllabus

Major Assignments

- Weekly Work Assignments (listed in the course calendar) – (**75**)
- Understanding-Based Pre-Assessment – (**50**)
- Formative Assessment Analysis – (**100**)
- Student-Constructed Exam Questions – (**50**)
- Grading Policies – (**50**)
- Alignment Guide – (**50**)
- Unit Plan Stage 1– (**50**)
- Unit Plan Stage 2 + Rubric – (**100**)
- Unit Plan Stage 3 – (**100**)

Table 1

A Portion of the Assignment Overview in SBG Syllabus

Assessment of Standards and Weight (235 points)	**InTASC Standards Assessed**
Standard 4a – Learning Goals and Standards for PBL Unit *Stage 1 of Project-Based Learning Unit (20)* - Due Week 5 - May be revised/resubmitted until Week 11	**Standard 4a**: The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches

Standards 4b, 5 and 6a – Assessment Instruments *Pre-Assessment Prompts (20)* - Due Week 6 - May be revised/resubmitted until Week 8 *Project-Based Learning Design (50 points)* - Due Week 9 - May be revised/resubmitted until the Final *Rubric Design (25)* - Due Week 9 - May be revised/resubmitted until the Final *Test-Question Construction (20)* - Due Week 10 - May be revised/ resubmitted until Week 12 *Formative Assessment Prompts (20)* - Due Week 11 - May be revised/resubmitted until Week 15	**Standard 4b**: The teacher…creates learning experiences that make aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content. **Standard 5**: The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues. **Standard 6a**: The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress

While this process deepened my understanding of my professional standards, one of the benefits of standards-based grading (Muñoz & Guskey, 2015), it was so time-consuming that – in the midst of it – I was tempted to throw in the towel and return to business as usual. I shared this struggle with my critical friends over dinner one evening, and they encouraged me to persevere while suggesting I change the course in which I was implementing it. I was planning to conduct this self-study in the graduate assessment course I teach every spring, reasoning that the course was familiar enough that adding an additional "layer" would cause less disruption than implementing it in the assessment course I was developing for our new undergraduate licensure program. But my friends were right; starting from scratch with a new course turned out to be less daunting than reconfiguring an existing course. To hold myself accountable, I volunteered to tie several assignments to the program's new portfolio project - its key assessment for accreditation. With my colleagues - and now my department - holding me accountable, I had no choice but to proceed.

If the syllabus was daunting to me, it was doubly so to my students when I introduced it to them in the first class, as evidenced by this entry in my reflective journal:

> *"Should have shared the alignment piece with them? I don't know. They did seem to appreciate the explicit invitation to revise and resubmit assignments; so, while the overview may have caused some of them stress at first glance, I think my emphasis on the revision policy ultimately caused most of them to breathe easier."*

Emboldened by this apparent acceptance, I proceeded with my plan to introduce the concept of SBG as implemented in K-12 schools by asking students to read an article about a California high school that adopted it in response to plummeting performance of their students during the pandemic. I was shocked by the pushback I received from students, and recorded some of the conversation in my reflective journal after class:

"This is just not reasonable. How many times can they retake the test before you have to move on?" remarked one student.

"We might as well throw out the whole system of schooling in the United States!" said another.

"Lots of kids – not me, but my friends who were really motivated by GPA in high school – would not like this at all!" explained another student, whose comment was met with much agreement from the rest of the class.

I took the opportunity to remind them of the reality that the fact that they were sitting in this classroom at a competitive university meant that grades worked for them. I reassured them that grades had worked for me, too, so that I understood their frustration. But I wondered if someone could give me a comment from the perspective of someone for whom grades hadn't worked.

"That's true – my practicum teacher last semester said that one of his students never had his homework because he got kicked out of their house and had to sleep in a hammock out back and had no light or anything."

I thanked the student and explained that SBG is not just being implemented in California; it is also being considered by a nearby county. This made a connection for a student whose sister attends school in that county, and she confirmed with an "Oh yeah…." as the rest of the class chuckled good naturedly.

We were able to end on a positive note as I assured them that I would prepare them for both "what is and what will be" in grading and assessment practices. I knew that I had my work cut out for me, though; the nature of this work will be discussed in Finding 2.

Finding 2 – SBG Must be Modeled

The next theme emerging from the data is the importance of modeling SBG for pre-service teachers. Alignment was the first step. For every rubric, the standard itself became the rubric criteria with descriptors outlining levels of expertise. This meant rearranging my rubric criteria to make them more skills-based than product-based. This is a journey I've already embarked upon because that is best practice in assessment; beginning with the standards just helped me do a better job of streamlining. It also communicated to students what standards they needed to work on the most. A portion of one standards-aligned rubric (for a project my students were to design for their own students) is featured in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample Standards-Aligned Rubric

Project Design Rubric

	Ready to Implement	Needs Some Revision	Redevelop

Standard 4b: Learning experiences make aspects of the discipline accessible for learners to assure mastery **Standard 6b:** Multiple methods of assessment guide decision making.	• Project is broken into manageable, meaningful chunks of instruction • Formative assessment is strategically planned at regular intervals to check student progress and make sure instruction is accessible. • The project includes ample opportunities for feedback, revision, and student reflection	• Project is broken into manageable OR meaningful chunks of instruction (not both) • Formative assessment is planned to check student progress. • The project includes some opportunity for feedback, revision, and student reflection	• Project is broken into chunks of instruction, but strategy is unclear • Insufficient formative assessment to check student progress. • Few opportunities for feedback, revision, and student reflection

Aligning tasks and rubrics to standards served as the basis for the rest of the modeling process: providing feedback to students based on their mastery of standards and allowing them to revise and resubmit based on that feedback. The rubric provided the criteria on which I could base my very specific feedback. While I've always allowed revisions, my realignment to standards caused me to redefine "expert". To truly demonstrate expertise in the standard as defined by InTASC (and not by me) reframed my conception of the term. As I reflected in my journal after grading the first assignment:

> *"SBG sounded horrible to students until they got their grades for their first assignment and realized they could revise and resubmit. Then they were all over it. Because my rubric took a mastery approach I didn't feel bad about not giving everyone an "expert" for their first try. They shouldn't be experts yet. I think back to the realization I had as I was creating the syllabus: expertise is grown not created. I think that really freed me up. Of course, I am NOT enjoying all the re-grading…. I've always done "revise and resubmits", but I've never had every student resubmit."*

Feedback, of course, is a topic of study in an assessment course. In this course, it fell late in the semester – week 11 – after students had submitted and received feedback on four major assignments. Students read jigsawed articles about the hallmarks of effective feedback and shared with their classmates in class, composing a master list within their collaborative groups. Before we discussed, I presented a few points not covered in their readings (e.g., the research on the impact of feedback versus grades). I was taken aback by their responses. My reflective journal records the following:

> *"They were a rapt audience. After experiencing the feedback all semester, they are believers. One student said (in response to study about comments vs. grades), 'I know I ignore comments in other classes. And I know we get grades in this class, but since they aren't final, and since we can always revise and resubmit according to your feedback, they don't feel like a permanent grade, so I actually read your feedback'." At a critical point in a long and toilsome semester, this felt like a victory. I was encouraged that the modeling of providing clear, specific, standards-based feedback had been so effective.*

Finding 3 – SBG Pays Off

The week we discussed feedback marked a turning point, both with the class and in my own attitude. Up until that point, I felt like I was swimming upstream. At that point, however, I felt, subtly, that students trusted me. I also looked at my newly configured SBG report and realized that I already had enough current information on the standards to eliminate the need for the final. I ran this idea by my critical friends first, and they agreed. That left me euphoric:

> *"I'm ditching the FINAL. It doesn't make any sense to have it. They have demonstrated their grasp of all the course standards in multiple assignments, with breadth and depth and growing levels of expertise. Those they didn't exercise multiple times they've had the opportunity to revise. Giving them another assignment*

is overkill. I DO want them to experience the joy I just did [in recognizing their growth], so I will hold individual conferences with each of them during finals week. They should come prepared to discuss the standard they feel the most confident in (with evidence) and least confident in (with goals). I will also ask them to note the area in which they've experienced the most growth. I want them to comb through the rubric criteria mapped to standards and see their scores on, say, Standard 4, increase from one assignment to the next."

My final meetings with students revealed that they, too, felt encouraged by the semester and proud of their growth. I asked that they complete a Google form answering the prompts described above to ensure they would be prepared for discussion and so that I could review their responses and reactions. I found it interesting that there were no discernable patterns in the assignments they cited as evidence for their ratings. Essentially, it reinforces the central premise of SBG; it matters less how or when you get there… just that you get there. And in the end, they all got there. One pattern that did emerge was students' pride in their growth, regardless of where that growth occurred, as evidenced by the following student comments:

…I originally received the lowest grade in the class [on the Stage 1 assignment] because I was unable to develop ways to connect my lesson to essential questions and student lives. I went through two separate revisions and would eventually earn an 18/20 on that assignment. Learning how to make essential questions that are broad enough to be applicable to other situations, while also being specific and targeted enough to be relevant to the lesson and students is a very tricky balance to achieve, but I believe that I have greatly improved at this over the course of the semester.

I think that I have most improved in my ability to create test questions. At the beginning of the semester, I created a Kahoot for my practicum class. Overall, it was a big mess and caused a lot of confusion because the questions did not align to the standards…. In my last practicum class, I asked students to answer multiple-choice questions that I had created [and it went great]. I think that the Test-Questions and FAA assignments clearly show that I have improved in my ability to ask questions...

In the beginning of the semester I struggled to come up with good ways to connect mathematics concepts to real life. It was hard to make it relevant to the students and the world. I had to revise my ideas multiple times, however I feel that I landed at a very creative real-world project-based task.

That these students are the same students who railed against the prospect of SBG is a wonder, and it reinforces the power of the practice for all students, including those at the university setting for whom traditional grading is a motivator.

Finding 4 – The University Caveat: "Non-Academic Factors"

One minor but important theme emerging from my study was my inability to maintain fidelity to SBG's elimination of "non-academic factors." In the university setting, I rely on students completing their reading assignments before they come to class. I cannot expose them to multiple and varied perspectives by spewing them from the front of the room. I traditionally assign a "Weekly Work" grade made up of an accumulation of points for students bringing reading notes to class each week. Since my assessment class is a methods class, not a lecture class, I could not reconceptualize teaching it without this preparation… and when I didn't check it, they didn't bring it.

Therefore, I added that category back into the syllabus, but called it "Professional Learning," InTASC Standard 9 which states, "The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions have on others". I explained that each class would begin with a "Professional Learning" activity; they could not participate unless they had completed their readings. Notes served as their ticket into the professional learning activity and comprised their professional learning points for the semester. This worked, but it caused me to work harder to make those professional learning activities meaningful. At one point, I expressed frustration in my reflective journal:

"I am running out of collaborative activities to use to exercise standard 9. I've used the matrix, debate team carousel, roundtable, graffiti, discussion board for peer review, and now I'm using jigsaw… for the third time. Structured Academic Controversy is on the way for the last week. I need more strategies in my arsenal that will justify me giving them – and grading - outside reading to fulfill standard 9."

> *I wonder, though, if I should have put myself under that kind of pressure. Yes, I wanted to model SBG for my students with as much fidelity as possible, but they are university students, not K-12 students. While I do believe SBG fits at the university level, perhaps this one area need not apply.*

Conclusion

This study offers an examination of an important concept in teacher education: Would a move to standards-based grading at the university level bolster professors' efforts to create more growth-centered classrooms for their students? I believe the answer is a resounding "yes." As one student explained in their final course evaluation "[SBG is] an excellent grading style where students can truly learn from their mistakes." This is what I would wish for every learner at every level; consequently, I am piloting a differentiation course for our undergraduate program and implementing SBG in that course, as well. But because it requires change on such a large level, I cannot implement it in all my courses at once. If I work with K-12 teachers to incorporate SBG into their practice, I will recommend the same as I would to university professors: 1) pilot it with one class before adopting it across the board; 2) prepare yourself and your students for what you are about to experience; 3) make sure you have support and accountability; and 4) release yourself from full-fidelity implementation, if needed. We still work within a system, and until the system changes, we will need to be flexible with ourselves and with programs like standards-based grading to meet our students' needs.

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Ungrading as Turning Point in “Forever on the Way” to Becoming Critical Educators

Christine Beaudry, Jane McIntosh Cooper, & Leslie M. Gauna

Teacher Education | Self-Study | Assessment | Critical Pedagogy | Ungrading

This paper shares insights from a collaborative self-study of the authors’ experiences implementing ungrading in our teacher education courses. Addressing the conference theme, we inquire into how ungrading represents a pedagogic turning point as we continue becoming our best-loved selves as teacher educators, recognizing that we are “forever on the way” in evolving towards these ideals. We focus analysis on how we understood ungrading in the context of our philosophies as critical educators and how our experiences with ungrading informed both our practices as teacher educators, as well as our perspectives on our teacher educator identities. We gained insight into how ungrading aligned with broader values and purposes central to our identities as critical teacher educators, how and why we made changes to improve our practices over time, and how implementing ungrading enabled us to sustain images of our best-loved selves as teacher educators. We found that ungrading enabled us to sustain aspects of our teacher identities and practices that we most valued as we worked to build relationships with students and support them in growing their knowledge, skills, and understandings in ways that aligned with both course outcomes and their own goals for who they want to become as educators. In systems that too often focus on standardization to the detriment of diversity and inclusion, there is continued need for research that offers practical insights into implementing responsive approaches. This study seeks to share what we have learned about ungrading for those seeking more responsive approaches to evaluating learning.

Introduction

How we determine and evaluate learning holds significant implications for our practices as educators and for our students’ experiences and outcomes. This paper shares insights from a collaborative self-study of implementing ungrading in teacher education courses. We, the authors, are three teacher educators from two different public higher education institutions in urban cities in the southern and western U.S. We formed Las Chicas Críticas, a professional group, and have engaged in ongoing collaborative self-study of our practices for nearly a decade. We engage in self-study to better understand and improve our practices by aligning our values as critical pedagogists to our instructional approaches. Addressing the conference theme, we inquire into how ungrading represents a pedagogic turning point as we continue becoming our best-loved selves (Craig, 2017) as teacher educators, recognizing that we are “forever on the way” as we continue to evolve towards these ideals (Greene, 1995, p.1). Our interest in ungrading arose from a previous study focused on inquiring into our values as critical educators, and findings about how these values informed our approaches to assessment (Cooper et al., 2018). This led us to a growing body of literature on ungrading, and we documented our experiences implementing ungrading in our own courses. In analyzing our experiences, we gained insight into how ungrading aligned with broader values and purposes central to our identities as critical teacher

educators, how and why we made changes to improve our practices over time, and how implementing ungrading enabled us to sustain images of our best-loved selves as teacher educators

Perspectives

Ungrading has a long history. The practice of assigning grades, though often viewed as standard, is relatively recent (Blum, 2020). This shift has exacerbated rather than ameliorated inequity, perpetuating disparities in educational outcomes. Kohn (2020) observes, "..ranking students or grading them on a curve - in both cases setting them against one another for artificially scarce distinctions, thus rigging the game so that not everyone can succeed - is not only counter productive for learning, but also, frankly, immoral" (p. xiv). This approach to grading has not served our students well. As Tyler (2020) points out, "They [grades] don't show a student's ability to think, write, and problem solve...They show which students are steeped in the language and culture that the U.S. A-F grading system favors, which affects our students of color disproportionately" (p. 26). Ungrading resonates strongly with critical and constructivist approaches that emphasize co-constructing knowledge and problem-posing approaches, as well as recognizing that grading choices made significantly impact student experience and outcomes, with current systems often serving to reinforce current power structures and their resulting inequities.

Ungrading decenters grading and focuses on learning as demonstrated by application of knowledge, skills, and understandings in the context of instructional goals (Barnes, 2015; Blum, 2017; Bloom, 2020; Sackstein, 2015). Teaching is a series of opportunities for meaningful qualitative feedback, from instructors and peers, to continuously advance learning (Blum, 2020). This emphasizes the importance of formative assessment and feedback that moves learning forward by providing specific and meaningful information about where learners are, where they are going, and how to get there (William, 2011). Ungrading aligns with effective approaches to formative assessment, which should comprise the majority of instruction and include feedback that moves learning forward, activating students as learning resources for one another, and activating students as owners of their own learning (William, 2011). Without grades, students are encouraged to engage with their work and feedback throughout this process to reflect and continuously revise and refine it. When students are given opportunities to revise and improve their work, they are more motivated to take creative risks that focus on learning, rather than on grades which discourage learning (Kohn, 2020). They are also more likely to review and attend to feedback when they have opportunities to make revisions. As a result, ungrading supports a learning environment and culture in which learning is understood as an ongoing and iterative process and students are expected to refine their work until they are satisfied that it reflects advanced understanding and greater mastery (Villanueva et al., 2021).

Methodology

This collaborative self-study inquired into implementing ungrading in our courses. We focused on analyzing how our experiences with ungrading informed both our practices as teacher educators, as well as our perspective on our teacher educator identities. Recognizing that these goals reflected Berry's (2004) reasons for engaging in self-study, we determined a collaborative self-study best aligned to our questions focusing on realizing our values as critical educators in practice (LaBoskey, 2004). Our study focused on:

- How do we understand ungrading as aligning to our values, purposes, and goals as critical educators?
- What have we learned from our experiences and how has this informed our approaches?
- How has ungrading supported us becoming our best-loved selves?

Data collected beginning in Fall 2020 included (a) course artifacts (e.g., syllabi, assignments and evaluation criteria, student work), (b) student feedback (e.g., student reflections, student conferences, and formal institutional course evaluations), (c) research journals for each author composed and shared in Google Docs that documented weekly reflections and insights, and (d) conversations during weekly meetings, recorded and transcribed. Throughout the 2020 academic year, we met weekly online and "storied our experiences" (Craig, 2017). These meetings enabled us to collaboratively share, analyze, and construct meaning of our experiences. In summer 2021, we began reflecting on and restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) our previous experiences, focusing on how our reflection and analysis revealed insights into our questions. Utilizing inductive coding (Charmaz, 2006) to analyze texts, themes were determined

collectively as we shared and identified points of resonance (Conle, 1996) and dissonance with perceived values and practices (LaBoskey, 2004). Through the telling and re-telling of our teaching stories, we made meaning of the experiences surrounding ungrading (Craig, 1997). Initial findings from our inquiry provided a basis for continued reflection and analysis during the 2021-2022 academic year as we continued to refine our implementation of ungrading.

Findings

Philosophy: Living Our Values

As critical educators, ungrading immediately resonated with us and provided us with both a language to name established practices, while also offering a framework for extending these into a more purposeful and consistent approach to evaluation. In previous collaborative self-study into our shared values and practices as critical teacher educators, we identified the centrality of constructivist approaches that emphasized co-construction of educative experiences that valued the voices and perspectives of all participants through dialogue (Cooper et al., 2023). Ungrading, with its emphasis on process, feedback, reflection, and growth, resonated with each of us as a natural extension of our existing practices. We already encouraged students to revise and resubmit work based on peer and instructor feedback, emphasizing that grades were reflections of interim progress and could always be improved. We also focused on qualitative feedback on authentic assessments and provided multiple opportunities for students to reflect on their work and learning. Excerpts from our journals and conversations during our weekly meetings illustrate reflection on our purposes and goals for implementing ungrading:

> *I see ungrading as aligning with my values as a critical, constructivist, and responsive educator. Critical, because it directly engages issues of power and authority and supports a dialogic approach in which participants engage in both teaching and learning with one another. It supports a vision of teaching as an act of dialogue and community, inquiring together and engaging in productive struggle towards growth; constructivist because of the co-constructive approach to gaining and evaluating knowledge, skills, and understandings, of making sense and meaning, and responsive because it naturally responds to diverse readiness, interest, and preferences (Summer, 2021).*

In analyzing how ungrading aligned with our educational philosophies, we identified a shared emphasis that teaching and learning are reflective and iterative processes. Our students must embrace reflective practice that enables critical and creative thinking as they navigate the daily challenges of developing, facilitating, and evaluating curriculum and instruction. Ungrading supports differentiated and responsive approaches that rely on knowing each student and "meeting them where they're at," which is central to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion (Nieto, 2013). It also emphasizes cooperation over competition and encourages students to reflect on their own learning and progress rather than compare themselves to others (Kohn, 1992). As one of us reflected in a way that resonated across our experiences:

> *The ways I see my implementation of ungrading is consistent with my purpose and my values is by reframing what it used to be a time to drag my feet because "I have to grade" now is a time that I look forward as a way to know my student through their work and feel useful by providing feedback, experience awe watching them think and re-think, reflect and problem solve, ask questions, authentic questions (Summer, 2021).*

Ungrading also offered an opportunity to model critical approaches to education for our students' use in their own practices. As one student reflected, "She practices what she teaches which is very unique for a college professor. This is so beneficial because you get to see what she is hoping we will utilize in action which makes it easier to understand" (course evaluation, Spring, 2021). We understand ungrading as a way to continue "walking the road" as critical educators who, through focusing on engaging meaningfully with students and their work to support growth, are working for justice and equity (Cochran-Smith, 2004).

Practice: Engaging With Students and Their Work

An insight that emerged from our inquiry was how ungrading supported us in connecting with students and engaging them meaningfully with their work. Something that excited us about ungrading was the potential it held for centering

formative assessment and feedback, which we already understood as essential to moving learning forward (William, 2011). While each of us prioritized feedback prior to ungrading, we recognized that transitioning to an ungraded approach would further increase the importance of effective feedback. Structuring and facilitating effective feedback was one of the most challenging aspects of ungrading, as our critical values of rich dialogic feedback competed with time constraints. The challenges are illustrated by student reflection from one of our courses during initial efforts to implement ungrading. "I enjoyed the content and the way it was taught…Grading was not always within a good time period, waited a long time…Overall great instructor" (student reflection, Fall 2020). This exemplifies that while overall instruction, supported by an ungraded approach, was generally well-received by students, initial analysis revealed opportunities for improving our feedback processes.

Providing Feedback That Moves Learning Forward

We found that we each endeavored to facilitate and engage high quality feedback. Engagement with feedback may seem straightforward; however, we found that students may not review feedback or may not have experience using it to improve their work. We learned that we needed to more explicitly model how to access and respond to our feedback. This included engaging in synchronous class activities that modeled the process and, especially in asynchronous online courses, creating resources that explained how to locate and respond to comments.

> *In terms of making sure they read my feedback and if they know "where" to read my feedback, because the Blackboard platform is not that student friendly to readily show the instructor's feedback, I can assess student ability to do that. I am doing this because last semester, at the end-of-the-semester interview, I realized one student stated she did not know how to look for my feedback almost too late in the semester… (conversation from weekly meeting, Fall, 2021).*

Each of us developed strategies to support student response to feedback. One of us shifted to using Google Docs for reflections and projects, so that students could easily access feedback and respond directly to comments with questions or indicate resolutions of suggestions. Another incorporated strategies that included having students access copies of instructor feedback directly in class and highlighting revisions made. Similarly, another had students make additions using different font colors to clearly indicate progression and growth over time.

Another approach we developed to engage feedback, was to meet students synchronously specifically to discuss their work. These meetings offered opportunities to connect with students about feedback and discuss questions and ideas for future refinement. Teaching multiple courses in a variety of formats necessitated that we adapt meetings to each course. For courses taught synchronously, we devoted portions of our class meetings to conferencing with students individually and in small groups. These conferences were structured to coincide with students working independently, or as part of learning stations, with one station focused on meeting with the instructor. Using stations was particularly helpful for courses with high enrollment.

One instructor that taught asynchronously online developed a system for conducting conferences at the beginning and midterm of the course by having students sign up on a schedule created in Google Docs. Meeting for end-of-course conferences with each student was something we all found successful. Conferences provided an opportunity to discuss learning experiences, progress towards course and individual goals, and students' summative evaluation of their work, including which letter grade they ultimately aligned with their learning and why. They provided valuable opportunities to share feedback, with instructors providing feedback about coursework and students providing feedback to us about their overall experiences in our courses. As one student shared, "She was the only professor I had all summer (I took 5 classes!) who took the time to meet with individual students" (course evaluation, Summer 2022). Focusing on how and when we would regularly provide meaningful feedback to students in ways that directly supported their engagement and development of their work enabled us to more purposefully engineer activities and tasks that effectively scaffolded learning.

Activating Students As learning Resources for One Another

Another insight was how efforts to improve ungrading simultaneously necessitated and supported engaging students as learning resources for one another. Structured peer feedback is beneficial to both those receiving and providing it, as

students must internalize the learning intentions and success criteria in the context of others' work and their own (William, 2011). We already included opportunities for students to engage in peer feedback, but found that ungrading encouraged us to refine these. We built upon previous approaches, including providing criteria to guide evaluation, encouraging students to include specific questions about aspects of their work, and practicing clearly identifying and communicating what has been demonstrated, what could be improved, and suggestions for how to improve it. We realized that prior to ungrading, discussions focused on peer feedback might be limited primarily to larger drafts or completion of projects, but now more focus is given to portions of projects, with students meeting in pairs or small groups to collaboratively discuss, analyze, and evaluate one another's work. Students are able to more fully engage in each stage of projects and to benefit from peer feedback more similarly to what the instructor would facilitate in an in-person format. These additional opportunities for peer feedback also provided more time for us to check in with students and address questions that arose. Strengthening peer feedback also increased opportunities for instructor feedback as well.

One of the main insights from this inquiry was how we could translate these approaches to asynchronous instruction. One of us included peer feedback as a focus in a three-week cycle, where the second week of each block was devoted to engaging in peer feedback. Similarly, another included more formalized and scheduled opportunities for peer feedback that were clearly communicated on the course schedule. For these activities, the entire focus of discussion was on peer feedback, rather than feedback being positioned as a product.,Students would share a draft of work on a scheduled date, and students would then have the next weekly discussion block to focus on engaging in meaningful peer feedback, with another week to make revisions (this revision time coincided with engaging in new content for the next module).

We found increased references in student reflections and course evaluations on the impact of engaging in peer feedback on their learning experiences. One student reflected,

> *I really appreciated the week you gave us to evaluate our peers' work and make revisions. I also appreciate you giving us feedback as though we had submitted a rough draft and then allowed us to make changes to improve our work before submitting the final work (student reflection, Spring, 2022).*

Another observed:

> *I spent the time needed to fully engage with the materials, reflect on my work, revise and edit my work based on peer and instructor feedback, and produce a text set and other course assignments that I am proud of. I also consulted with you regarding this assessment...This is my first experience with ungrading. While I was uncomfortable with the process at the beginning, the amount of feedback I received regarding assignments and projects made me feel better (student reflection, Spring 2021).*

Comments like this resonated with our analysis of how our ungrading had shifted to better balance feedback from instructors and peers. As one author reflected, "All across my classes I moved away from assignments submitted solely to me, the instructor. Assignments are also submitted…in a way where other students can read what their classmates have submitted" (research journal, Fall, 2021). Further, these reflect how by making these shifts to develop clear and purposeful processes for students to support each other's learning, the balance, quality, and frequency of interactions with knowledge, skills, and understandings improved.

Activating Students As Owners of Their Own Learning

A final insight that emerged was the consideration of how we could better support students in self-evaluation. We included more opportunities for students to evaluate their own work prior to and following sharing it with peers. This provided opportunities for engaging with learning intentions and success criteria and applying it to both their own and others' work. Additionally, we refined the reflections that students engaged in throughout the semester. We included specific questions about what students had learned, how they had demonstrated their learning, how they had used peer and instructor feedback to support their learning, and how they had applied their feedback to refine their work. We realized that we needed to be more purposeful about including opportunities for self-evaluation in ongoing reflections,

as well as in more formal reflections at the beginning, midpoint, and end of course and following completion of major projects. We included questions focused on ungrading in beginning of course reflections, as well as an invitation to ask questions and share concerns. Weekly reflections provided opportunities for students to share updates as well as ask questions and enabled us to respond to any concerns. "Having a shared Google document with her and adding to it weekly helped me feel as if I really connected with her. She made sure to provide feedback on the document in a timely manner which was great" (course evaluation, Spring 2021).

We also developed more formal reflection at the midpoint for self-evaluation and an opportunity to “check in " and discuss how progress aligned to the letter grade that would ultimately need to be assigned. Initially, feedback was provided in written comments on the reflection; however, this evolved into conducting brief synchronous individual meetings with each student. In asynchronous courses, since the midpoint aligned with the development of major projects and also provided an opportunity to synchronously discuss feedback. These meetings, particularly in asynchronous courses were important opportunities to connect personally with our students as well as to discuss their learning experiences and progress. As one student reflected:

> *I enjoyed this class and was surprised at times when I thought the course work would be heavy. It only caused me to think a little harder and go outside my comfort level. I appreciate the Professor’s input and the feedback. I was at first confused on the end of the year (course) interview or exit interview, but I found that to be essential specially since the course was online and I would have probably never had F2F met her (course evaluation, Spring, 2021).*

Always on the Way: Becoming Our Best-Loved Selves

Perhaps the most significant insight we gained was how ungrading increased our joy of teaching. Ungrading encouraged us to reframe the process of engaging students in their work with a primary focus on improvement. This insight reflected many of the comments shared by students that ungrading enabled them to meaningfully engage in our courses and their own work, such as

> *It truly allowed for me to work on my goals...I was not afraid to make mistakes...I was able to do my best, and accept feedback to improve my work...I found myself doing my best work because that is what I felt like I should do, not my best work just to secure the A (student reflection, Fall 2021).*

We found that this brought us closer to our students, strengthening relationships by engaging more directly with them and through their perceptions of our primary motive as supporting their growth.

> *I always love chatting with you…on our Zoom meetings. I was very impressed on our first zoom this semester, specifically when you mentioned some details that you remembered about me and that made me feel like I wasn’t just another student. And I know you have a lot of students and classes, so those little comments made me feel very valued (student reflection, Spring 2022).*

For us, these comments exemplify values and goals that are central to the most cherished aspects of our teacher identities in which we see ourselves as building caring relationships with our students that support and empower them in their ongoing growth and development.

Crucial to this was how ungrading served as a turning point in our practices as well as our students’ experiences in terms of freeing us from a system that constrained rather than supported learning. As one student reflected,

> *...ungrading made this course exciting to come back to. Surprisingly, with no grade there was no guilt. I went through the course because I wanted to complete it and come away from this course with the knowledge I needed. Not because I needed to pass (class reflection, Spring, 2021).*

One of us similarly observed "Time is used differently...we don’t “grade,” we provide feedback. We also are released of “points” to focus on quality and growth" (conversation from weekly meeting, Fall 2021).

Through ungrading, we felt both challenged and supported to live our values of focusing on connecting with students in ways that made them feel seen, heard, and valued, as well as engage them with their work in ways that supported progress towards both course and their own learning goals.

Significance

Implementing ungrading provided challenges, but also opportunities to rethink our values and purposes as educators and how to make progress towards our goals. We found that ungrading sustained aspects of our teacher identities and practices that we most valued as we worked to build relationships with students and support them in growing their knowledge, skills, and understandings in ways that aligned with both course outcomes and their own goals for who they wanted to be as educators. It relieved unnecessary focus and pressure on points and submission deadlines of 11:59 pm and enabled all of us to focus on connection, collaboration, and learning. In other words it helped us humanize our practice and enabled us to live aspects of our best-loved selves (Craig, 2017, Cooper et al., 2023). As one student reflected:

> *I not only did the work required of me, but I was able to show my understanding through my work. I was also able to really get a satisfying sense of "greatness"...when I was able to converse with my peers and show my new understanding. That was one of my favorite aspects of this course, seeing the achievement of my overall goal this semester come to life in real time rather than later...I think this gives a great sense of responsibility to students because they are responsible for keeping up with their grade and reflecting on the work they did. (class reflection, Spring 2022)*

In systems that too often focus on standardization and accountability to the detriment of diversity and inclusion, there is a continued need for research that offers practical insights into implementation of alternative approaches. This research offers insights into our experiences of ungrading with the intent to share what we have learned about how to effectively implement ungrading for those seeking more responsive approaches to evaluating learning.

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Section III: What opportunities are you considering, contemplating, exploring, or embracing to contribute to different communities and audiences?

“Listen before you push”
Rural Experience and Its Impact on the Identities and Practice(s) of Teachers/Teacher Educators
Ungrading
Something Happened
Enacting a Relational Approach As an Editor
Missed Connections
Collaboratively Cultivating Critical Racial Literacy Practices for Teacher Education
Examining the Value of Integrated Arts in Teacher Education From a Collaborative Cross-Border Cross-Institutional S-STEP Perspective
Liberating Our Anti-Racist Selves
Looking Back to Move Forward
“We Are Going to Need a Bigger Bottle”
Dancing With Others
Three Thresholds in a Single Crossing
Taking Stock
Developing a Sense of Belonging in Spaces for Community Curricular Collaboration
Living Up to Expectations
Learning About Self Through a Multi-Institution Inquiry Into New Teacher Preparedness Post-COVID
Experience As a Clinical Faculty Associate Shifting Teacher and Teacher Educator Identity
Exploring the Role of Mentorship, Resistance, and Affirmation

Enacting Theory-Practice Pedagogies
"It helps us remember our why"
Looking Into the Rear-View Mirror While Moving Forward
What Advice Would We Give Ourselves on the Threshold of a VUCA Environment?

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“Listen before you push”

A Dean’s Self-Study of Leadership and Critical Friendship

Rodrigo Fuentealba & Tom Russell

Critical Friendship | Leadership | Quality | Listening | Expectations

This self-study of a dean’s first year of leadership in a faculty of education in Chile was conducted in conversation with a critical friend in Canada. The central questions for the study are (1) What are the primary differences between the first and second time as Dean of Education at the same university?, (2) How can the Dean support and encourage practicum leaders to develop strategies for improving the quality of students' practicum experiences?, and (3) How does critical friendship contribute to the process of identifying assumptions, reframing actions, and evaluating their impact? Themes in the data include how Rodrigo has changed strategies in his third appointment as a dean, how he is supporting improvements in the quality of students’ practicum placements, and how critical friendship contributed to the self-study. The authors conclude that “listen before you push” was a productive strategy. Outcomes are presented in terms of what Rodrigo learned about leadership and what both authors learned about critical friendship.

Context of the Study

Early in 2021, Rodrigo was appointed as Dean at a university where he had served as Dean for one year eight years previously. In the intervening years, Rodrigo worked at another university, including three years as Dean. This new position involves five pre-service programs on three campuses. The authors have acted as critical friends to each other for at least seven years, as an extension of their professional friendship that began 11 years ago. While they live and work in different cultures and languages, they share enough English to communicate clearly. Tom has visited Rodrigo’s universities many times; Rodrigo has visited Tom’s university on four occasions. Each has met the other’s students during these visits. Their friendship became critical over a four-year period (2015-2019) when Rodrigo observed all of Tom’s classes via Skype or videorecording; they frequently discussed class events shortly after each class. Later, Rodrigo invited Tom to act as critical friend during his deliberations about accepting a new position as dean and in the months since taking office. This self-study began as way to analyze Rodrigo’s earliest months of the appointment as Dean, as Rodrigo met and began making decisions with faculty, students and staff in three cities. As we focused on Rodrigo’s leadership, this study gradually expanded to include self-study of their critical friendship. Thus this report seeks to develop insights into both leadership and critical friendship.

Each of us has found that sharing experiences with another teacher educator who is *trusted implicitly and at all times* but who works at a distance (both physical and cultural) can provide critical new insights when trying to study the impact of one’s own work. We sense that our professional relationship is not only powerful but also in some ways

unique. During 25 years with self-study methodology, Tom made numerous pedagogical changes to which Rodrigo paid close attention; Rodrigo subsequently began to examine and change his own practices and associated assumptions. We collaborate well because we trust each other implicitly and we both see the power of addressing not just personal practices *but also the assumptions that underly them.* Learning-in-action and reflection-in-action (reframing) are essential perspectives in our self-studies. All this has been made possible by Rodrigo's remarkable ability to recall in detail events, both recent and distant, and by Tom's persistent focus on asking "What did you learn from the experience?"

Relevant Literature

This self-study is guided by Schön's (1971) concept of learning systems, Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-in-action, Redish's (2021) concept of epistemological expectations, and LaBoskey's (2004) methodological principles of self-study. Rodrigo is particularly committed to encouraging all to attend to their learning from experience, the importance of which is implicit in the concept of reflection-in-action. The goal is to see faculty working as a learning system:

> *We must . . . become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, . . . we must invent and develop institutions which are "learning systems", . . . systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. (Schön, 1971, p. 30)*

In the context of teaching physics, Redish (2021) describes epistemological expectations as "students' expectations about the nature of the knowledge they are learning. . . . Students' epistemological expectations can have profound effects on what they hear and how they think about what they're learning." (p. 316). Extending this idea to teacher education, Rodrigo works from the assumption that both faculty and students learn from experience as well as from books, lectures and discussions. Rodrigo believes that it is critical to address epistemological expectations about the nature of one's learning about teaching, learning and learning to teach.

This study has also been influenced by a number of published self-studies that focus on leadership, critical friendship, and the significance of the two in combination. These include Clift et al. (2015), Loughran (2015), Loughran and Allen (2014), Mills et al. (2012), and Ramirez and Allison (2016). Our personal analyses of the power of critical friendship have been discussed in Fuentealba Jara and Russell (2022) and in Fuentealba and Russell (2014, 2016, 2020).

Objectives

This self-study identifies and interprets patterns in Rodrigo's earliest efforts to improve the quality of teacher education at his university. The following questions are central:

1. What are the primary differences between the first and second time as Dean of Education at the same university?
2. How can the Dean support and encourage practicum leaders to develop strategies for improving the quality of students' practicum experiences?
3. How does critical friendship contribute to the process of identifying assumptions, reframing actions, and evaluating their impact?

An overall objective involves studying responses to Rodrigo's various moves to better understand his own underlying assumptions as he works toward greater coherence and mutual understanding of the roles of supervisor, mentor teacher and student during practicum placements.

Methods

The authors are the participants in this self-study that focuses on Rodrigo's first 10 months in a new leadership position. Data sources include (1) notes of meetings with faculty members, pre-service teacher candidates, and mentor teachers who provide practicum placements and (2) notes of frequent online meetings between the two authors. Particularly significant has been Rodrigo's culturally unusual commitment to bringing students into ongoing deliberations about the practicum. Rodrigo set out to act not as a mentor but as a partner to department heads, developing professional friendships in which he acts to include a big-picture perspective in their conversations.

Notes taken by Tom during online meetings with Rodrigo are central to the analysis of Rodrigo's efforts to encourage improvements in the university's teacher education programs. Data were analyzed in terms of major themes across a series of conversations, with Tom regularly challenging Rodrigo to explain in greater detail. Discussions with faculty, students, and mentor teachers are ongoing and recordings provide additional data. Perhaps the greatest challenge identified to date is finding meaningful ways to invite mentor teachers to be part of teacher education.

With attention to LaBoskey's (2004) five characteristics of self-study research, the authors analyzed data independently and shared the patterns that they identified. Here we highlight areas of accord and areas of tension concerning improvement of the practicum experience. This research extends our earlier self-studies (Fuentealba & Russell, 2016, 2020) and adds to previous self-study conference presentations by deans, such as that by Mills et al. (2012). Trustworthiness typically involves credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. As data were collected, the authors drew on the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Nowell et al. (2017, p. 4)

Data

The following data from meeting notes between May and August 2021 describe some of Rodrigo's earliest experiences and observations. Rodrigo meets every fortnight with his immediate superior, here designated as VR. These excerpts are followed by data relevant to each of the three research questions.

- Early on, VR made supportive comments: "You have experience; we expect you here a long time." "If faculty practices don't change, the student experience won't change." "The university needs to support teachers in schools." (20210514)
- In an online meeting with 12 practicum supervisors, everyone spoke and Rodrigo was careful not to act as an authority. Rodrigo wanted them to feel comfortable speaking but also wanted them to feel comfortable taking risks. (20210518)
- Rodrigo attended a meeting about national standards for teachers and was disappointed to see that the focus was on the quantity of knowledge new teachers must have, with no attention to how they approach their practice. (20210525)
- After another meeting with VR, Rodrigo told Tom that VR asks good questions and pushes him at times. When Tom asked Rodrigo how he pushes, Rodrigo gave this example: "When people ask for more time, I ask what they will do with the time." After three months, Rodrigo now has a clearer map of the situation and his role. (20210726)
- VR asked Rodrigo how he knows Tom and why their relationship has lasted so long. Rodrigo commented that they work together to analyze and resolve problem situations each is experiencing. VR told Rodrigo that every Dean needs a friend like Tom. (20210726)
- In a small meeting with faculty to explore the tensions between theory and practice, Rodrigo stressed that everything we say involves making assumptions. He also asked, "Where are the voices of the students and the mentor teachers?" When faculty said, "We need students to reflect," Rodrigo asked, "How do you learn about their reflection" and was told "It's not easy." At this point in his early months, Rodrigo became increasingly aware of the gap between colleagues' assumptions and his own. (20210804)

Question 1: What Are the Primary Differences Between the First and Second Time as Dean of Education at the Same University?

After reviewing several months of data, Rodrigo summarized his previous and new practices and the influence of his critical friend in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Rodrigo's Previous and New Practices As Dean

Previous Practices (2012)	New Practices (2021)	Influence of Critical Friend

Asking others “What were the results of your experience?”	Asking others “What did you learn from the experience?”	Asks for evidence of learning: “Did students notice the change in practices?”
Sees the importance of listening and recognizing the voices of others and asks “What is your opinion?”	Sees the importance of others’ experiences of practices. Encourages reframing of practices by exploring assumptions.	Reminds that “Listening alone is not learning.”
Asks “What are the best practices in other contexts?”	Asks “How do our practices help us to learn in a better way?”	Stresses the importance of the authority that comes with experience.
Suggests to others that “You ought to do this.”	Suggests to others that there is knowledge in action.	Points out instances of modeling practices to others
Sees individuals acting alone	Supports a collaborative view of professional practice	Explores features of critical friendship

When Tom asked Rodrigo to describe his changing assumptions, he received the following:

- When a Dean asks, “Do you agree?”, the only answer is “Yes.” I need to involve others in new practices, as simple agreement is not enough.
- Books and research are important but learning from experience is the most important element in my new role. Now I often ask, “What new perspectives have we gained from this discussion or experience?
- I now assume that I need to listen more and at the same time be open to sharing different viewpoints. I assume that meetings can also be an opportunity to change my own thinking.

Taken with the changing practices in Table 1, these statements reveal the value of self-study of a new Dean’s earliest months in that position.

Question 2: How Can the Dean Support and Encourage Practicum Leaders to Develop Strategies for Improving the Quality of Students' Practicum Experiences?

With Rodrigo’s listening and modeling, practicum leaders are discovering the power of listening to teacher candidates. Following cultural norms supported by personal experiences, they previously would watch a lesson but talk only to the mentor teacher and then give the student the comments written during the lesson. In November 2021, Rodrigo invited Tom to lead two 90-minute Zoom presentations (with excellent translation services). Each presentation was attended by about 40 individuals, with roughly equal numbers of teacher candidates, mentor teachers, and faculty supervisors. Including students with those who offer them critiques and suggestions represented a unique change of assumptions, including the value of listening to students to understand how they are experiencing the practicum. Students’ comments included the following:

- How can we talk to our mentor teachers so that they can listen to our needs in their classroom and have the trust to explain what we are not doing well as teachers?
- Sometimes mentor teachers give total control to the class (planning, teaching, evaluating—everything!) and they have a little participation in the class. Does this help us improve practices or does it only overwhelm us?
- How can the relationship between the mentor teacher and the student in practice be strengthened, and what kind of benefits would this relationship generate for the student in practice?

Analyzing these data led Rodrigo to reframe assumptions about supervisory activities and applied them to planning for the first term of 2022: (1) Listening to Tom led Rodrigo to "push" consideration of student voices and Rodrigo is making this recommendation explicitly to supervisors. (2) Rodrigo will ask supervisors to collect evidence of changes they are making in practice, in contrast to familiar practices of reporting changes without evidence.

Question 3: How Does Critical Friendship Contribute to the Process of Identifying Assumptions, Reframing Actions, and Evaluating Their Impact?

Our critical friendship focuses on challenging each other to identify the assumptions implicit in our practices and gather evidence about the impact of new actions based on reframing of assumptions. As Rodrigo continues to share his leadership experiences with Tom (much as Tom previously shared his teaching experiences with Rodrigo), the comments by Tom support Rodrigo in his probing of assumptions that underlie his actions and the responses by those with whom he is engaging. Tom frequently points out that Rodrigo has the skills to change a practice, to deviate from a dean's typical response in his culture, and then to lead the analysis of underlying assumptions. We offer several examples of the process:

- When one describes a situation of new actions and the responses they generate, the other asks "What did you learn by acting differently?" and encourages reframing of the situation.
- We share the assumption that we should not ask others (including students) to do what we have never done ourselves.
- Most discussions end by asking "What have we learned?" and "What issues need further exploration."
- We try to focus on making sense of the challenges being faced by our students and our colleagues.

Themes and Patterns in the Data

Question 1: Primary Differences in Role As Dean

Rodrigo's changes of practice are being noticed by those with whom he interacts; they are noticed because they do not conform to stereotypes of the behaviour of a Dean. In most instances, unexpected responses by Rodrigo signal to his new colleagues that he takes a different approach to leadership. We offer the following examples of changing practices and assumptions:

- When Rodrigo joined the administrators assembling for a graduation ceremony, he decided to go to the nearby room where students were assembling and spoke with the students. He had never done this in previous periods as a dean. When he was reminded that he is an authority, he replied "I don't lose authority by talking to them." At a similar ceremony later that day, a colleague also went to talk with students, indicating the effect of Rodrigo's modeling of the behaviour.
- In his first time as Dean, Rodrigo had many ideas for change. Now he has similar ideas for change but takes a different approach, always listening first and more inclined to ask others to take a risk by changing a personal teaching practice.
- When Rodrigo describes to Tom a situation of new actions and the responses they generate, Tom asks, "What did you learn by acting differently?" and encourages reframing of the situation and underlying assumptions.

Question 2: Supporting Improvements in the Quality of Practicum Placements

Teacher education has long struggled with issues of quality in teacher candidate's learning during practicum placements (e.g., Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1987). Understanding that improvements will come slowly, Rodrigo studied the impact of early moves to identify existing patterns and tensions:

- In reviewing relevant data from March to July 2021, Rodrigo reported that it is customary for only the Supervisor and the Mentor Teacher to talk after the Supervisor observes a lesson by a Student Teacher. Typically, a Supervisor simply leaves notes for the Student. Meetings with Tom have focused on listening to the voices of students during a practicum and Rodrigo now explicitly “pushes” Supervisors to include the voices of Students.
- In the Chilean context, people may refer to changes in action without reporting direct evidence. Rodrigo now “pushes” for *evidence* of changes that students are making *in practice*.
- Evidence of behavioural changes continues to be difficult to obtain. It is common to rely on recipes for better teaching (“You must do it this way”). Recipes often fail students because they have so little experience and are working in unique contexts. If a recipe does not work well, difficulties can generate resistance by students to changing their teaching behaviours in response to directives.
- Rodrigo has identified a significant tension when asked for advice: "One must be deliberate in avoiding responses that suggest a recipe." For example, when the leader of a meeting asked Rodrigo, “What question should start the discussion?”, Rodrigo responded by asking, “What issue do you want to resolve in the meeting?” Rodrigo often models by explaining what he sees as the assumptions underlying his own practices.
- By studying his own actions in relation to those of his new colleagues, Rodrigo has noted that some practicum leaders fail to see the need to ask metacognitive questions of themselves as well as of students. The problem with offering recipes is that one often fails to address the underlying assumptions. Asking for assumptions implicit in actions may make an individual uncomfortable, thus generating tension in their relationship.

Question 3: Contributions of Critical Friendship

Previous experiences as critical friend to each other helped us to extend that friendship in this self-study. The more we explored the first two questions, the more we realized we were also learning more about the nature and potential of critical friendship. The three main points Rodrigo has explored with Tom in the context of improving practicum quality are (1) the importance of students’ voices, (2) the importance of evidence from students’ actions, and the importance of all three participants in the practicum triad engaging with each other at all times. Our critical friendship includes these patterns:

- When we observe or discuss each other’s classes, we never say to the other, “You are wrong!” Instead, we listen, ask for more details, and probe for what has been learned.
- We always ask, “What did you learn from the experience of a changed practice?”
- Encouraging each other to take risks, either explicitly or by modeling a different practice, has become an important feature of our critical friendship.
- Sharing the taking of risks with new practices quickly deepens a critical friendship and its benefits.

This most recent adventure in critical friendship inspires a recommendation to teacher educators to engage in repeated mutual critical friendships with the goal of continuing to improve the practices of both actor and critical friend.

Conclusions

Our central finding is that “Listen before you push” has thus far been productive. In Chile, there are expectations that a dean tells people what to do and maintains personal distance. Guided by reframed assumptions about teaching and leadership, Rodrigo began this appointment with an emphasis on listening and minimal giving of instructions. At first, many faculty seemed puzzled about how to respond; soon Rodrigo began to notice acceptance and even appreciation of his intention to listen to the concerns and goals of both faculty and students. Rodrigo has identified four significant differences between his first and second experiences as Dean of Education at Autónoma:

1. Rodrigo’s approach with team leaders is deliberately characterized by calm.
2. Rodrigo guides teams forward by discussion, not by direction.
3. Rodrigo urges faculty to share their plans for teaching and research.
4. Rodrigo models the behaviours that he is encouraging others to explore.

Rodrigo set out to be a dean who keeps his office door open. He welcomes ideas and suggestions, to which he responds with inquiries about underlying assumptions and supporting arguments, pushing without being directive.

Rodrigo is responding to tensions between campuses by creating online discussion groups with members from all campuses to encourage cooperation at the program level. Similarly, cross-campus groups of students are a helpful beginning. *Listening before pushing and pushing rather than directing* have proven to be elements of a decanal strategy that most people are finding productive and supportive. Our ongoing critical friendship continues to support clarifying assumptions and reframing practices.

Returning to the Literature Guiding This Self-Study

We have applied Redish's (2021) concept of epistemological expectations to the nature of what teacher educators know and what they are learning (and not learning) from their experiences as teachers of teachers. We all inescapably enter the work of teaching teachers having been shaped by Lortie's (1975) apprenticeship of observation without explicit awareness of the assumptions and behaviours we were internalizing. As models of teaching for those learning to teach, we include ourselves among the teacher educators who must identify their personal assumptions about how we learn to teach. This self-study has revealed the importance of listening as well as telling and questioning.

LaBoskey's (2004) five characteristics of self-study methodology continue to be valuable guides. This self-study was self-initiated to enable Rodrigo to understand his earliest moves after his appointment as Dean. We push each other to be improvement-aimed, and this study was interactive with faculty, mentor teachers and teacher candidates. Our methods are typically qualitative and we have provided examples in support of our conclusion. Nowell et al. (2017) helped us strive for trustworthiness in our analysis of data. The two works by Schön (1971, 1983) encourage us to be "adept at learning" and to pursue reframing of our assumptions as we continue to learn from experience.

Outcomes: What Have We Learned From This Self-Study?

What Did Rodrigo Learn About Leadership?

Perhaps Rodrigo's greatest insight concerns the similarities between good teaching and good leadership. Teachers are encouraged to build a trusting relationship with their students and a sense of community within the class. Good teaching also involves listening to students' successes and challenges as they learn. Rodrigo's changed practices (Table 1) appear to be building trust and a sense of community with his colleagues. Listening to faculty members and students is generating an increasing number of telephone and email conversations about what people are experiencing and how they hope to improve learning within the teacher education programs. Encouraging strong collaboration and respecting the views of others are also features common to both teaching and leadership.

Rodrigo has developed a novel set of assumptions that are drawing people's attention and encouraging risk-taking. This first year of his appointment has also enabled Rodrigo to focus on how individuals learn from experience. Self-study methods have enabled Rodrigo to see that learning from experience requires permission to analyze experience and to do so against a backdrop of previous experience. Re-examining situations and events can generate reframing of assumptions and support for new practices. These activities require attention to knowledge constructed from experience as well as knowledge developed from research.

Rodrigo's attention to improving the quality of learning in the practicum risks challenging traditional assumptions about the structure of a teacher education program. Efforts to date suggest that trusting, engaging and listening are generating openness to new possibilities and new risks with respect to deeply rooted habits and responses by mentor teachers in schools and the faculty supervisors who visit student teachers.

What Did Rodrigo and Tom Learn About Critical Friendship?

This extended and ongoing self-study has shown us the value of a long-term relationship with many shared experiences. Each shared experience, whether in person or by video, strengthens our critical friendship. Rodrigo's impressive ability to recall events shared years ago enables us to revisit shared experiences, compare them to immediate concerns, and then construct new interpretations that may generate new practices. A critical friendship can be particularly supportive of risk-taking, knowing that a new practice has been developed in partnership with someone who shares a commitment and understands the implicit assumptions. Increasingly, we sense that critical friendship can be seen as two individuals committed to teaching/leading each other in a trusting environment dominated by good listening.

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Rural Experience and Its Impact on the Identities and Practice(s) of Teachers/Teacher Educators

Candy L. Jones

Teacher Educator Identity | Rural Experience | Rural Capital

Rural experience and ways of knowing impact the identities and practice(s) of teachers, teacher candidates, and teacher educators in profound and complex ways. Through self-study, the examination of artifacts from my past (including a Master's thesis, a Doctoral thesis, and a self-created video and script on the topic of my own rural identity), and recorded conversations with five teacher/teacher educator colleagues with whom I shared a rural kinship, I explored the impacts of rural experience on identity formation and practice. Findings from the study suggested: (1) that rural experience has a profound impact on professional identity, (2) that teachers/teacher educators who have had such rural experience(s) have a kinship rooted in similar or common knowledge, values, skills, and beliefs, and (3) that rural experience and identity foster a profound commitment to, and advocacy for rural places; relationship and connection to place and others; place-conscious, experiential approaches to teaching and learning; and a commitment to leadership and service in practice. These findings extend existing literature about teacher/teacher educator identity formation, and suggest that self-study is a meaningful methodology for examining complex, contextually specific, socially constructed phenomena such as 'rural capital'.

Introduction

While the impact of rurality on the identity of teachers and teacher candidates has been studied previously, it has largely been done so by teacher educators about teacher candidates/novice teachers who are: engaged in rural practicum experiences (e.g. Goodnough & Mulcahy, 2011), in or just exiting teacher education programs (e.g. Moffa & McHenry-Sorber, 2018), or fairly new to the classroom (e.g. Walker-Gibbs et al., 2018). Very little, in fact, has been written about the impact of rural experience on veteran teachers or teacher educators, including the ways in which their rural identities impact their pedagogy and work with students. In addition, little has been done to incorporate rural ways of knowing in teacher education programs in Canada and elsewhere, despite the fact that there is significant consensus around the importance of place-based knowledge (Avery & Hains, 2017; Avery & Kassam, 2011; Gallay et al., 2016; Shamah & MacTavish, 2009; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000), the need to challenge conceptions of rurality (Moffa & McHenry-Sorber, 2018; Walker-Gibbs et al., 2018), and the importance of looking for local solutions to issues faced by rural schools, people, and communities (Gallay et al., 2016; Gruenewald, 2003; Kudo, 2020; McLaren & Giroux, 1990; Skyhar, 2022; Smith et al., 2017).

As a teacher educator who taught in three different rural communities prior to coming to a Faculty of Education in Manitoba, Canada, I am interested in the complex ways in which rural experiences impact the identities of teacher candidates, in-service teachers, and teacher educators, and how such identities are evidenced in and acted out in

practice. Importantly, I have noticed since coming to academe that there is something unique about my experiences and those of my rural colleagues. I have noticed a kinship, a unique way of thinking about education evident in pedagogical practices, attitudes towards service and community, understandings of knowledge and ways of relating to others. These noticings and interests have led to a self-study about the topic of rural educators' identity, one that incorporated not only my own understandings of the impact of growing up rural, but the experiences of others with whom I share this kinship.

Aims of the Research

The goal of the self-study research described in this paper/chapter was to explore how my experiences growing up, living, and working in rural places have impacted my identity and practice(s) as an educator, and how these impacts compare with other educators who have lived and worked in similar contexts.

Method(s)

Self-study provided a valuable framework for investigating the impact of rural experience on both identity and practice (LaBoskey, 2004; Pithouse et al., 2009). It allowed for the investigation of "experiences and conceptions of 'self'," both personally and "in relation to other(s)" (Pithouse et al, 2009, p. 47) through qualitative inquiry, utilizing several data sources, dialogue, and collaboration (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013). The first data source used for the study, was an approximately 1-hour video (and video script) I created over a decade ago for a rural education course in my Ph.D. program about how growing up, living, and working in rural places impacted my identity as an educator. The second and third data sources included my Master's thesis (Skyhar, 2009) and my Doctoral thesis (Skyhar, 2018). In my Master's thesis, I focused on practitioner research done in my own Grade 10 mathematics classroom, while my Doctoral thesis consisted of a case study of a professional learning community known as the Numeracy Cohort, which I led as a numeracy coach in the rural division I worked in at the time. The fourth data source that was used, which was much more dialogic and collaborative in nature, was a series of 5 recorded (Zoom) conversations conducted with a variety of colleagues who had experiences growing up and/or teaching in rural communities. The recorded conversations (which were transcribed for analysis) allowed for a broad range of rural perspectives to interact with my own, increasing the trustworthiness of the findings and what Kitchen (2020) refers to as "credibility through interaction" (p. 12).

Analysis of the data began with an initial review of the video/script and theses. During this initial review, I used analytic memos to record my thoughts in relation to the research questions. Following the initial review, the recorded interviews were conducted using some of the initial review findings to frame questions for discussion. The interviews were then analyzed for themes through a combination of thematic coding and analytic memos in the second phase. Following the interview analysis, codes, and memos across data sources were organized into the broad themes that formed the study's outcomes.

Outcomes

The findings of the study followed, essentially, the research aims outlined. Examining my own experiences, and their impacts on my identity and practice(s), allowed me to understand the elaborate connections that exist between these elements. Comparing such experiences and connections to those of my colleagues further allowed me to consider areas of alignment and tension that shed light on the complex phenomena and intersections between identity formation and teacher/teacher educator practice.

My Rural Experiences and Their Impacts on Identity

My own experiences in rural places began just a few weeks after my birth when my parents moved into my recently deceased paternal grandparents' home in Warren, Manitoba, about 30 kilometres northwest of the capital city of Winnipeg. This was home for my entire life up until the point that I graduated from high school in 1991 and left for university. Warren was very small with somewhere around 400 inhabitants in the town and surrounding area at the time. Several people, including my parents, commuted to Winnipeg for work if they were not employed in the community or farming their own land. The community had standard amenities for a community of its size, and although increasing numbers of families at the time were becoming two-income households causing community involvement to dwindle, my experiences in Warren included both a sense of belonging amongst my neighbours, family, and community

members, and a distinct pride and involvement in local organizations such as the community hall, church, arena, sports associations, and school groups.

After making the transition from rural to urban to get a Bachelor of Education at the University of Manitoba, I returned to another rural (and northern) context when I accepted my first teaching position (of 5 years) in Snow Lake, Manitoba. Snow Lake was a mining town, nestled in the rocks, lakes, and pine trees of the northern Canadian Shield. It was here that I had to adapt for the first time to a new rural context, one that felt small and similar to Warren, but that had different geography and economic touchstones than the prairie farming community in which I grew up. I didn't find it hard to fit in in Snow Lake, just the same as I didn't find it hard to fit into the similar-sized schools and (agriculture-based) communities of Carberry and MacGregor where I spent 3 years and 12 years teaching respectively. In each of these communities, I drew on what I knew about connecting with people, learning about local economic structures, learning about local geography, participating in and supporting local initiatives, and volunteering my time and energy to make the community a better place (e.g. coaching, sitting on boards, running theatre projects, etc.).

The video I created in 2010, in addition to exploring the nature of growing up as a "townie" (rather than on a farm), and as an achiever (Carr & Kefalas, 2009) who was expected to leave the community to pursue post-secondary education, also looked at the histories of my grandparents, mother, and son, and the complex ways in which they had adapted (and continued to adapt) to new rural contexts over the course of their lives. After looking at the work of scholars such as Corbett (2007), Kelly (2009), and Greenwood (2009), in relation to rurality, place, and mobility, I noted the following in the video:

> *What I have come to understand from this project, however, is that I have another kind of capital that isn't labelled in the literature. While it takes mobility capital to dis-embed oneself from the places and spaces they have known, it takes what I might call 'rural capital' to embed oneself in a new rural place. (Rural Video)*

Rural capital, or common knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs that exist amongst those living and working in rural communities, for me, included an appreciation of community, volunteerism, relationality, local places and strengths, honesty, down-to-earth people/thinking, and generational lines. Deeply rooted in my identity, these values were a constant for me no matter where I went.

The Rural Experiences of My Colleagues and Their Impacts on Identity

The five colleagues I had conversations/semi-structured interviews with had a variety of unique background experiences tied to rural contexts. Leyton, an Associate Professor in the department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia, was the son of two visually impaired parents from Steinbeck, Manitoba, and Galahad, Alberta who went to a national school for the blind in Ontario. His early upbringing consisted of living in an inner-city context in Regina, Saskatchewan, and traveling via Greyhound bus to his dad's cousins' farm(s) an hour and a half away on weekends where he experienced strong ties to both rural family members and the rural church community.

Mike, a retired Associate Professor from the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at Brandon University, grew up going to Catholic and public schools in Windsor, Ontario before moving to Brandon to attend university. For Mike, Brandon *was* rural with a population of around 30,000 at the time. He described experiencing a culture shock but enjoyed close relationships with students and professors in the small university before moving to an even smaller context in Boissevain, Manitoba, where he spent most of his teaching career (which included administration) in a K-12 school prior to taking a faculty position at his *alma mater*.

Dawn, who had just become Associate Vice-President Research at the University of Saskatchewan around the time of the interview, grew up in a very small K-12 rural Saskatchewan school with primarily six students in her class – five girls and one boy. In our conversation, she described many aspects of her upbringing that affected her identity, including the family farm, inter-generational families in the community, community-focused activities and involvement, highly-gendered roles in the community, connection to land/place, independence, and expectations to leave the community to

attend university. These aspects of her identity accompanied her to her first teaching roles in Marengo and Kindersley, Saskatchewan, and into her future studies and educational positions at multiple levels of academe.

Gail, a teacher in Gillam, Manitoba, grew up as the daughter of a nurse and civil servant in a community close to mine where her family had a small farm. She attended the same high school as I did, although she did not attend the same elementary (K-8) school. Bonded by a nearly lifelong friendship, we have stayed close, linked by our shared profession of teaching, our past experiences, and our deep understanding of each other. Her perspectives for this study provided an interesting parallel (and sometimes divergent) view of our sometimes-shared rural experiences.

Jackie, an Associate Professor at Brandon University, grew up on a farm four and a half miles out of Climax, Saskatchewan with strong links to family, farming, and the community. After attending university, she had a couple of short teaching placements in small Saskatchewan communities, but neither of these were a good fit. It was only when she worked in Vancouver, British Columbia in a school for students with learning disabilities and then in a Jewish day school that she truly fell in love with the profession. Jackie eventually completed an educational administration degree and returned to Lemberg, Saskatchewan to be closer to family and to work as an administrator before completing her PhD and pursuing a university career.

In terms of impacts on their identities, the colleagues I spoke with identified many ways in which experience had influenced their core selves, including how their rural experiences impacted their understandings of *knowledge* and where it is held; their *values* in terms of family, community, service and relationality; and their *beliefs* about themselves as adaptable, independent, risk-taking, capable, participatory individuals and about rural places as connected to their identities, valuable, comfortable, and worth advocating for. Dawn, for example, noted that "knowledge is held within people in different spots," explaining that the men sitting on "coffee row" held the history of the place, that her dad and brother-in-law possessed significant knowledge about the land and machinery that today "are like NASA cockpits," and that "there's knowledge of the land or the people or of the things that [individuals] would never get in school" (Dawn Interview). In terms of values, the interviewees echoed many of the rural values I had identified, including "a community service attitude" (Dawn Interview), seeing yourself as part of a community "network" (Jackie Interview), valuing "people and relationships" (Mike interview), and the importance of family and family history. The colleagues I spoke with also openly discussed how their beliefs about themselves and rural places had been impacted as a result of their rural experiences. Most of the participants felt that their rural upbringing had fostered the ability to be adaptable, independent, willing to participate, and comfortable with taking risks. For example, Jackie noted the following:

> *I always think, O . . . I had better volunteer for that . . . I can do that . . . I can help with that. And I think I also see myself as somebody who has the capacity to do things. You know, if there's something wrong in my house, or there's something wrong with my car, I usually think I should have a look at it, I could probably fix it. . . . I think that also comes from not necessarily rural, in general, but from being on a farm . . . My dad fixed everything. We rarely had somebody come [in to fix things] and usually we had to help him. (Jackie Interview)*

Jackie's description of her experiences and their impact on her sense of self as capable and adaptable were echoed in the conversations I had with Gail and Dawn as well, and Leyton, who straddled rural and urban contexts, described his own adaptability in terms of his ability to "code switch" between worlds. For example, in his interview, he said the following:

> *I very much see myself from the country and the city. And I think I have a more well-rounded understanding of just life in the world because I have both of those experiences . . . I'm just as comfortable driving into a town that has a gas station and foraging everything I need and ending up at somebody's house for dinner because of that kind of very small town friendly slow down kind of vibe. And then I can also pick up the city pace and just zip around with the zippiest of them. (Leyton Interview)*

Finally, a deep connection to place was evident across the stories of my colleagues. Several of the participants talked about making choices to live and work in rural places, even when it required change and/or sacrifice, and all of them spoke about advocating for rural schools, communities, and spaces in some form. Moreover, deep connections to the

land were evident in the words of the participants as they described not only geographical features of home but also the feelings and memories that such places/images evoked. It was Dawn that illustrated the power of this most clearly, describing how rural “touchstones,” such as having quiet spaces with grass, water, trees, berries to pick, etc., had actually allowed her to ground herself and handle the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Impacts on Teaching Practice(s)

The impacts of past experiences and accreted rural identities on teaching practice(s) identified in the study fell into four main categories: 'advocacy and commitment', 'relationality and connection', 'curriculum and pedagogy', and 'leadership and service'. Evident across both data sources related to my own experiences and teaching, and the conversations I had with colleagues, was a profound *commitment* to, and *advocacy for*, rural education and communities. For example, the abstract of my Doctoral Thesis (Skyhar, 2018) began as follows:

> *Rural school divisions in Canada, if they can be spoken of as a collection, consist of extremely diverse groups of people, living in varied geographical settings, with unique community strengths and challenges. The provision of professional development (PD) for rural teachers is one area in which rural school divisions face particular challenges due to the contexts in which they operate. Issues relating to funding, geography, staffing, and local contextual differences impact the ability of rural divisions to provide effective PD for their teachers. (Skyhar, 2018, ii)*

Dawn also described several ways in which she had advocated for rural schools and places over many years, including her community’s longstanding fight against school closures (which they eventually lost), her reinstitution of a rural practicum placement for teacher candidates at the University of Saskatchewan, her work to raise awareness about rural spaces and Indigenous ways of knowing, her deliberate hiring of rural people, and the teaching and research projects she had been involved in in rural contexts around the world. Leyton, like Dawn, described a need to work against deficit thinking about rural contexts, particularly in relation to teaching practica and experiences. He noted that he was always promoting rural as “good” with teacher candidates, encouraging them to “fall in love with their place,” to “find their people,” and to be both conscious of, and involved in, the rural communities in which they found themselves. Finally, all of the participants in the study, like me, chose to commit themselves to rural research, hoping to improve the lives of rural people and foster sustainability within their communities.

The second theme that emerged in relation to the impacts of rural experience and identity on practice was 'relationality and connection'. Throughout my career as a teacher, I continuously sought out connections to teachers in other schools/communities, something most likely related to working on very small rural staffs where there were limited numbers of teachers in my subject area. My doctoral work also followed this trajectory as I sought to foster school division connections between teachers with the common goal of improving math teaching and learning. When I moved to a post-secondary context, I sought out others with whom I felt a connection, other people interested in rural education, math education, or teacher professional development. This is how I first met Jackie, Dawn, and Leyton, in fact. Leyton, like me, also noted that he sought out other people with rural backgrounds wherever he was, and worked to promote networks of teachers and leaders in rural contexts. In his interview, Leyton said, “I come from a very relational stance, relationship to the land, relationship with people, equity, like making space for all kids in our rural settings.” Similarly, Mike talked about education as a “human endeavor” and noted that he sought out connections with other STEM/technology educators in the province. Jackie also talked about her tendency to seek out family-like connections in her work, inspired by her experiences growing up in very small school communities in which her fellow students felt like siblings and her teachers felt like parents. This was, in fact, a common description across several of the interviews, particularly for Gail, Dawn, and Jackie who grew up on family farms and who attended very small rural schools. Finally, in addition to relationships with other colleagues, most of the participants also described a strong connection to the place in which they grew up and to nature/the outdoors more generally. For some this related to farms and farming communities, and for others, it had more to do with feeling at ease outdoors and connecting to the land.

In terms of *curriculum and pedagogy*, many commonalities also emerged in the data. All of the interviewees described using and/or educating teacher candidates about place-based, place-conscious, inter-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary, student-centered, decolonizing, land-based, experiential, whole-body, multi-age/grade, inquiry-based, and/or design-

based approaches. Moreover, they described instances in which they created curricula or courses at the institutional level such as a “farm school” collaboratively created in a division Jackie worked in and a land-based leadership course co-created by Dawn at the University of Saskatchewan. These descriptions echoed my own foci on culturally relevant, project-based, experiential mathematics curricula for rural students in my Masters and Ph.D.; work connecting and engaging rural educators in collaborative teacher inquiry in my Ph.D.; and work with primarily rural undergraduate and graduate students in a university context. Finally, my own experiences and the experiences of my colleagues all seemed to undertake an outward stretching trajectory, beginning first with individual teaching, courses, and school-based initiatives, and moving towards provincial, university, national, and even international projects focusing on the development of new curricula, assessments, pedagogies, and programs.

The final theme that emerged in relation to the impacts of experience and identity on practice in the study, was that of 'leadership and service'. My own experience, and the experiences of the colleagues I spoke with, included a variety of leadership roles stepped into, and service work volunteered for. From coaching teams to organizing local events, there were many instances of working for a better collective future. Mike, for example, described leading various divisional, provincial, and regional committees early on in (and throughout) his career, just as both Gail and I had participated in a variety of provincial initiatives and informal leadership opportunities. Dawn, Jackie, and Mike also all became rural administrators in a relatively quick fashion, something clearly related to the small numbers of people available in rural communities to engage in leadership work. Regardless of the informal or formal nature of the leadership and service work engaged in, all participants in the study, like me, found themselves taking on significant responsibilities locally, something likely impacted by the small number of people in the contexts in which they lived and worked. They also communicated significant values around leadership and service tied to their past experiences, always expecting this of themselves and others in their communities.

Discussion/Conclusion

Through the examination of my own rural experiences, their impacts on my identity and practice(s), and the ways that these impacts compared with those experienced by five of my colleagues, I essentially undertook what Pinnegar and Hamilton (2015) describe as “moving forward by looking backward” (p. 323). What I learned in this process was: (1) that rural experience has a profound impact on professional identity, (2) that teachers/teacher educators who have had such rural experience(s) have a kinship rooted in similar or common knowledge, values, skills, and beliefs, and (3) that rural experience and identity foster a profound commitment to, and advocacy for rural places; relationship and connection to place and others; place-conscious, experiential approaches to teaching and learning; and a commitment to leadership and service in practice. These findings both align with and expand existing literature in the field. While others have previously described the impact of experience on the identities and practices of teachers and teacher educators (e.g. Danielewicz, 2001; Davey, 2013), findings in this study focus on several commonalities shared amongst a group of rural educators/academics, offering insight into the complex ways rurality and rural identity affect their research, pedagogy, leadership, service, and collaboration. This has much to offer the field of teacher education, including implications for hiring practices in faculties of education and for teacher education programs.

In terms of implications for self-study as a research methodology, the study also has much to offer. While it has previously been said that self-study has the potential to foster understandings of the self in relation to others (Pithouse et al., 2009) and that it is necessarily a collaborative process (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2013) focused on the improvement of the profession and teaching practice (LaBoskey, 2004), the study described in this paper/chapter offers an example of using self-study to examine phenomena like 'rural capital', something I described over a decade ago in relation to the knowledge, values, skills, and beliefs I intuitively knew existed amongst people with rural backgrounds. Drawing elements out of past experience, and looking at them in relation to the experiences of others, was important in understanding the complexity and interrelatedness of rural experience, identity, and practice. As such, self-study as a methodology can foster more than understandings of the self in relation to others (Pithouse et al., 2009); it can also foster understandings of complex, contextually specific, socially constructed phenomena that are difficult to identify, describe, and conceptualize.

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Ungrading

A Collaborative Self-Study Into the Intersection of Vulnerability and Assessment Practices

Tammy Mills, Rebecca Buchanan, & Kevin Roberge

Assessment | Critical Pedagogy | Grading | Ungrading

Traditional grading practices have come under critique recently because they are inequitable and often contradict the pedagogical goals of practitioners, especially teacher educators. This self-study examines the collaborative process of three higher education instructors assessing and grading differently. We each employed different ungrading strategies in our courses, and met biweekly to discuss our approaches, experiences, and challenges. Recordings of these meetings, alongside regular emails and reflective journals, were analyzed through the lens of vulnerability, exploring the ways we were made and made ourselves vulnerable as we engaged in pedagogically risky activities. Our findings demonstrate the value of collaborative sense-making and relational support for instructors who are implementing more equitable and humanizing grading practices in their courses.

Context of the Study

We are three college instructors; two of us work specifically in teacher education, and the third teaches courses in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGS) and mathematics, including math courses for preservice teachers. Two of us are pre-tenure and one of us is not in a tenure-track position. We work at a primarily-white, research-intensive institution in the Northeast United States. Our relationship grew from a shared interest in a group devoted to equitable teaching practices. We began discussing shifts in our grading practices while collaboratively reading *Ungrading* (Blum, 2020), which examines how to assess learning differently and how to more actively engage students in that process. Our partnership allows us to explore the relationships between assessment and grading in a traditional teacher education program, but also in undergraduate educational contexts, providing an opportunity to enrich our collaborative self-study by widening the perspectives of participants. To guide our research, we drew from qualitative and self-study methods (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2009; LaBoskey, 2004), so we could both collaborate and co-create our assessment practices and make a side-by-side-by-side comparison of those ungrading processes and experiences.

After reading and discussing the text, we each employed a unique method for assessing differently in our undergraduate courses. This provided us an opportunity to pause, take stock of our current practices, and consider how to intentionally shift our practices away from the dehumanizing effects of gradings (Romanowski, 2004). Motivated by a shared commitment to critical frameworks in education that seek to disrupt traditional hierarchies of power and humanize students (Andrews et al., 2019; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994), we decided to shift our grading practices in order

to better align them with our critical commitments. Collectively, we all transitioned away from the relatively traditional 100-point scale grading system, where all assignments were submitted and scored, sometimes along a rubric, and scoring weights were determined based on the importance of the task; for example, a final course project in Rebecca's course frequently counted for a third of the course grade. While the particular ungrading approaches of each author varied, Tammy employed a low-stakes points approach whereby everything completed had 1 or 2 points attached, but she gave specific feedback that helped scaffold the next moves students were being asked to make to complete a long-term project. Rebecca used a "no grades" approach, opting instead to use student self-assessment and one-on-one conferencing, coupled with specific feedback, and Kevin implemented a variety of methods, from a journal and feedback system to a "non-quantified" system in his WGS course. More detailed descriptions of each of our shifts are described in the outcomes section of this paper.

Review of the Literature

The traditional grading system is intertwined with the history of Western education and has sought to meet multiple purposes, from measuring academic achievement to comparing student performance (Olsen & Buchanan, 2019). Recently, there has been a movement toward change in assessment practices among and between a variety of educational stakeholders (Blum, 2020). While grading and assessment research has typically been distinct areas of study, research on assessment has consistently demonstrated the value of feedback for student learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In a meta-analysis of the effects of grading and feedback, Koenka et al. (2019) affirmed that while studies have consistently demonstrated that feedback is the most important feature in student learning, grades, even when accompanied by effective feedback, negatively influence motivation. Similarly, Shepard et al. (2018) note that grades consistently "become the focus of attention rather than attending to the means for improvement" (p. 28).

The focus of self-study scholarship on grading differently has, much like our aims, sought to transform the relationships between teacher educators and their students. Placier's (1995) foundational self-study found that grades served primarily administrative functions rather than pedagogical ones; highlighting how - despite their ubiquity - grades often go unexamined as a practice in teacher education. McClam & Sevier (2010) found that shifting grading practices destabilized relationships within the established system, because of concerns it raised around legitimacy and trust. They argue for more dialogue about grades across all members of the community (teacher educators, colleagues, and students). In much of the self-study scholarship, teacher educators reimagine grading processes in order to better align their practices with their commitments. For example, Brubaker (2010) shifted his traditional grading approach to individualized grading contracts; he highlights the tensions teacher educators face in negotiating authority with students as he sought to better align his professional, personal, and pedagogical beliefs. Similarly, in their analysis of their feedback processes, Pittaway and Dowden (2014) demonstrate the value of critical reflection of teacher educator beliefs related to assessment. In her examination of the intersection between care theory and grading Rabin (2021) found that grades can complicate a teacher educator's attempt to emphasize care in their pedagogy. For Rabin, de-centering grading, especially in an online context, supported her in explicating and mitigating the power dynamics between teacher educator and teacher candidate. Finally, Lischka et al. (2020) examined how revising a grading policy can deepen the practice of relational teacher education. In this self-study the lead author revised her grading policy "to remove all numerical values for activities completed" (p. 71) and instead provide feedback and opportunities for students to revise their work. The study found that a de-emphasis of letter and numeric grades increased the capacity of the teacher educator to engage in "the relational practices of respecting and empathizing with preservice teachers" (p. 75).

Aims

We shifted our assessment methods during the 2020-2021 academic year motivated by literature assessment practices and our orientation as critical pedagogues. We are influenced by writing and thinking in critical theory (Ennis, 1987), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), and feminist pedagogy (hooks, 1994). Thus, we each employed different ways of connecting assessment with learning in our courses that we variably call 'ungrading'.

In particular, we were guided by two research questions:

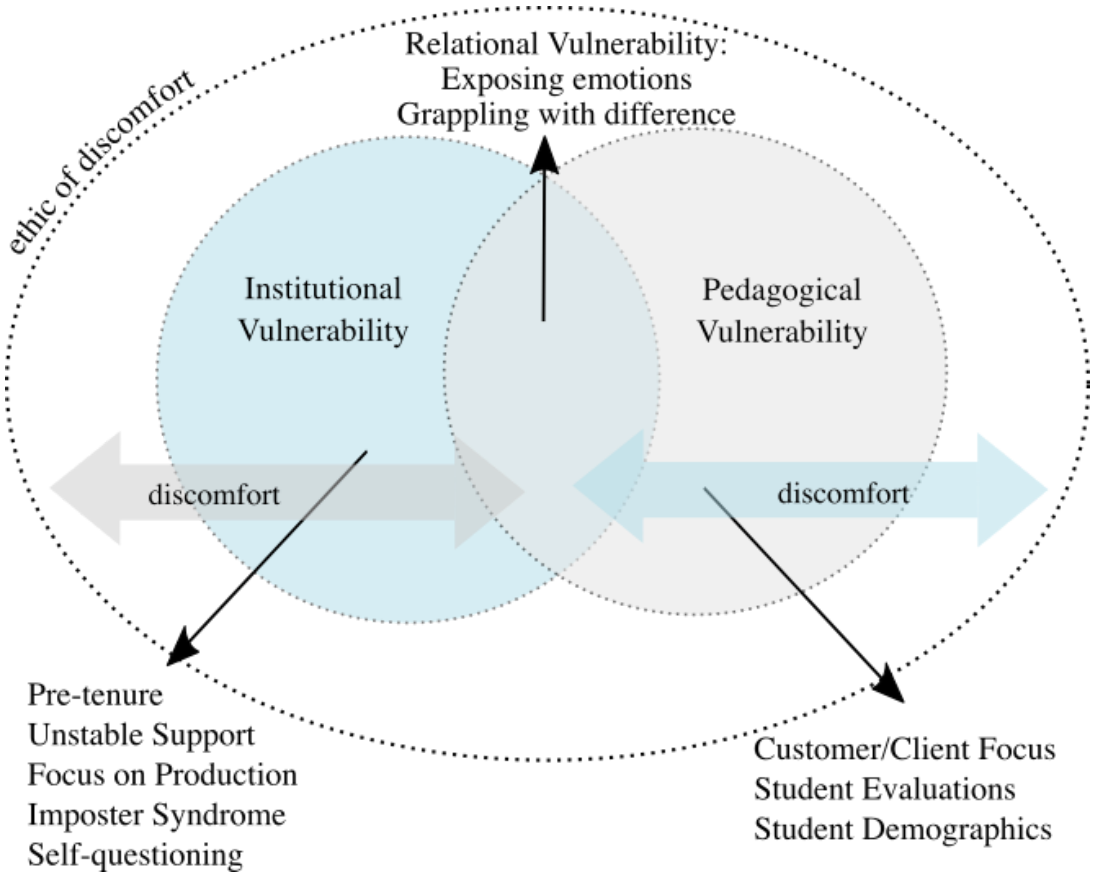
1. How do we (three college-level instructors) further humanize our practice through ungrading?
2. How do we navigate experiences of vulnerability that arise from a shift to ungrading?

Methods

For this self-study, we employed assessment *differently* in each of our classes. Thus, we implemented a self-study as a project of collaboration and dialogic inquiry and engaged with each others' contributions to produce individual and community learning (Lunenberg & Samaras, 2011). A collaborative self-study allowed us to use ungrading practices within our own contexts, experience them individually, and reflect on and make sense of those experiences together. In this iteration of upgrading, we were most interested in the effect the process had on our assessment practices and how we experienced evaluating student work within a higher education context that prioritizes ranking, competition, and numeric values. In further interactions, we may ask students how they experienced ungrading. However, that was beyond the scope of this self-study. To collaborate and to determine the influence of collaboration on our assessment practice, we journaled monthly; emailed each other regularly with questions, anecdotes, surprises, and takeaways; and met biweekly on recorded Zoom calls over an academic year. Transcripts, recordings, and notes from meetings, journals, and emails comprise our data sources. In our first level of analysis, we drew from a framework that proposed different, intersecting types of vulnerabilities experienced by faculty within institutions of higher education (Buchanan & Mills, 2020).

Figure 1

Vulnerability Framework



This framework, rooted in critical feminism, proposed four intersecting, overlapping categories of vulnerability: 1) an ethic of discomfort where people intentionally place themselves in a situation/experience and experience discomfort, recognizing its potential for transformation; 2) pedagogical vulnerability, whereby individuals attempt to disrupt the status quo and may contribute to students feeling "dis" comfortable; 3) institutional vulnerability, vulnerability within the institution, creating worries about tenure, promotion, job security, and disciplinary action; and 4) relational vulnerability,

“shared emotional openness about struggles, and risk-taking, feelings of invalidation by the institution, and humanizing care towards each other" (p. 245).

Our analytical process was informed by two interrelated approaches to qualitative research: grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). We began by coding all of our data according to the four aspects of vulnerability. As an emergent framework, this allowed us to further develop the interrelated aspects of vulnerability by grounding it in our data. To ensure trustworthiness, multiple rounds of coding were conducted independently by each author. After the first independent round of coding, we met as a research team to discuss areas of confusion, identify any discrepancies, and ensure consensus regarding the use of the vulnerability framework and consistent application of the four codes. However, we also stayed open to new learning as they arose, open coding for those instances in a second round of analysis. These open codes identified emergent themes not included in the framework. Finally, even though we engaged in a grounded, thematic analytical process, we chose to represent our findings narratively (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), in order to provide a holistic story of each of our experiences with ungrading.

Outcomes

While each instructor practiced ungrading differently, we were all similarly shaped by the interacting forces of institutional vulnerability and pedagogical vulnerability. To illustrate this process, we share vignettes narratively illustrating each of our experiences. These vignettes both describe our efforts to humanize our assessment practices (RQ1) and unpack how we were made vulnerable by these efforts (RQ2). Table 1 recaps, in brief, the approach taken by each author.

Table 1

Assessment Shifts

Tammy	Rebecca	Kevin
Low stakes, low points on all assignments	No grades, all feedback Student self-assessment	A four-point qualitative grading scale

Tammy

Tammy felt the intersectional pressures of institutional and pedagogical vulnerability because she was not only teaching a course about assessment, her class was responsible for a key assessment in the teacher education program, from which data is collected for accreditation purposes and tied to the college-wide rubric for evaluation. She had to negotiate assessing differently because of the linear assumptions held by a standards-based points system and accreditation committee. Her statement to Kevin in an email, “I know I shouldn’t be giving points, but I have to” demonstrates both the tension she felt as she pushed against her own knowledge and belief system and the vulnerability she felt as a pre-tenure assistant professor taking risks. However, she was supported by our collaboration.

She approached her course with an ethic of discomfort, however, the institutional pressures led her to change her orientation from “ungrading” to “learning about ungrading” as an unlearning process for preservice teachers. Rather than fully engage in ungrading the course, Tammy had the students coordinate self-selected groups, read self-selected chapters from the text, "Ungrading", and present surprises, key ideas, and takeaways from their reading to the rest of the class. They then discussed the implications of each ungrading practice presented by the author, beginning with the premise that each author was thinking about teaching and learning differently and shifting assessment practices accordingly. These discussions helped preservice teachers uncover how the system and structure of grading are embedded within the other oppressive systems of capitalism, racism, and patriarchy. The presentation of each chapter was ungraded, for no points. Students were asked to sign up for a chapter that they found interesting, to meet outside of class, and create a 15-minute-long “learning opportunity” by a certain date. Points, grades, and criteria beyond “learning opportunity” were not discussed until the end. In a sense, the students and Tammy navigated the dimensions

of the vulnerability framework together as they used the text and the book club to examine ungrading, develop relationships, and begin to learn new pedagogical strategies for assessment.

For example, after one group of students (White, cisgender identifying males) presented their chapter, they paused. One sighed and looked toward the students in the class and said, “I have never thought about any of this before. I have never read a textbook that I liked to read. This is…this is…I am not sure what I am going to do with this now…” Many students in the class nodded, sighing back. It was a moment of shared relational vulnerability. He was in an approximate pedagogical position, presenting to the class, and found himself exposing his emotions and grappling with differences publicly. The relational nature of the text, the acceptance of his peers, who had recently found themselves in the same situation, and the embodied reaction, the collective sigh, seemed to express their collective discomfort, but also the sense of community they were developing in that discomfort. Tammy understood this experience to mean that together, they were uncomfortable with the status quo but also with what it meant to disrupt the system.

Rebecca

Rebecca, a pre-tenure faculty member who works primarily in teacher education, transitioned away from a system in her undergraduate teacher education course where students could accumulate points for each assignment. The points available ranged from five to thirty, based on the importance of each assignment, and over the course of a semester, cumulatively the assignments represented a possible 100 points. The new approach she applied during this self-study was to go completely gradeless, or a version of what Gibbs (2020) described as “all-feedback-no-grades” (p. 92). She made this choice because it was aligned with her educational philosophy, which is rooted in critical frameworks (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994) that seek to disrupt the hierarchy of traditional student-teacher dynamics and create more collaborative communities in educational spaces. She had also experienced a phenomenon described by Gibbs (2020), where her students rarely acted on the feedback she had previously provided.

> *When teachers give feedback together with a grade, the students see the feedback as justification for the grade, but if there is feedback without a grade, then students can see the feedback for its own sake and act on it. (p. 96)*

She saw these two aspects as connected. Perhaps removing grades could make feedback a more integral part of the collaborative, dialogic communities she was trying to foster.

While she entered the work with an ethic of discomfort, she immediately learned how this process also demanded discomfort of students. They were asked to trust an instructor they did not yet know with a grading system where the parameters were vague. This pedagogical vulnerability was experienced both by Rebecca and the students in her class. Moreover, because the practice was out of the norm for faculty in the department, she expected that her more experienced colleagues would likely take issue with an ungraded course, raising concerns for her regarding institutional vulnerability. Therefore, she chose not to share this practice with colleagues outside of this self-study group. She was also concerned that the discomfort students might feel could be shared more broadly, and worried about the potential impacts, especially because multiple sections of this course run each semester, and the other sections used more traditional grading structures.

The process raised both practical and intellectual questions for Rebecca. Students became more comfortable with the process of ungrading as she had developed trusting relationships with them over the semester, which alleviated some of the pedagogical and institutional vulnerability she had been experiencing near the beginning of the course. However, new challenges arose when it was time to determine the final course grade. She met individually with each student and through their self-assessment they collaboratively determined a course grade. She then shared this in an email with the other members of this self-study:

> *I've been thinking a lot about self-evaluation - which I think can be super valuable for students. But this process of narrowing it down to a letter grade which is supposed to signify something in the larger world just felt like I was reducing all of the fantastic expansive work we did over the semester. And putting a responsibility on students that they palpably did not want. Which was interesting to think about - whether I*

am just transferring my burden onto them (but still holding the strings that say 'I'm in charge'). I think releasing the strings might mean either:

1. They decide what grade they get or

2. Everyone gets an A

Not sure I am ready for that yet...but something to ponder.

This quote demonstrates a renewed interaction between pedagogical and institutional vulnerability. At the end of the semester, students still felt uncomfortable being charged with determining their own course grade, but Rebecca felt too vulnerable to release all of the authority tied to being the person who "grades" students. However, this collaborative self-study space provided her with the support to engage with the questions that make instructors vulnerable and demand greater vulnerability from their students as they sought to collectively disrupt the status quo around grading practices.

Kevin

Kevin, a contingent faculty member in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality (WGS) studies as well as the Math department, moved away from a fairly typical numeric grading scheme where the final course grade was a weighted average of categories. Most of his prior teaching and learning experiences were in mathematics and physics courses where categories included homework, quizzes, and exams. This was his second-semester teaching in WGS and he decided to adopt a qualitative grading scheme similar to Elbow (1997). Work could be graded for completion (Complete, Not Done) or as Excellent, Satisfactory, Cannot Assess, Not Done. There were no late penalties and Not Done was not a proxy for a numerical grade of zero, it only indicated the absence of the work. While this was still grading, it functioned as an approach to ungrading by refusing late penalties, necessitating student involvement in final grade assignment, and setting aside some activities as completion-based (Kohn, 2020).

The inability to average qualitative data necessitated dialogue with students challenging the centrality of the instructor. It required considering, with the student, overall changes in work in the context of the first full semester of remote learning during the pandemic. Students submitted two self-assessments during the course answering questions modeled after Stommel (2020). These questions invited students to reflect on their success, excitement, and challenges as well as revisit student learning outcomes in the syllabus. This grading system could be used, to a degree, within a learning management system, such as Brightspace, which allows for custom grading schemes. Students could see their grades in the grade book, but there was no current average or numerical standing. These two self-assessments were a crucial component of assigning a final course grade. The syllabus described examples of how these qualitative grades would be translated into the required institutional grades A, B, C, D, and F (with +/-) though those examples were not formulaic.

Example 1: Clearly all excellent work would result in an A. But so would work that began unsatisfactory but progressed to satisfactory and finally, and consistently, was excellent. This trend might indicate growth and engagement with the feedback.

All work was submitted within a Google folder shared with Kevin and feedback was primarily provided using the comment feature. Kevin found the combination of ungrading with the use of Google Docs supported a process-focused orientation to student work. Students almost always replied to the comment-based feedback in the documents. These became conversations not only about the assignment but also about the content and personal details.

The "Cannot Assess" grade was framed to students as an invitation and not as a proxy for a C or D. It was always an invitation to return and continue working on the assignment and students often did return and make changes that had been scaffolded through those comment based conversations with Kevin in Google Docs. This refocusing on process instead of grades was exciting to experience. By the end of the semester, Kevin sent the following email to the other two authors.

> *What a weird feeling trusting students to evaluate themselves. It's also a beautiful thing, a really wonderful thing. I can do much better of course, but even this first pass....while I didn't ungrade WGS101 initially, I'm just assigning them their own recommendations. It almost makes the notion a grade so obviously ridiculous. There are a bunch of reasonable A's. Folks who make a case and I can't see any reason to disagree but their work (while complete and thorough) is certainly diverse. I don't know, it's just weird...almost farcical. Whereas with weighted averages...it hides some of the comedy of confidence numbers can perform.*

This quote demonstrates some of the potential of an ethic of discomfort (Cutri & Whiting, 2015). All of this change was made possible because of the ongoing support of our self-study. The feelings among all of us in this collaborative self-study can be best summarized in this line from an email that Kevin sent to the other two authors at the end of the semester:

> *And I love you both.*

Discussion and Conclusion

The meetings, the journaling, the shared text reading, and the dialogue all served to mitigate some of our fear of taking risks and helped us recalibrate the risks themselves. For example, the regular, collaborative sense-making supported Tammy's decisions to reframe assessment and to stay committed to making small shifts to status quo practices. Similarly, the shared space for sense-making allowed us to explore and question the nature of grades and their administrative functions in ways that weren't previously available to us, as is evident in Rebecca's vignette. The regular time spent engaging in shared material and reflecting on our own experiences provided avenues for relational vulnerability, which supported all three of us in ungrading. Moreover, our goals and experiences affirm existing research on assessment and self-study scholarship related to grading. Shifting away from traditional grading allowed us to prioritize narrative feedback (Gibbs, 2020; Koenka et al., 2019), and we saw significant shifts in the ways that students in our courses engaged with the material because of this transition to feedback. In addition, this research builds on previous self-study scholarship by demonstrating the ways that shifting grading practices can transform relationships between students and instructors (Lischka, 2020). For Tammy, the focus on ungrading as a pedagogical approach allowed preservice teachers to engage differently with the course material, as evidenced in the vulnerability they demonstrate in their presentations. For Rebecca, negotiating course grades in dialogue with students required the navigation of shared authority and decision-making power (Brubaker, 2010). Kevin found that the combination of feedback-driven support and qualitative grading prompted conversations with students, allowing for the combination of relational development and deeper engagement with course material. All three of us feel that the ways that ungrading allowed us to reorient our relationships with students deepened our practice as critical pedagogues.

This self-study furthers existing scholarship by presenting a framework that examines the process of grading in connection with institutional, pedagogical, and relational vulnerabilities. We demonstrate the possibilities and challenges teacher educators, and other instructors, face as they navigate grading differently, particularly within various institutional constraints. Given the implicitly hostile institutional environment, the space and time to be relationally vulnerable with each other was integral to our process and enabled us to explore how best to adapt our pedagogical practices in ways that aligned with our shared critical and humanizing commitments. In other words, it served as a valuable counterweight to institutional and pedagogical discomfort. The community we built as practitioners allowed us the space to think both broadly about the nature of assessments and grades as institutional constructs as well as technically, about how to carry out the process of assigning course grades within a learning management system. The multi-level support we provided one another attended to the multi-level demands we must negotiate as higher education instructors. While the particular institutional and pedagogical constraints will vary by setting, the vulnerability framework provides a tool for other teacher educators and higher education instructors to examine and collaboratively make sense of their specific contexts as they innovate pedagogically and/or rethink grading processes. Our findings demonstrate the ways that multi-field collaborative sense-making communities can support educators in the vulnerable work of assessing against the grain in higher education spaces.

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Something Happened

Exploring Student Religious Experiences Through the Eyes of Their Teacher

Jason Pearson & Michael Richardson

Evaluation | Action Research | Religious Education | Religion Studies

Although measuring religious knowledge can be fairly straightforward, assessing whether students are having religious experiences can be more difficult. The purpose of this self-study is to develop a clearer understanding of the interactions that enable my students' religious experiences and support me in recognizing when such experiences are occurring. The data from this study were reflections I created of my experiences with students which led to them having deeper religious experiences. I wrote ten narratives that captured my understanding of what occurred. Next, I interviewed those students taking notes on their responses to the narratives. In analyzing these two sets of data, I used the Listening Guide (Gilligan et al., 2006) to analyze the narratives. In the analysis I sought to verify that I had recognized their experience and uncover how I recognized this occurring. and find whether and in what ways I was able to tell when a student was having religious experiences in my classroom. The Student responses indicated that for some the plotline for the event was just regular attendance and participation to the experience from our interaction involved then engaging in extensive outside seeking and preparation. While the plotlines were diverse, I did uncover common elements which included taking time to know students and attending to my intuitions about their needs. Implications of the present study are explored for both religious educators and teachers in other content areas who might be interested in helping students move beyond content knowledge toward meaningful engagement with a discipline.

Context of the Study

I teach religion in a private teaching context where as part of their regular class schedule students are allowed to leave their secondary school setting and come to a separate setting to participate in religious instruction. The curriculum for this is somewhat proscribed and provided by the church that sponsors the program. The school is in a small, rural community where the majority of the population belongs to the church that sponsors the instruction. State law allows other churches to provide similar programs.

In Religious Education more broadly there are two goals: teaching religion and teaching about religion (Kollar, 2005). My focus has always been on the first goal of teaching religion by creating deep religious experiences to help my students become committed and full participants in the religion that sponsors the program. Determining whether my teaching leads to these kinds of experiences is more difficult than simply measuring the success of the second goal of teaching

about religion. The difficulty for me emerged when I tried to assess how well my instruction met my goal for my teaching. In trying to determine whether my instruction was leading students to have deep religious experiences in class, or because of class. Formal or even informal ongoing assessments of student learning were problematic because I recognized that students might be dishonest about their experience when they were asked about the impact of my teaching on their learning religion rather than about religion. They may try to please me as their teacher, or that their comments might impact their grade, or feel these experiences are private. This was my struggle: how might I determine whether my teaching did impact their religious experience and if I could uncover clues could I adjust my teaching to capitalize on my understanding? Therefore, this question guided this study: Is something happening in the lives of my students because of their involvement in my religious class?

Aims/Objectives

Thus, the purpose was to develop a clearer understanding of when and how my teaching and interactions with students deepened their religious experiences, and how I might recognize when such experiences are occurring. The following question guided this study: From my experiences reflecting on my students, what are the elements of teacher and student interactions that I perceive promoted deepened religious experience?

Literature

In the Gospel of Matthew, the Savior states that “Except ye be converted… ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (King James Bible, 1769/2013, Matthew 18:3). At the end of each of the Gospels in the New Testament, Christ gave the admonition to his disciples to go and preach to all nations. The commandment to preach in a way that might facilitate conversion is in many religions, not just in Christianity. In fact, this concept can be found in any educational endeavor. Does the math teacher only want to teach concepts to her students, or does she want her students to have the kinds of experiences with math that might lead them to become mathematicians? Becoming a mathematician does not fall into the realm of religious conversion, but there is a change or conversion in the person as they assume a new identity for themselves as a mathematician. They are becoming a new being. Paul in the New Testament says, “And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:10). I wondered about the experiences in teaching practice that could or were leading to the sort of changes I wanted my own students to experience. Was I accurately perceiving the influence of my teaching on my students?

"Religious conversion cannot be explained simply as a psychological process but involves a spiritual dimension” (Iyandurai, 2014, p. 189). Paul, to the Corinthians, said: “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11). This is what makes measuring the kind of spiritual experiences that tie a person to a particular religion so difficult. These religious experiences are something that happens between a person and God in the context of their religious faith. This spiritual dimension might make it difficult for someone who has had a religious experience to explain, let alone someone observing the experience to assess what happened. Even if it is difficult to explain, this spiritual dimension of religious experience is still something that is essential to conversion and important for me as a teacher seeking to create increasing numbers of such experiences. “The spiritual dimension cannot be ignored in religious conversion, and it is vital to understand the phenomenon of conversion” (Iyandurai, 2014, p. 191). This spiritual dimension of religious experience allows a person to connect with God and potentially leads to conversion. Lewis Rambo found that converts claimed to be closer to God and that “God is no longer an abstract concept but a living reality” (Rambo, 1993, as cited in Iyandurai, 2014, p. 191).

Understanding how personal conversion is to the individual has brought me to this difficult conundrum of whether my students are having these religious experiences of pure, intimate, connected communication with God. What happens in these religious experiences is deeply internal and not easily perceived by other people. Court (2013) elaborates on this idea:

> *Religious study should not only lead to religious knowledge and a moral life, but to creating a framework for a religious life within which students of any age might be surprised by joy, peace, insight, meaning and connection – whatever inadequate words we ascribe… A religious life sustained only by habit or fear, by community, security or stability or by the acquisition of an extensive body of knowledge is not a full*

> *religious life. While we cannot teach, promise, evaluate or verify religious experience, we must include it as a revealed and valued aim. Clearly, this is not an aim that can be broken down into goals and behavioral objectives. No 'behavior' is intended. (p. 257)*

Encapsulating this quote, Court makes the claim that we cannot evaluate or verify religious experience and that no behavior is intended, but she uses the words "joy, peace, insight, meaning and connection" which gives cause for contemplation. While there may not be a specific behavior intended for the students to show a religious experience, there are indicators such as joy, peace, insight, meaning, and connection. One can often tell when someone's emotion moves from anger to joy or from anxiety to peace. Though it has been shown that nonverbal communication is not 93% of all communication (Lapakko, 1997), as was once thought after a famous study by Mehrabian and Ferris (1976), it is clearly an important factor when trying to communicate how we are feeling. A teacher can often tell when their students are experiencing deeper meaning or gaining understanding by the body language or facial expressions of the students. This nonverbal communication cannot be context free if we want to identify its meaning (Barrett, 1993). I believe there can be indicators of conversion when coupled with shared thoughts and feelings. The behavior might be as simple as a brief moment of eye contact, a nod, a change in posture, etc. These alone might not mean anything, but coupled with shared thoughts and feelings, a teacher can have a shared religious experience with a student.

Methods

S-STTEP was a natural fit because of the personal nature of religious experiences for the student and teacher. In this study, I am not trying to figure out if my students are having spiritual experiences. I am trying to discover if I, as their teacher, can tell whether they are having those experiences or not and how I can develop contexts that allow for more of such experiences. The study was self-initiated, self-focused, and oriented to improving my practice as a religious educator seeking to improve his ability to help students have deeper religious experiences (LaBoskey, 2004). Through a S-STTEP approach, I observed my classroom and my student interactions seeking to identify characteristics of religious experiences as they occurred in order to better engage my students in religious instruction. Throughout the data collection, analysis, and representation of findings, I worked with my co-author as a critical friend who questioned and provided support.

Through observations and analysis of the students, I sought to determine the accuracy of my intuitions about students' learning and experience in moments of instruction. I interviewed ten students who had previously been in my classes. My data consists of my observations, notes on my reflections, and my journals about experiences and interactions with my students that I labeled as spiritual or enlarging their religious development. I presented my narrative to each student and asked him or her if they agreed with the narrative and if there were any additional details. I adjusted the story based on their details to make a more accurate and cohesive story. I inquired if they felt this religious experience was significant for them and recorded the interview. I presented my narrative to the students themselves. I asked them if they agreed with what I had written and if there were any additional details that needed to be added. I asked them if they felt like this was a significant religious experience for them. I recorded those interviews and with that text, I was able to add their narrative to my own to create a more cohesive story about what happened. All students interviewed were no longer my students and the results of the interview would have no impact on their classroom experience. My narratives and students' responses to them constituted my data collection.

For the analysis process, I used Gilligan's work on using listening to guide analysis (Gilligan et al., 2006). The first part of the Listening Guide is looking for plotlines. I was able to piece together four different plotlines based on the student's readiness before the event. Then, with those plotlines, I showed I moved to the next aspect of the listening guide which involved the construction of I-poems based on the data. These are created by identifying every "I" statement in the narrative. I-poems force the researcher to listen to the first-person voice and to hear more clearly how this person speaks about themselves. This was such an enjoyable part for me because it made the narratives live for me. When the narrative is put into an I-poem, small but important details are easily seen. Through I-poems and my consideration of them, I was able to determine the plotlines in the data and how each story fit within the plotlines. The third part is Contrapuntal Listening which comes from the concept of contrapuntal music. I started with the entire narrative and looked for different voices. I looked for negative versus positive voices, my voice versus the student's voice, or my

actions versus the student's actions. From this, I was able to begin to form my conclusions about the narratives. Following my analysis based on the Listening Guide, I next engaged with critical friends (my coauthor, my colleagues, and others) to critique and then deepen the analysis helping me broaden and deepen the analysis and develop the trustworthiness of my interpretation.

Outcomes

From plotlines that I created from narratives, I developed I-poems to represent each experience recorded in my data (see Gilligan et al., 2006). The I-poems captured the interactions I had with my students. For this paper, I will be only focusing on one of the interactions with my students. To represent my findings, I included descriptions of what happened to me as I prepared a lesson for a student while that student was at school that day.

I-Poem

Me	Student
I felt passionate. I had read. I just felt really inspired. I went to work. I did more collaborating. I did more talking. I did more planning. I did more wrestling. I got in class. I could feel. I wanted this.	I felt depressed. I felt lazy. I procrastinated. I was a lot less happy. I began to care less. I wasted time endlessly. I just lacked the care. I began to question. I had no reason. I was stuck. I couldn't feel joy.
I asked. I felt. I asked. I looked at a student. I walked by.	I entered my scripture study. I went to school. I felt sad. I felt God would help me. I walked into Brother Pearson's. I listened. I never wanted to leave. I never wanted the feelings to diminish. I recognized. I heard. I wrote.
"I needed to hear this today."	I know God is aware of me. I needed. I realized.

As the form of the poem suggests, this was an interactive process. You will note that my focus was on what I was doing and while as the poems' structure suggests, the student was involved in their own experience of this in this interaction. In my memory, as captured in this poem, I felt very passionate about a certain topic that I wanted to teach. For some reason, I just had an idea, and I couldn't make that idea fit into the block of scriptures that we were teaching that day. I worked hard and seemed to produce a decent lesson. For the most part, though, it felt like a normal lesson when I taught it.

When I look at these two I-Poems side by side, I can see my struggle–which was a struggle to say the right thing to my students that day, and at almost the same time the student was struggling with the opposite emotions. The student presents herself as being depressed and apathetic. I have presented her experiences of depression and apathy in opposition to my desire to create a lesson about which I felt passionate. It is only in the last stanza that the impact of my passion becomes visible in the student's expression of her response. As my drive to try and convey a message to my students grew, I was using words like passionate, inspired, work, collaborating, talking, planning, and wrestling. The student is using words with the opposite feeling: depressed, lazy, procrastinated, less happy, wasted time, lacking the care, and stuck.

As I act and teach with passion, the language of the student reveals a shift in her experience and her motivation. I notice this shift in this student and the motivation that comes into them. Her statements: "I never wanted to leave," and "I never wanted the feelings to diminish." reveal her shift from action to inaction captured in the phrases: "I listened," "I recognized," "I heard," and "I wrote." I was completely unaware of what was happening to this student before that lesson, and even throughout the lesson I still didn't realize the impact that the lesson was having on this student. In fact, I wrote my side of the story before I knew all the details of the student's side of the story. As I was able to write the I-Poem, it was beautiful to see both experiences side by side and how parallel they were. It wasn't until the lesson was over and as I watched this girl prepare to leave that I noticed that she indeed was trying to stay and linger longer.

When I analyze my motivation to give that lesson that day and see the student with that specific circumstance happening to them, it really does feel like there was some other force assisting me in the preparation of that lesson. I felt that way in my lesson preparation, but it seems that the student felt that way as well, as the student says in the last stanza, "I know God is aware of me."

Through this work, I sought to develop not traditional findings but assertions for action and understanding based on my empirical analysis of these experiences. This analysis occurred via an I-Poem. My exploration of the I-poems reaffirmed my understanding of the elements of teacher-student interactions that I needed to be awakened to as I made efforts to increase the meaningful religious experience of my students. Acting on these findings I have improved my practice. The findings have implications for others who seek to teach students in ways that cause them to develop morally and intellectually and impact their lived experiences. This study also provides guidance for teachers in other content areas who seek to determine their influence in their students' lives.

My Realizations

As I reexamine my teaching, there are things that used to matter to me that don't matter as much anymore. The physical interactions that I thought were important, like raising your hand, writing in your journal, sharing with a partner, or following along, don't seem as important. I used to feel that if students were raising their hands in class and talking, they were having religious experiences, or at least that the student was having a good time. Maybe having a good time was all that mattered. Engaging my students in any way was so important before but now as I have analyzed my purpose in teaching seminary, I want my students to have religious experiences and not just be engaged. That could look different for every student. The themes of following intuitions and focusing on relationships emerged as I inquired into the stories. I explore these below

Following Intuitions

After doing this research, I thought I would have a list of tips or tricks that I could implement into my teaching that would increase the likelihood of my students having religious experiences. This is not the case, and I am more trusting of my own intuitions or inspirations than I was before instead of relying on new tips and tricks. Because of all the things that led up to these religious experiences, I am much more aware of my own intuitions and the influence they can have on the classroom. The more closely I follow my own teachings about attending to religious experiences, the more I will be led to interact in ways that support students' religious experiences. Many of these experiences with students happened after I had personally had a powerful religious experience in which my own commitment was fortified. Before one experience, I had gone to one of our temples and had a deep connection with God that day. In another, I was wrestling with a spiritual topic that was troubling me deeply and the answer to that problem just happened to be the thing one student needed. When I teach my students religion, my own connection to religion is essential.

In every story, I made a lesson plan or had an idea of how I wanted the interaction to go. Somewhere before or during the interaction, I felt a need to change what I was doing. For example, I felt I needed to do something, I remembered a dream, I had a thought, I asked a question. I didn't plan for these feelings to come. I don't believe it is possible to force them to come. After hundreds of lessons, I could never guarantee a student was going to have a religious experience. I never knew a religious experience with a student was going to happen before it happened. As a young teacher, I would have never noticed my students' reactions during a class because I was so concerned about what I was going to say next. As I have done this research, I am much more aware of what my students are experiencing during a lesson. As I notice their reactions, I am paying more attention to what contributed to those reactions. This causes me to recognize more when I am being impressed to make changes in my teaching and be more willing to follow those promptings.

Relationships

This type of study could potentially be important for any teacher. In this modern age, teachers are being replaced by online learning programs. If a teacher is just there to stand and deliver material, then replacing them with YouTube or Khan Academy seems like a great financial or logistical plan. However, there is more to a teacher than just standing and delivering the material. With all of these stories, there was a relationship that was developed between me, the student, and the topic. These connections are essential in human interaction and create spaces where people feel an identity and a closeness to a topic. It is not enough to know a topic so that you can receive an income someday. A teacher wants their students to become something more. They want their students to feel great joy in connection with their learning, and for that learning to become part of their lives. Although this paper is focused on religion, the connections I feel with my students feel similar to those I had in my college math classes as I sat in wonder and awe at the beauty of mathematics. Those classes made me want to become a mathematician and because of that, I made connections with the people in those contexts and with the topic, and it is now a part of my identity. Math brings me joy. After spending time with teachers in the public schools, they are there to help their students feel the joy of their subject and become something because of it or become converted to it.

I found that as I began to gather data for this paper, I became much more purposeful in my efforts in class to identify when my students were having a religious experience. I felt pressure to gather enough stories to make this paper relevant. This pressure caused me to rethink the way that I prepared lessons and how I interacted with my students. I was much more driven to have more meaningful classes and interactions. Doing this for a prolonged period of time has changed the way that I prepare and teach.

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Enacting a Relational Approach As an Editor

A Self-Study

Julian Kitchen

Self-Study | Relational Teacher Education | Leadership | Editing

Professors assume many roles. Although leadership involves new skill sets and relationships, little is done to prepare us for these important roles. Since Manke identified topical threads in teacher educator administrators' self-studies of practice, there have been a growing number of such studies. Less common are studies of informal leaders in the academic community. Editing, notably, has received little attention in self-study discourse or more widely. As editors help create knowledge, this self-study by the editor of journals contributes to better understanding and supporting the role. The first objective is to examine ways in which the author as editor has lived out a conception of teacher education as relational. The second is to identify opportunities for extending self-studies of leadership to include the editor role.

Objectives

Self-study provides teacher educators with opportunities to study their practices in a rigorous intellectual and practical manner (LaBoskey, 2004).

In 2005, I wrote a self-study in which I presented relational teacher education (RTE) as an approach to preparing teachers (Kitchen, 2005). Underlying this work was an understanding that "education is development from within" (Dewey, 1938, p. 17). The seven characteristics of RTE s have been adapted here to frame consideration of the relational dimension of editing:

1. *Understanding one's own personal practical knowledge;*
2. *Improving one's practice as an editor;*
3. *Understanding the landscape of teacher education scholarship;*
4. *Respecting and empathizing with authors and community;*
5. *Conveying respect and empathy;*
6. *Helping authors face problems in their texts;*
7. *Receptivity to growing in relationship.*

These characteristics are considered in relation to topical threads in administrator self-studies identified by Manke (2004):

1. *Power: Power may be inherent in the position or in the acknowledge expertise of the administrator.*
2. *Community: Leaders play key roles in developing and shaping the nature of the community.*
3. *Social Justice: Authority provides opportunities to covertly or overtly engage with social justice.*
4. *Reform: In an era of reform, leaders have opportunities to alter the educational landscape through their interventions.*

The limited literature on academic editing is also considered. Baruch and Konrad's (2008) edited volume "Opening the Black Box of Editorship" is particularly helpful, with chapters on the editor's role in knowledge creation (Konrad, 2008), communicating with authors (Rynes, 2008), the editor as activist (Jacobs, 2008), and the trade-offs among editorial goals (Starbuck et al., 2008). The importance of rigor in the review process is considered by (Crespo, 2016), who stresses the importance of feedback that is objective, constructive, respectful and recognizes the importance of the author's voice and choices. English and colleagues (2019) illustrate the importance of focusing on key areas for improvement; they illustrate by discussing their focus on the developmental growth of authors, internationalization, encouraging quality reviewing, and using the forum as a venue for discussion. "Academic journals are increasingly the topic of study, giving rise to the aptly titled field of journalology," according to Norris (2011). The emergence of journalology represents the recognition of academic journals as "almost educational institutions themselves" for their contributions to the public dissemination of knowledge (Norris, p. 1).

Methods of Inquiry

"Self-study of teacher education practices is a metacognitive and reflective practice conducted by teacher educators learning from experience," according to Martin and Russell (2020, p. 1049). Self-study, they assert, recognizes teaching experience as being "acquired by investing time in the context of professional action; learning from experience demands reflection-in-action as an alternative frame of reference for personal learning." (Martin & Russell, p. 1059). This self-study of my work as an editor of books and a journal in self-study is guided by this reflective stance. It is "self-initiated and focused", "improvement-aimed", employs "multiple, primarily qualitative methods", and is made available for "exemplar-based validation" (LaBoskey, 2004).

My data for this self-study are past journal entries and academic papers, as well as my current journal entries focussed on editorial duties. First, editorials in academic journals and books convey my perspectives as an editor as I sought to make sense of the field, offer insights to readers, and guide future authors. Second, in my journal, I wrote entries on the challenges I experienced and the choices I made as an editor. I maintained this journal from March 2021 to January 2022 containing twelve entries, many of which were written while editing or shortly after. These journal entries convey the challenges I experienced and the choices I made as an editor. Third, these two sources overlapped in two chapters I contributed to "Writing as a Method in the Self-Study of Practice" (Kitchen, 2021a, 2021b) in which I included journal entries and insights on writing gleaned from my experiences as an editor.

These sources are subject to critical reflection and analysis through the frame of RTE, as well as themes identified by Manke and academic editors.

Outcomes

I puzzle over my experiences in order to critically reflect on how I drew on relational teacher education to guide my leadership practice as an editor. I also draw on the self-study literature on leadership to help make sense of the challenges I faced. This section is organized around the seven characteristics of RTE (adapted to the editor role), with brief summaries of each and followed by data on practice from my research texts and analysis through the lens of RTE.

Understanding One's Own Personal Practical Knowledge

I have always appreciated prose that is clear and engaging. Over the course of my academic career, I have devoted a significant amount of my energy to writing articles, chapters, and books. In learning to write well, I have been guided by insightful reviewers and thoughtful editors. When I became the editor of the journal based in my college of education, I recognized that I was assuming a significant level of responsibility for the growth of my professional colleagues. Over a dozen years as an editor, I have come to recognize that editing, particularly in self-study, is a professional practice in need of exploration, particularly as it relates to the personal professional well-being of authors. Today, as the editor of a top-tier journal, multiple books, a handbook, and a book series, I recognize that becoming an editor is to assume an important leadership role in my communities of educational scholarship and practice. In order to attend to these responsibilities relationally and thoughtfully, I have drawn on my practice as a relational teacher educator.

The impact of my personal practical knowledge as a reader on my approach as an editor is evident in "Tips on Writing an Educational Research Article for Brock Education," I wrote:

> *First, capture my interest in the first few paragraphs. Too often papers begin "In this paper, I..." or "This is a study of X." While these are direct and to the point, they are BORING. Imagine that I am browsing through on-line academic articles while sipping coffee on a Sunday morning. You want to entice me to read on by hooking me with an important social issue, an interesting problem, or a clever analogy…*
>
> *Second, tell me why your topic of great interest or importance at the moment. As an editor, I am more likely to work with a manuscript because when has something urgent and important to share with the world…*
>
> *Third, convey a sense of wonder and engagement about the topic and the research…*
>
> *Fourth, tell me how your work relates to the larger field of study…*
>
> *Fifth, provide a thorough analysis of the research findings. Often manuscripts arrive with detailed data or stories but very short sections on analysis and conclusions…*
>
> *Sixth, write well. Good writing looks effortless but is the result of countless revisions and edits. For complex ideas to become clear and understandable, the author must carefully select the words and phrasings that bring these ideas to life… (Kitchen, 2011, pp. 1-3)*

The purpose of this editorial was to make explicit to prospective authors the literary "reasoning that underpins the teaching that they are experiencing" (Loughran, 2006, p. 5). Or, as I wrote more recently, "A well-written self-study should rise above being functional and informative textile to become a precisely and delicately crafted tapestry that artfully tells the story of the research in order to evoke understanding in the reader and, even, prompt changes in practice" (Kitchen, 2021a, p. 3).

Also guiding my practice as an editor is my practical knowledge as an academic writer who has honed his craft through the guidance of reviewers and editors. In particular, the modeling of my academic mentors informs my understanding:

> *I am inspired by the example of leaders in self-study who supported me as a new scholar. Stefanie Pinnegar welcomed me warmly at my first Castle conference in 2002. John Loughran and Tom Russell encouraged me to submit work to the first issue of Studying Teacher Education. Linda Fitzgerald and Deborah Tidwell collaborated with me in editing my first book. I see myself as following in their footsteps. I know from my own negative experience elsewhere and positive experiences in the S-STEP SIG that the words and actions of leaders make a difference. Responses from people I have supported confirm the power of encouragement by leaders in the field. (Journal April 9, 2021)*

Feedback from reviewers and editors has been key to my professional learning and I continue to benefit from such feedback as an experienced writer. My experiences as an emerging scholar have guided my understanding of the editor as leader and, more generally, my approach to leadership in teacher education (Kitchen, 2016).

Improving one's practice as an editor

As an editor previously, as well as a program leader, I recognized the importance of leadership in improving scholarship and building strong educational communities (Fullan, 1997). In my journal, I wrote:

> *First, editing has become an important part of my professional work and identity. I currently edit a book series for an academic publisher and am co-editor of the main journal for the self-study of teacher education practices. I am currently editing three books, and recently edited the second edition of the self-study handbook. Second, as I reflect on my work and seek to become a better editor, I notice a dearth of literature on effective editing or editing as leadership in education, particularly in self-study. (March 15, 2021)*

The practice of reflecting—through journal entries, articulating my approach to editing (Kitchen, 2014; 2021a) and this chapter—on my role as an editor through an RTE lens (consciously and unconsciously) has been an important element of my editing process, as it has been in my teaching and to leadership practices (Kitchen, 2016). The limited literature on leadership in self-study and the role of editor reinforces the importance of being mindful of one's practice. It is important to acknowledge and critique one's power (Manke, 2004) in order to serve as gatekeeper and validator of knowledge in a humble, relational, and caring manner (Kitchen, 2005). Improving one's practice also involves a commitment to supporting and building community (Manke, 2004), which I attempt to do, for example, by offering encouraging feedback at or after conference sessions at AERA (Journal, April 15, 2021). It is also important in the role of editor as reformer in the discourse community (Manke, 2004). This commitment prompted a special issue of Studying Teacher Education on social justice in the wake of the killing of George Floyd by American police and an editorial describing the special issue as:

> *a response to the structural racism that informs society and its institutions. How can teacher educators address their own inherent biases and unconscious perpetuation of racist policies? How can they address diversity, equity and inclusion in their classes? How can they break free to become antiracists? (Kitchen & Berry, 2022, p. 1)*

I have learned—through the process of reflecting on my practice and noting my lack of structured preparation for the role—that good academic editorial practice is also about being fully present and attending mindfully to the mundane matters of editing such as careful line editing, responding to inquiries quickly and nurturing new talent, It is about keeping the ship afloat, navigating a smooth journey, and, on occasion, doing something dramatic and meaningful.

Understanding the Landscape of Teacher Education Scholarship

As a teacher educator, a contributor to academic discourse, and a leader in teacher education communities of practice, I have witnessed many changes in the landscape. In the editor role, I developed a good grasp of the history and emergent themes in self-study. This is reflected in my practice of using the editorial platform to honour the rich history of S-STEP and the broader field of teacher education while challenging teacher educators to deepen and extend our collective scholarship.

This is evident in the preface and section introduction to the "International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices":

> *This second edition marks a more mature stage in the field's development. More mature in the sense that it reflects different preoccupations at a later stage of life, one in which self-study seems more rooted and secure. Taking the place of the vigorous and passionate chapters in the first edition justifying our existence are new chapters explaining where we are and what we are doing now as a scholarly community of practice. (Kitchen, 2020a, p. xi)*

> *The publication of this second international handbook is an opportunity to look beyond individual studies of practice to the bigger theoretical, methodological, and practical questions that should engage the field in the 2020's and beyond. After introducing the other nine chapters in this section, I review the history of S-*

> *STEP as a vehicle for improving our practices and the entire teacher education enterprise. (Kitchen, 2020b, p. 1025)*

Also, in writing editorials for *Studying Teacher Education*, it was my practice to go beyond summarizing the articles published in the issue by addressing themes relevant to teacher educators. For example:

> *Self-study practitioners critically and reflectively examine themselves, their practice and the contexts in which they work. Quality self-studies, such as the six articles in this issue of Studying Teacher Education, are situated in the present moment yet engage perennial questions in teaching and teacher education. (Kitchen & Berry, 2022, p. 1)*

Respecting and Empathizing With Authors and the Community

"Each adult learner has his or her own relationship to knowledge, and this relationship is influenced by the social and cultural characteristics of the individual's life history," according to Dominice (2001, p.83). This understanding, which has aided me in being respectful to students, has also guided my interactions with academic peers. In my practice as an editor, I deeply respect all teacher educators venturing into, or engaging over time, in self-study. This leads me to engage meaningfully with every submission and to intently engage alongside authors in bringing their insights to life on paper.

For example, in an email response to a recent article accepted for publication in *Studying Teacher Education*, I began, "Congratulations on an interesting and timely article that addresses issues of the day" (April 27, 2021), as a means of showing respect for their efforts. This is also often the suggestion that followed as they came from a place of empathy with the challenges of writing well. In my notes on the manuscript, I addressed ways in which the writing and organization could be improved to draw out the authors' insights, such as (1) "attending to some passive writing--better to show action on your part;" (2) "being clear in the opening paragraphs so readers are drawn in;" and (3) "how to avoid blurring dynamics that are supposedly "natural" with intentional actions by educators.

Conveying Respect and Empathy

As a teacher educator, my strength is conveying genuine respect and empathy to students. As an editor, I try to practice living alongside authors as meaningfully as possible.

In addition to being genuinely respectful in my interactions with individual authors, I also intentionally convey these in my public practice in the role of editor:

> *I take my responsibility as a leader in the self-study community very seriously. I make a point of offering a comment in each session and encourage people to expand on their papers for publication… At one session, a graduate student private messaged me at the end of the session to express her excitement to "meet" me. We then talked briefly after everyone else left the session, with me offering encouraging words… In the same session was a paper by a large group of recent S-STEP scholars. Their work resonated with me, and I also recognized that I might be able to offer them some guidance on being a self-study community of practice. I wrote the leader author an email praising their content, encouraging their collaboration, and offering to be of assistance. Later in the day, she responded with thanks and indicated that they would take me up on my offer. (Journal April 9, 2021)*

Helping Authors Face Problems in Their Texts

Carl Rogers, the humanist psychologist, wrote, "This book is about me, as I sit there with that client, facing him, participating in that struggle as deeply and sensitively as I am able" (1961, p. 4). I see education in similar terms, as I have written in my work on RTE (Kitchen, 2005). This is my adaptation of Carl Rogers words to the role of editor: "This self-study is about me, as I sit there with the authors manuscript, facing her, participating in that struggle to convey meaning as deeply as I am able" (Journal, March 15, 2021).

This practice is made explicit in a chapter exploring my writing process:

> *As an editor, I give considerable attention to helping teacher educators craft their writing to engage readers. For an upcoming book on diversity, I received a self-study by two teacher educators on their experiences as South African of colour. Their stories were powerful, but the chapter needed work. As their two 'story pieces' were titled "A Tale of Becoming" and "Radiance," it occurred to me that these titles reflected the overall message of the chapter. I suggested that these be incorporated into the chapter title and that 'becoming' and 'radiance' artfully woven into the fabric of their chapter. (Kitchen, 2021a, p. 13)*

Similarly, I reflected on editing a manuscript for *Studying Teacher Education*:

> *In editing a manuscript today, I attended to gaps in the writing: name of program, how institutional details fit together.*
>
> *I also asked for more detail in the methodology section. For example: 'You clearly had a lot of data. I suggest quantifying it in some way so we appreciate the efforts more. E.g., # of pages of field notes, # of journal entries.'*
>
> *I also asked the authors to expand on their conclusion in order to make connections between the specific study and larger themes in the field (Journal, March 22, 2021).*

Through this practice, the importance of rigor in the editing process is balanced with respectful consideration of the author's voice and choices (Crespo, 2016):

> *As I figuratively sit beside the author, I sometimes get things right and sometimes offer suggestions the miss the point or are not welcome by the author. While maintaining publishing standards, I largely defer to the authors. But through these interactions—which can be awkward--where clarity emerges for authors and editors. By bumping up against my lack of understanding—whether due to limits in the manuscript or in the editor—authors are able to make their points clearer for the intended reader. (Journal, January 11, 2022)*

At the heart of the practice is genuine engagement in writing as a means for sharing important ideas with others. It is my intention that authors see me working alongside them as a peer helping advance their scholarship.

Receptivity to Growing in Relationship

As a scholar and editor, I am receptive to growing in relationship with the authors I support. This, I believe, is reflected in the level of engagement with the editing process documented in the discussion of the six characteristics of RTE above. For example, it is my practice to take time to learn from my predecessors, identify best practices as an editor, engage with important issues in teacher education, offer thoughtful feedback and suggestions to authors, and serve as an ambassador to new practitioners of self-study.

As I wrote in my journal on December 11, 2021:

> *Over the years, RTE has informed my practice as both a teacher educator and as a leader within my university and in scholarship. Throughout, I have worked hard to be reflective in and on action. I see myself as constantly learning and growing alongside the people I connect with in class and in my scholarly community. Indeed, receptivity to growing in relationship has almost become second nature.*

Significance

This modest exploration of my experiences as an editor offers some insights into the lives of teacher educators and other academics who assume such informal leadership roles in academia.

First, the results of this self-study into my teacher education practice suggest that relational teacher education is sufficiently robust that it can be applied across teacher education contexts, from classroom teaching to field experience support to leadership in programs and in scholarship. This self-study also contributes to the small but growing literature of teacher education administrator self-study. In particular, it is relevant to the challenges of transition from teacher

educator-researcher being an editor. The importance of maintaining and adapting one's values and skills as a teacher educator to the opportunities and challenges of leadership, including as editor, are considered in RTE as a tool for praxis (Furman, 2012) by professors enacting their visions of education.

Second, if professors are to be successful in formal and informal leadership, and encouraged to develop relational practices in these important roles, more needs to be done to support them. While it is useful to draw on one's prior experiences as an educator, there is also a need for professional preparation. This certainly should involve the notion of praxis, but also basic management strategies and particular ways to establish policies, practices, and organizational cultures that promote reform and social justice (Cherkowski & Ragoonaden, 2016). Knowledge and practical guidance would help new editors be successful initially and sustain them as they continue in this vitally important leadership role in scholarship.

Third, there is a need for more academics to share their experiences and effective practices in various forms of leadership with a view to developing a body of literature on practice that will help professors thrive in these new and important roles. The self-study community is well-positioned to advance this field of professional inquiry for editors and other leaders in teacher education and beyond.

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Missed Connections

How the Quality of Teacher Education Community Impacts Student-Teacher Practicum and Teacher Educators

Kathleen M. Sellers & Stephanie Baer

Community of Practice | Care Theory | University Supervision | Self-study Methodology | Teacher Licensure

This narrative self-study addresses the impact of community on stakeholders in a teacher education program at a public university in the United States, with particular focus on student-teachers completing their final practicum. The authors began a critical friendship in 2020 with conversations quickly focusing on the importance of community in teacher education practice. During 2021-2022, both authors were responsible for supporting student-teachers completing practicum and a teaching licensure assessment. Data included personal narratives of community educational experience, collective narrative, notes, journal entries, and surveys. Through the lenses of care theory (Noddings, 2003) and community of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), findings suggest that during practicum, pre-established relationships were especially helpful to student-teachers. Narratives were used to understand how researchers learned, modeled, and instructed teacher candidates in professional community-building. Through a critical examination of the authors' past and present experiences of professional community, alongside student-teachers' practicum experiences, we suggest teacher educators and supervisors must invest time and care in cultivating professional relationships to better support the success of student-teachers consistently throughout teacher education programming. Accordingly, we see a need for empirical research that examines current and historic trends in teacher-education programs' collective experience of community and faculty skills in implementing community-building.

Context of the Study

It is well documented that community and care impact student learning and teaching practice (Greater Good in Education [GGIE], 2019; Toom et al., 2017). Strong student-teacher relationships lead to better student learning outcomes (Chetty et al., 2011), and strong faculty relationships lead to more quality instruction (Styron & Nyman, 2008). Pandemic-induced isolation underscored the importance of community for students and teachers alike. During the summer of 2020, the authors met and began our "critical friendship" (Samaras, 2011, p. 13), in the midst of professional and institutional uncertainty. Our friendship became an anchor for our personal and professional growth, as we wrestled with a lack of professional community in our respective roles of doctoral student in educational leadership [Kathleen] and associate professor of art education [Stephanie], at one public university in the American Midwest.

In the fall of 2021, for the first time during our critical friendship, our roles aligned around working with student-teachers taking EdTPA, a standardized portfolio assessment of student-teacher performance. Kathleen was newly assigned as Graduate Assistant to the Coordinator overseeing student teaching and EdTPA completion, while Stephanie had long served as a Teacher Educator and Supervisor to Art Education students. EdTPA is required for most student-teachers at our university to receive teaching licensure, and its implementation has been a persistent point of tension in our teacher education department, partly because of philosophical objections to the positivist orientation of standardized assessments like EdTPA. This tension is consistent with recent self-studies of teacher education faculties implementing EdTPA, which report negative impacts on student-faculty/-supervisor relationships as a result of implementing the assessment (Cronenberg et al., 2016; Donovan & Cannon, 2018).

A recent survey, administered by other faculty at our university and presented as part of a student-teacher seminar, added to our concern about the teacher education community when it indicated one of the greatest obstacles students-teachers perceived in completing EdTPA and teaching practicum was feeling isolated. Isolation is an affective experience of community, namely the absence of community, and as such, it can impact one's learning experience (GGIE, 2019; Toom et al., 2017). While for over a year we, as critical friends, had been talking indirectly about community, in the fall of 2021, we realized that being invited to both work with student-teachers presented a critical opportunity and context to directly examine the effects of community on our practice.

To explore this issue, we chose a theoretical framework that could address both the affective and relational dimensions of the teacher education community. Jean Lave (1996) explains,

> *learning is an aspect of changing participation in changing "communities of practice" everywhere. Wherever people engage for substantial periods of time, day by day, in doing things in which their ongoing activities are interdependent, learning is part of their changing participation in changing practices. (p. 150)*

Accordingly, we understand our university's teacher education program as a community of practice, where learning is directed at the practice of teaching. More than simply a practical endeavor, Nel Noddings (2003) has theorized that learning is also an ethical endeavor, experienced affectively, through caring relationships between teachers and students. Together, care theory (Noddings, 2003) and community of practice theory (Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991) shaped our study of teacher education community and its relationship to student-teachers as they crossed the threshold from students to licensed practitioners.

Aim/Objectives

For this narrative self-study, we aimed to address:

- How have we - authors - experienced community in our academic lives at and beyond our university?
- How do our experiences of community and student-teachers' sense of community, while completing practicum and licensure assessment, shape the nature of our pedagogy with teacher-candidates?

Because we understand community as multifaceted and a product/creator of everything around and within it (Lave, 1996), and because we understand healthy student-teacher relationships as engaged in a continuous cycle of care (Noddings, 2003), this inquiry aims to explore our individual and shared terrain within teacher education contexts. Our study is a response to Donovan and Cannons' (2018) call for "a strong, empirically grounded understanding of how edTPA affects student teachers' relationships with their supervisors" (p. 19) and for greater attention to and theorizing about the supervisor's role in the construction of the teacher (Cuenca, 2012).

Method(s)

We employed narrative self-study to answer our research questions. Self-study is a methodology, usually employed at the university level (Kitchen et al., 2019), through which teacher-educators recognize and modify their perceptions in ways that improve and promote critical consciousness of teaching practice (Geursen et al., 2016; LaBoskey, 2004; Northfield & Loughran, 1997). Narrative inquiry, "is a way of organizing human experience, since humans lead storied lives individually and socially," (Kim, 2016, p. 18) and helps us relate our historical experience to our present activity

(Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry compliments and enhances our use of self-study because "narratives can be a 'door opener' to discuss and think deeply about complex and taboo issues" (Milner, 2007, p. 595). EdTPA is both a complex threshold students must cross to enter professional life and a taboo practice from which significant numbers of faculty in our school distance themselves. Our individual narratives provide the means by which we understand learning communities, approach critical friendship, and explore together the concrete expressions of and limits to community, as they relate to student-teacher supervision and EdTPA support in our university.

We used multiple forms of data in this study, collected over the course of 22 consecutive months, during which we engaged in regular self-study conversations. We took notes during these conversations and journaled about our experiences, especially of teacher supervision and EdTPA guidance during the 2021 fall semester. These notes and journals were recorded in a shared digital repository, along with reflective journal entries about our self-study conversations, student-teacher seminars, and faculty and staff meetings related to our supervisory and supportive roles. Though we knew professional community impacted both our teaching practice and our students' experience, our self-study conversations revealed that without more data about our students' experiences, we could not make informed changes to our practice to meet their learning needs, during practicum and EdTPA completion.

Accordingly, we prepared a mixed-methods survey, drawing on Cho and Demmans Epp's (2019) adaptation of Rovai's (2002) Sense of Community Survey (see Appendix A), which we administered to student-teachers, after they completed the EdTPA in the fall 2021 semester, and received a 44 percent response rate (n = 69). We also sought formal interviews with student-teachers, though only one agreed to be interviewed for our study. We obtained prior approval from our university's Research Ethics and Integrity Office (ID #04078e) to administer the survey and interview. The choice to collect this data aligned with Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) suggestion that "problems must prescribe methods" (p. 14). By understanding the problems student-teachers face during this critical time in their professional training, we could more intentionally reflect on how our pedagogy, and the teacher education community that shapes it, might better respond to their needs. We coded this survey and interview data using Dedoose (2022), a web application for mixed-methods data analysis, and analyzed our data for code co-occurrence, categories, and themes (Kim, 2016). A selection of responses is presented in Appendix B.

This analysis, informed modifications to our teaching practice with teacher-candidates, and reflection on those changes. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) explain, "When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, then self-study moves to research" (p. 15). Accordingly, it was during this time that our self-study moved into research. We continued recording notes during regular self-study meetings and keeping researcher journals, but we also began writing and discussing autobiographical narratives about our prior experiences of community in and beyond our university, which helped contextualize our respective practices in the present and strategize for changes in the future. Then, we turned our attention toward the process of both storying and "[excavating] stories from our data" (Kim, 2016, p. 204).

Bullough and Pinnegar's (2001) guidelines for quality in self-study research assert "The autobiographical self-study researcher has an ineluctable obligation to seek to improve the learning situation not only for the self but for the other" (p. 17). Accordingly, we used our student-teacher data to clarify what student-teachers needed from the teacher education community. The survey and interview revealed that students who felt isolated during practicum also felt less supported by the teacher education community. To address EdTPA and practicum problems of practice, many students reported seeking/receiving support from peers and alumni as well as depending on various forms of technology (e.g., YouTube, TeachersPayTeachers, group chats), rather than reporting consistent support, or even comfort-seeking support, from experienced faculty (e.g., supervisors, professors). In light of these insights, we reexamined our self-study data, identifying specific moments from the past school year and beyond, which illustrated times in our practice and/or experience of educational communities of practice that addressed or informed our reading of the needs identified by student-teachers. We then wove together these experiences into autobiographical vignettes (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), which we then smoothed into a collective narrative (Kim, 2016).

Outcomes

Findings

Our survey data suggested that during practicum, pre-established relationships (e.g., trusted peers, alumni-friends, or former faculty) were especially helpful to student-teachers completing the EdTPA. Accordingly, to improve our practice, we needed to understand how we learned, modeled, and instructed students in teacher education relationship-building. Toward this end, in the sections below, we share our storied experiences of community outside and inside our current university, before sharing ways our practice has changed as a result of this self-study.

Outside Experiences

Kathleen: I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees over six consecutive years, at a Catholic university in New England. There, a community between students and faculty was fostered with intention and consistency. As an undergraduate, degree programs would host socials each year, which brought students together with faculty to share meals and conversations. When I had questions or just an itch to chat with a faculty member, I could walk around the department and find open doors and well-lived-in offices. Rarely did I have to set up a meeting with a faculty member, because I could so easily find them in their office. While I seldom grew close with faculty, I have many fond memories of chatting with them about life.

This was even truer as a graduate student in my university's school of theology and ministry. Community anchored the school's mission. It hosted multiple weekly community events. These included protected community time each Wednesday afternoon, when classes did not take place for two hours, allowing all students and faculty to share in a prayer service followed by a catered meal. While participation was optional, it was attended by most full-time students and faculty, creating a reliable space for informal connections. Further, the school hosted regular community nights, during which students and faculty gathered for fun activities and a potluck meal. Everyone was welcome, and so students often brought their partners or friends to share in the community. More than a school, for the years we were master's students, it felt like we were part of a family. This made it easier to approach faculty both in and beyond the classroom. When I had questions or struggled with content, I felt comfortable reaching out to my professors to ask questions. While office doors were usually open only by appointment or for office hours, once I was invited in, I felt welcome to stay for a heartfelt conversation.

Stephanie: While a doctoral student, I shared an office with four other graduate students in a suite next to five faculty in our area. My advisor made a point to fold me into her circles, introducing me to academic life through both my graduate student community and my new connections and responsibilities. My graduate student colleagues and I were at different places in our programs but were quick to share frustrations, study notes, textbooks, secrets to surviving as a graduate student, and collegial conversations. We invested in one another's success and helped each other navigate the academy.

My first position in higher education, unfortunately, did not mimic the community I was able to build during my graduate work. I was in a place where hidden resentment and passive communication were the norm. Professors wanted mostly to be left alone to do their work. Cliques were common, and friendships often seemed based on needs for one another's expertise rather than community. While I made a few valuable connections, the work I did felt isolated and unimportant to the greater mission of the department, though I'm not sure if anyone knew what that mission was. At faculty meetings I felt it easy to disappear in the small department, rarely being asked to contribute or report on anything. I longed to be among others like me, who cared both for furthering work in their own fields and also fostering positive relationships with one another across disciplines.

Internal Experiences

Kathleen: I lived nearly 40 miles from campus and worked full-time during the first three years of my program. So, even on the few occasions when the department or graduate school hosted a get together, I could rarely attend. Once I transitioned to full-time status and visited campus more regularly, I almost never found an office door open or a classmate hanging out at their desk. I was so struck by this that during the fall semester of my fourth year, our first back

to campus after the pandemic, I made a point to walk through the department whenever I was on campus, and every day, it looked like a ghost town.

Specific instructors, especially in my first year, made a clear effort to welcome my cohort. One professor bought us pizza and organized potlucks during class time, the expense of which he covered out of pocket. Another professor told us about her love of culantro all semester before feeding us a Latin American meal, like her grandmother taught her. Still, another professor invited us to a potluck at her home, after the semester wrapped up. But these were outliers. Outside of these classes, there were limited opportunities to build community. There was no scheduled common time, no joint lunches, and few invitations to coffee, even with my advisor. When I shared this observation with a senior faculty member, he lamented that it used to be different. In past decades, faculty sought each other out every week to have casual conversations over coffee. Offices used to be packed across the school. But generations shifted their expectations, people left, and most recently, COVID sent many home, where they have lingered, me included.

Stephanie: My initial induction into my department community was led by a strong and detail-oriented person who wouldn't hesitate to hug new colleagues and stop them in the hallway to check-in. I felt encouraged to make my small office a place where others could gather and chat, with a small couch, extra chairs, and a whiteboard to record spontaneous brainstorming. I was invited to department events and asked regularly to share what our program was doing and how we could be better supported. Our students' and program's accomplishments were acknowledged, and collaboration seemed easy.

Now, finishing my 8th year at this institution, I reflect on how a once-vibrant community has dissipated. A department that was alive with collegial hallway conversations, open doors, and happy hours, devolved into a cold, quiet place. While COVID and quarantine is partly to blame, our community's isolation began long-before. The university shut down a faculty space for dining together and didn't replace it. There were feeble attempts to bring something similar back, but to this day, there is no common space for faculty across the university. In my own department, leadership shifted and values seemed to change and diverge. What once seemed like a collective effort became clouded as communication and collegiality waned.

Changed Practice

Kathleen: Early in the spring 2022 semester, my junior pre-service students spent a few weeks in the field, reporting back to me through reflective journals. As they became flummoxed by problems of practice, I began advising them, "It takes a village to educate a child." I would deliberately point out colleagues that might have skills to help them respond better to their students' needs. This became a habit throughout the semester, reminding students during office hours, class discussion, and even our final class of the year, that there is a whole ecosystem of experts they can and should build relationships with, wherever they go to teach–parents, community organizations, faculty, coaches, intervention specialists, counselors, nurses, and even the secretary at the front desk. Further, this community is longitudinal; their former classmates, professors, and alumni just a few years ahead of them are all resources they can learn from. The better they know this village, the stronger their relationships with them, the more resources they can turn to to enhance their practice.

This point was underscored, when two different guest speakers, both having recently completed the EdTPA, shared on two different occasions that alumni mentorship helped them do better on the assessment. They advised my students to find alumni they trust to ask questions as they go. When, on the last day of class, I asked groups of students to recall strategies to complete the EdTPA, every group named alumni mentoring as key. During that same class, I presented my students with difficult scenarios, drawn from my own experience teaching in urban secondary schools. In small groups, they had to generate solutions to problems of practice, and one by one, student groups generated solutions that demanded collaboration with their imagined colleagues.

Stephanie: On the last day of class with my spring sophomore pre-service students, they entered in high spirits and quickly began pulling their tables together. Normally, this team-based class used tables that stayed in pods, and students would wander in, find their team, sit and quietly chat or get on their devices. Today it was different. The volume was heightened, the tone more jovial, and fewer devices popped up, while students were finding their seats. Yes, it was

the last day of the semester, but something else was different. Students who normally make a beeline for their seats and put their heads down walked in, smiled at the large group forming, and squeezed another chair in between others. Students who normally kept to their smaller friend groups in class were quick to bring stragglers in and converse across the long set of tables. “We should have been doing this all semester!” One student said. Another replied, “Yeah! This is so much more fun!” Before we started our activities for the day, I walked to the center of the long table and smiled. “This makes me so happy,” I told them. “You will learn a lot of things in this program, but if you can keep doing stuff like this - it will serve you so well as you continue on into teaching.”

Discussion

Our earliest experiences in educational communities of practice illustrate how structure and intention contributed positively to our experience of community. Kathleen benefited from protected time for relationship-building, shared activities, and institutionalized expressions of hospitality. Stephanie interacted with peers and colleagues in closely-organized spaces, was mentored intentionally to take on more professional responsibilities, and benefited from a caring collegial environment. In her second community of practice, however, Stephanie experienced a less caring community and more expectations for self-reliance.

This came to be mirrored in our current community of practice, as we have experienced it over the course of this self-study. However, Stephanie has witnessed a gradual attrition of community, resulting in the current state of individuation. When she joined the faculty, Stephanie benefited from shared faculty dining space, where ideas were exchanged freely and frequently, and a caring departmental culture, which included support for creating a welcoming physical space in her office, to sustain student and faculty intellectual exchange. Since Kathleen matriculated as a doctoral student, she has only known a school culture wherein community-building was driven by individual faculty initiative, rather than institutional design. Both of us agree, this has been exacerbated by the Covid pandemic but preceded it. That both we and our student-teachers struggled with community in this context seems inevitable.

Both care theory (Noddings, 2003) and community of practice theory (Lave and Wenger, 1991) are clear that relationships matter for learning. Within any community of practice, peripheral members offer a kind of scaffolding, allowing new members to participate in community practices without much responsibility (Mirra et al., 2016). As these new members improved their competency in a given task, they learned from more core members, who allowed greater participation, with increased responsibility within the community. Our self-study suggests that part of responsible participation in teacher-education communities of practice is the community-building itself. This can be enhanced by structural design of spaces that enhance connection and flow of ideas. But most fundamentally, we need to know our colleagues, because they enable us to learn better how to respond to our students' needs. If we don’t have the knowledge or skills to be responsive educators to specific problems of practice, no amount of caring engrossment in our students’ lives will compensate for the knowledge or experience we lack. We need a community of practice to help us respond, and building that community is a key part of our professional responsibility. This was modeled for both of us in our formative college and graduate studies, but as professionals in our current university, our learning and instruction has suffered from the lack of it. As we engage student-teachers, who we know are struggling with isolation during their practicum semester, we have realized that it is incumbent upon us to name this need, change our own behaviors to enhance the quality of the teacher education community, and help our teacher-candidates–before they ever go to field–learn through our instruction and our example what responsible participation in an educational community of practice can and should look like.

Conclusions

This self-study offers insight into how we, as teacher educators, have experienced community in our academic lives at and beyond our university and how that, along with student-teachers’ sense of community, continues to shape the nature of our pedagogy with teacher-candidates. Through our joint inquiry–into our own experiences and our students’, we found that community must be fostered early and consistently in the teacher education experience to function as a resource that student-teachers can rely on while away in field placements. These supports include but are not limited to relationships with faculty, supervisors, peers, and alumni. Realizing this, we made deliberate modifications to our spring semester practice that communicated this need, repeatedly and explicitly, to our teacher-candidates, prior to their

practicum/EdTPA semester. We both linked relationship-building to successful professional practice, and Kathleen explicitly threaded this insight between both EdTPA success and professional practice. Further, Kathleen was able to repeatedly model professional community-building by inviting repeated guest speakers to her class, who further amplified the value of their own communities in professional and EdTPA success.

Our personal experiences with (and without) community in higher education and our exploration therein provided a foundation that necessitated new and more intentional conversations with students about the role of community and care. Likewise, we recognize that teacher educators and other staff and mentors involved in the care and teaching of teacher-candidates require strong communities themselves. Accordingly, we see a serious need for empirical research that examines current and historic trends in whole teacher-education programs' collective experience of community. Further, research is needed to understand the skills faculty have in community-building and the degree to which community-building is incorporated into the teacher-education curriculum. Self-study, particularly because it relies so strongly on critical friendship, may play a key role in studying, modeling, and rebuilding more caring communities of teacher education practice.

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Appendix A

Sense of Community Survey Given by Authors to Participants

Question	**Potential Responses**
What is your role in the teacher education program here? (Select any that apply)	Student Teacher, Graduate Student, Supervisor, Teacher Educator, Staff Member, Other
What area(s) are your courses/endorsement/certification in?	22 options were listed based on grade bands and disciplinary area programs.
Did you complete your entire teacher education program here?	Yes, No, I am not a fall 2021 student teacher., other
Which assessment did you complete or were you involved in?	[Alternative-to-EdTPA Assessment], EdTPA, I was not involved in either assessment., Other
Did you have significant responsibilities beyond student teaching this semester?	Yes, No, I am not a fall 2021 student teacher., other
Where do you plan to teach after getting certified?	In [U.S. State], Outside of [U.S. State], I do not plan to teach., I am not a fall 2021 student teacher, Other
Sense of Community - Short Form Survey* * See Cho & Demmans Epp, 2019 for questions	Likert Scale response: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

Appendix B

Open Response Questions with Selected Responses

Open Response Questions	Selected Responses
What FACULTY/STAFF were most helpful to you during your student teaching/edTPA experience? Please list what position they held/hold.	“cooperating teachers were helpful, none of the [University] staff were very helpful” “No staff were helpful during my student teaching experience. [Five named faculty] were very helpful during my courses prior to this semester.” “My supervisor- Dr. Stephanie Baer” “[Alternative-to-EdTPA Assessment] Advisor” “While I am grateful for everyone that helped me throughout this process, I did feel rather isolated. I have a specific major and my [University] Supervisor did not know about this major really so I feel like they couldn't really give me much feedback or help with my questions. I also don't know of anyone else who has my major so that was hard since I really didn't have people to talk to.” “I felt I was unable to receive help or support from any University staff during my student teaching experience.” “[The Student-Teaching Coordinator] was most helpful during my student teaching/edTPA experience.”
What RESOURCES were most helpful to you during the student teaching/edTPA experience?	“EdTPA handbook and research I did online” “none of the resources from [University] were helpful” “Teachers Pay Teachers and my cooperating teacher's resources collected over many years” “Not many resources were helpful. I felt that I figured out most of my edTPA by myself or with the help of other students.” “The passedTPA website” “the handbook, seminars, office hours, and the edtpa help site” “My cooperating teacher, YouTube (regarding edTPA), various teaching books” “The graduate students at the seminars” “Peers I know who previously student taught, my cohort peer groupchat”
What role did the [University] Teacher Education community have in the success of the student teaching/edTPA experience?	“My friends were helpful to me. The teaching community as a whole was not.” “Being able to bounce ideas off of peers that have been constant throughout my entire educational program was extremely beneficial” “Not a whole lot to be honest, My supervisor was the most helpful. As well as the 11 week schedule to follow for edTPA”

Open Response Questions	Selected Responses
	"No role. I did not feel support from my school or professor during this entire time, they lacked empathy and understanding in the dynamics of certain lifestyles. I felt as though because I do not reside in [University] that I didn't belong and was never approached or even emailed by the professor or TAs." "The [University] Teacher Education Community had seminars that allowed the student teachers to collaborate with other students and ask questions to their supervisors if needed. I also felt that if I emailed [the EdTPA Coordinator] or my supervisor with a question, I always got an email back in a quick manner." "The close community of the Art Education majors, and our weekly seminars with our university supervisor were [instrumental] to getting me through my student teaching experience. During those weekly seminars we as a group were able to reflect on our week, the good and the bad, and seek insight and advice from each other and our university supervisor." "The [University] Teacher Education community was sort of helpful, but once I started student teaching I feel like all support was gone and I was totally isolated and by myself. I think I was so overwhelmed with all of my stuff and I didn't really have any tips on how to time manage or how much time I should spend on certain things or regular check ins from my supervisor. While I really did like my supervisor, as mentioned, they did not know anything about my major so they couldn't really answer my questions. I also would have liked getting to know them better since when I met my supervisor I had no clue who they were and then they were my contact point for all things Miami and I just didn't have a relationship with them. My methods classes were by far the most helpful before my student teaching, but not much was helpful during my actual student teaching."

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Collaboratively Cultivating Critical Racial Literacy Practices for Teacher Education

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Racial Literacy | Antiracism | Literacy Education

Engaged in the fifth year of an ongoing self-study community of practice (SSCoP), we recognize schools and curriculum as contexts that produce and maintain racism. As a group of eight white, female teacher educators from different institutions across the United States, we share a common goal of dismantling the structures that operationalize anti-blackness and anti-Black racism by foregrounding racial literacy in teacher education. In this multi-site case study, we used 'critical racial literacy' as an analytic framework and the 'Archeology of Self' as an action-oriented process to examine critical incidents from our monthly discussions of shared readings and journals. We found we needed critical love and humility to reflect and interrupt racism. We noticed we did not engage in exploration of our own beliefs and biases, instead we explored incidents of institutional and systemic racism. We recognize we need to examine ourselves in these contexts and systems. In sharing this study, we seek to call others into mobilizing critical racial literacy and the Archeology of Self, perhaps through SSCoPs, to interrogate and (re)imagine teacher education to work towards antiracism. In doing so, we advocate a global and united movement for more equitable education systems.

Purpose

As a group of white teacher educators from different institutions across the U.S. engaged in year five of a self-study community of practice (SSCoP) (Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009), we center anti-racist, anti-bias (ABAR) teaching and learning in methods courses. While we began our collaboration focusing on our own learning and (un)learning racism, our work has shifted to taking action in our spheres of influence. To inform our perspectives, we read, discuss, and write reflections on work by authors of Color. As an SSCoP, we aim to enact equity-focused teacher education that prepares pre-service teachers (PSTs) who are change agents. In doing so, we realized that Archaeology of Self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022) is one way for us to begin to develop our own racial literacy while simultaneously enacting racial literacy in our methods courses. This paper seeks to contribute to the SSCoP body of knowledge by sharing findings from an analysis of how we engaged in racial literacy development across various geographical locations to transform our pedagogy in literacy methods courses.

At the same time, we acknowledge that our subjectivities and accountability systems constrain us. The institutional structures we work within mobilize racism; thus, some of the changes we implement in our individual courses conflict with the institutional frameworks (e.g., teacher accreditation standards, licensure examinations, etc.). Consequently, focusing on the individual level of our work is not enough. We must enact “strong equity”—accountability systems and

programs that include all stakeholders and recognize societal and educational systems and structures that reproduce inequality (Cochran-Smith et al., 2018, p. 6).

To meet this challenge, we must recognize schools and curricula as sites of continued anti-blackness and anti-Black racism (Jackson, 2022; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021; Love, 2019) and center racial literacy in teacher education (Sealey-Ruiz & Greene, 2015). "Racial literacy is the ability to examine, discuss, challenge, and take anti-racist action that involves acts of racism" (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 19). In the past two decades, "the explanatory power of racial literacy has expanded the ways race and racism have been conceptualized across multiple fields" (Laughter et al., 2021, p. 2). Racial literacy aims to reflect on experiences with race, be reflexive about attitudes and beliefs, and take an anti-racist stance. Croom (2020) calls for a racial turn in literacy research and argues for the lifelong development of racial literacies among literacy researchers. This turn must also happen in K-12 classroom settings. Teachers well-versed in racial literacy can better identify barriers students may face in the classroom as being linked to larger systems. We must extend this knowledge to our pre-service teachers and foreground discussions of race while problematizing systemic barriers and focusing on actions that could lead to more educational equity for students of Color. If we are working on becoming racially literate teachers who promote culturally responsive teaching, we must be more reflexive and engage in consciousness-raising self-examination around race. "Reflexivity is a very important process in racial literacy development. It offers the mirror needed to do the important work," and forces us to be more conscious of our assumptions (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021, p. 23). We acknowledge that becoming racially literate educators and researchers will always be a work in progress and, therefore, we must continually self-reflect and "grapple honestly with the reality of race, racism, and racial politics in the United States–and [our] own role in perpetuating the systems of oppression" (Richert et al., 2008, p. 648).

The events of 2020-21, which again exposed the structures of societal racism, have amplified this pressing need. As we work toward developing and centering racial literacies for our PSTs and ourselves, we asked the following question:

- How did our critical incidents illuminate the ways we did or did not engage in the Archeology of Self, an action-oriented process for racial literacy development (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022)?

Conceptual Framework

We draw upon racial literacy (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021) as a theoretical framework. Racial literacy originated in sociology (Twine, 2003) and was later used in legal studies (Guinier, 2004) before its use in education (for a recent content analysis of racial literacy studies in education, see Laughter et al., 2021). Racial literacy requires a multilayered understanding of the functions of race in society and "that we learn to read individual situations for the ways in which they represent, reinforce, or resist systemic injustice" (Grayson, 2018, p. xv). For a racially literate person, "race functions as a tool of diagnosis, feedback, and assessment of conditions within society and people's lived experience"; this requires an understanding of the complex ways that race intersects with how individuals experience the world (Skerrett, 2011, p. 314).

Sealey-Ruiz (2021) outlines tenets that schools of education can embrace to develop racial literacy. These tenets mobilize racial literacy among PSTs, in-service educators, and teacher educators. First, Sealey-Ruiz (2021) recommends that educators read critical texts about race, racism, and diversity across disciplines to establish a common language to interrogate, problematize, and eradicate notions of racism. Second, to become culturally responsive educators, it is imperative that educators self-examine their conceptions about race, Black children, and other children of Color. Next, teacher educators must hold themselves accountable for modeling and practicing racial literacy while maintaining similar expectations of PSTs. Similarly, PSTs are responsible for practicing racial literacy in the classrooms where they will observe and teach. The fourth tenet includes discussing and critically interrogating personal experiences with race and racism. Last, educators operationalize racial literacy by taking action against racist and discriminatory practices causing adverse effects for Black students and other students of Color in the schools they will teach in.

In addition, Sealey-Ruiz (2022) suggests that the Archeology of Self is an action-oriented process that encourages educators to engage in self-examination or deep reflection that includes excavating or digging into issues of racism to understand how racism influences pedagogy. It offers six components for racial literacy development: critical love, care,

and commitment for the communities we live in; critical humility, understanding the limits of our own ideologies; critical reflection, thinking about how our identities privilege or marginalize our work; historical literacy, developing an awareness of historical forces that shape our society; deep examination of the self and biases; interruption, interrupting racism and inequality at personal and systemic levels. (See the Archeology of Self graphic here.) The Archeology of Self was inspired by theories and frameworks including Critical Race Theory (Ladson-Billings, 2021), Abolitionist Teaching (Love, 2019), Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy (Muhammad, 2020), and reimagining and reframing success and achievement in education (Emdin, 2021; Milner, 2011). Sealey-Ruiz (2022) asserted: "There is no way around this: the heart and the mind must be examined if we are to move forward in eradicating the inequalities that exist in education for BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, and People of Color] students" (p. 24). Some scholars have begun to use the Archeology of Self to dismantle the status quo as teacher educators (Porcher, 2021a; Tondreau et al., 2021), and others engaged undergraduate and graduate students in the Archeology of Self using multimodal tools (Porcher, 2021b) and through letter writing (Bell et al., 2022). We drew on racial literacy as a theory and the Archeology of Self as a process and a tool for examining our own racial literacy development. We highlight these efforts in critical incidents from our SSCoP below.

Methods

Using a multi-site case study design (Creswell, 2013), we explored the ways we did or did not engage in the Archeology of Self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022) in an effort to build our racial literacy development (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). As Sealey-Ruiz (2020) posited, "Individuals who develop racial literacy can engage in the necessary personal reflection about their racial beliefs and practices and teach their students to do the same" (para. 3).

Self-study allowed us to examine our personal and collaborative reflections about our racial beliefs and practices and the discord between the two (Dinkleman, 2003; Fletcher, 2020; Loughran, 2005; Samaras, 2011). Self-study offered a way to systematically answer our questions related to racial literacies in and outside of our individual contexts as we work toward a more equitable education system (Fletcher, 2020; Kitchen, 2020; Loughran, 2005; Sealey-Ruiz, 2022; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015).

Participants, Contexts, and Positionalities

We are eight white female teacher educators from varying geographic locations and institutional ranks (see Table 1). Our self-study began in 2018 when we met through our self-selected participation in a group on studying teacher education at the Literacy Research Association Annual Conference. Since then, we have met monthly, participated in shared reading and writing, and developed personal and professional friendships. We studied critical literacies (Tondreau et al., 2020), examined our whiteness and niceness (Tondreau et al., 2021), and worked to build our racial literacies.

Table 1

Participants

Participant	Years in Teacher Education as Professors	Rank	Region	University Type
(A)	4	Assistant Professor	Southeast	Mid-size, Public
(B)	8	Associate Professor	Northeast	Small, Private, Liberal Arts
(C)	4	Assistant Professor	Midwest	Mid-size, Public

(D)	18	Professor	Northeast	Mid-size, Public
(E)	16	Associate Professor	Midwest, Urban	Private
(F)	6	Assistant Professor	Northeast	Small, Private, Liberal Arts
(G)	2	Assistant Professor	Southeast	Large, Public
(H)	14	Associate Professor	Pacific Northwest	Private, Liberal Arts

We are mindful that our positionalities as white, cisgender females shape how we read, how others read us, and our work as teacher educators. As such, in our work together, we raise questions about what it means to examine race issues critically. We feel that our self-study creates a space for us to explore tensions within our institutions while developing our own understanding of racial literacy. We are cognizant of our positionality as white women when attempting to engage students and colleagues in conversations about race; we also acknowledge how much we learn from the emotional and intellectual labor of our colleagues of Color. We also acknowledge that some may feel we are challenging their positions of privilege. As white teacher educators, it is imperative that we become more aware of the privileges and biases associated with whiteness and our positions at the university and that we overcome possible fears about entering critical conversations. We would be remiss if we did not mention the need for us to interrogate our whiteness. It would be unethical to engage in work about systems of oppression without thinking about how we, as white educators, play a role in maintaining such systems (Linder & Davis, 2016). Our self-study is an outlet for us to reflect and grapple with how we do, or sometimes do not, interrupt racism.

Data Sources and Analysis

Data collection for this study spanned October 2020 to January 2021, in conjunction with our reading and discussions of "Race, Justice, and Activism in Literacy Instruction" (Kinloch et al., 2019). We chose this particular interval of data because the study of race, justice, activism, and literacy instruction built on our ongoing racial literacy development, and our analysis of this data allowed us to understand in what ways it did (or not).

One data source includes monthly video recordings and transcripts (n = 4) from synchronous Zoom meetings. In our monthly meetings, we began with personal (e.g., family updates, etc.) and professional (e.g., teaching of a common assignment; brainstorming possible data analysis) check-ins, then provided updates regarding our shared writing (e.g., reflections and writing for publication), discussed our shared reading (e.g., reflecting on chapters read), and set goals for upcoming writing and reading. Another data source includes our journal reflections (n = 32) and our responses to one another's journals and shared resources. Journal responses were reflections regarding the book chapters we read, common assignments we implemented, how the semester went and setting related goals, and taking heed of Kinloch and colleagues' (2019) call to foreground race, justice, and activism in literacy instruction: What are you willing to do? What are you willing to risk? What's sustainable? What isn't? How do you know? Our data sources aligned with our self-study efforts.

Self-study provides us with a space to practice the tenets of racial literacy. Price-Dennis and Sealey-Ruiz (2021) suggest three tenets for engaging with beliefs and practices: questioning assumptions, critical conversations, and reflexivity. Questioning includes resisting and/or interrupting racist or discriminatory practices, policies, and beliefs encountered in education. Critical conversations serve as an outlet to question assumptions and practice to gain confidence in using language about race and other biases. Reflexivity is the cyclical, ongoing process of (re)examining perceptions, beliefs, and actions about race and discrimination. We contend that we made more progress toward racial literacy development together than we would have on our own (Tondreau et al., 2020).

Explicating our data through the components of the Archeology of Self toward racial literacy development illuminated how we were or were not engaging in the process. We employed critical content analysis (Miles et al., 2013) and analyzed transcripts and journals using the six components for racial literacy development: critical love, critical humility, critical reflection, historical literacy, examination of the self, and interruption (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022). The first four authors worked as a subgroup of critical friends and coded data line-by-line with the components above as codes. We employed constant comparison (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), individually examining transcripts and journals and coding. We met regularly to confirm and reconcile our codes. Then, the whole group worked as external critical friends to member check, build trustworthiness, and identify the most salient critical incidents that showcased (or not) our individual and collective racial literacy development. We all reviewed the findings to confirm that our words and ideas were expressed consistently with our intent.

Findings

For this paper, we showcase two critical incidents to demonstrate how SSCoP played a role in our shared racial literacy development through the Archeology of Self. The dialogic nature of our group meetings and the interactive online journals allowed us to track discourses of race, power, and intersectionality, highlighting the interplay between the components of the Archeology of Self. Studying these particular critical incidents allowed us to engage in critical reflexivity (Paris & Alim, 2014; Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021), more clearly identifying how we used our developing racial literacy to impact our spheres of influence and also how larger systems constrained these efforts.

Critical Incident: Meeting

The dialogue we chose to highlight begins when Participant H discusses how she is experiencing difficulty ensuring that deficit language is removed from all courses in her program, even those she does not teach. During our October meeting, we discussed culturally biased literacy assessments and our own shortcomings in replicating these standardized measures within our own teacher education programs. For instance, we discussed issues of deficit language and how in assessing students, some of us described them as “high-needs” or “struggling” while labeling them with a level of perceived literacy. The conversation highlighted that these assessments perpetuate deficit discourses (Sachs et al., 2018). Deficit discourses are a tool for “literacy educators to uphold a culture of violence that affects all of our [Black US citizens] youth” (Haddix, 2020, p. 33). This violence contributes to racial disparities in test scores and disproportionate disciplinary action in schools, leading students of Color to special education and/or the School-to Prison-Pipeline (Annamma et al., 2014).

We engaged in an Archeology of Self as literacy teacher educators who teach PSTs to find students’ perceived weaknesses in the context of a white curriculum. While we challenged deficit discourses in our courses, group members indicated uncertainty about challenging colleagues who perpetuate those discourses with PSTs. Participant B shared her experience convincing her colleagues to be “on the same page” regarding the term “literacy clinic.” This example illustrates the interplay between Participant B as an individual who makes choices to challenge medicalized language that replicates systems of oppression, “You go to a clinic when you’re sick, or something’s wrong with you, not when you maybe want to grow a little in some ways with literacy,” and who enacts agency when she works to build consensus with her colleagues, “So I sent an email,” and, “I looped in everybody.” Through her individual actions, she is providing cultural knowledge to colleagues by identifying the problematic nature of medicalized language and offering more appropriate phrasing. Thus, illustrating how she is working beyond interruption to collaborate with others to build historical literacy and critical reflection. The discussion of these issues within our group represents critical humility as she recognizes the limits of individual actions to make the necessary changes in our curricula.

Simultaneously, this excerpt highlights Participant B's effort to interrupt deficit discourse in her institution. She aims to change the discourse of her colleagues, “If we could all get on the same page,” at the same time, she understands that the institution is larger than herself and that the misconceptions of others can and will undermine her own efforts to challenge deficit discourses, “Ah! you’re undoing the work I’ve tried to do!” Although we have formed an SSCoP to provide us with the language and the courage to speak up about racial injustice in our own context, we need to build a community to build racial literacy within our contexts.

This conversation began as Participant H shared frustration over a colleague who is teaching the literacy assessment class for her and having her PST use deficit language to describe students. Thus, opening the conversation for Participant B to share her experiences and then for Participant D to continue the discussion. Participant D then describes how our schools are designed to label and marginalize students who don't "perform" on state testing. Putting students in separate classes impacts their self-efficacy. Thus, highlighting the full spectrum of how literacy education is dominated by societal and racial discrimination. The critical reflection and acknowledgment of the historical literacy practices demonstrate a move towards racial literacy.

Broader societal discourses comprise the audit culture of education, which uses language to position and rank students and re-inscribe deficit discourses. The medicalized language tied to "deficits" in literacy skills, and typically adopted by mainstream special education, assumes that a disability is a "natural" impairment within the individual in need of remediation (Annamma et al., 2016). The colonial legacy of this thinking remains deeply rooted in the American school system, and linkages between race and intellect undergird our systems for disability identification, assessment, and support. In this example, Participant B is not only pushing back on the language of individual colleagues or the norms of her institution; she is also attempting to disrupt societal norms and discourses to facilitate racial literacy.

Critical Incident: Journal

Journal reflections helped us identify how we operationalized racism, as well as other issues that mediated our work toward racial literacy. In November 2020, we chose and responded to the prompt, "Reflect on the reading [Chapters 5 and 6] and/or common assignment. What went well, and what do you want to revise?" The reading focused on a student at a four-year institution, Arlene, who experienced a white professor who undercut her identity through writing criticism. The incident led Arlene to drop out of the four-year institution and move to a community college where she felt more comfortable. The reading allowed us to examine the historical literacy of writing instruction at four-year institutions and to critically reflect on how our institutions perpetuate racial disparities.

Participant B's entry demonstrates recognition of institutional racism, noting and questioning her complicity and the institution's role in perpetuating and dismantling racism, "Arlene's [experience of racism] was troubling, but one I can really see happening. When her [white] professor undercut her writing, it changed her life trajectory. She left the university for a community college where she felt more at home. This caused me to pause to consider what supports were in place or what instructional supports were used to lead to Arlene's success?" Illustrating that the critical reflection process leads to a desire to interrupt current practices and engage the remainder of the group in an interactive dialogue.

Participant D responded, "This is a really important question that forces us to deal with our institutions at a level that we are often not invited nor feel comfortable with." Wrestling with a system that needs to begin with critical love, Participant D references her individual comfort, indicating that her whiteness insulated her from taking action, evidence of critical reflection (Jones & Okun, 2001). Participant C replied, "When I think about tracking in US high schools, middle schools, and even elementary schools, I'm not at all surprised. The system is designed to have some students working for those in power. This system of oppression actually works quite well." This critical reflection addresses the historical literacy of schooling and represents how institutions lack critical love or humility. Throughout this conversation, it is evident that there is an attempt to think about how we can interrupt the historical issues around racism through critical reflection.

This dialogue suggests that we were collectively developing racial literacy; entries encouraged individual reflection that helped us identify and articulate how racism was being mobilized. In analyzing our SSCoP through the framework of racial literacy development of the Archeology of Self, we could better identify discourses of racism at the individual, institutional, and societal levels and how they constrained anti-racist teaching. This shed light on questions we needed to grapple with and opportunities for actions in our own contexts, such as identifying necessary instructional and institutional supports for students of Color or pushing back on the practice of tracking.

Discussion

We argue that collaborating critically and methodologically rigorously through our SSCoP facilitated our racial literacy development (Kitchen, 2022; LaBoskey, 2004; Loughran, 2005). We came together five years ago with critical humility, and over time, we developed critical love for our SSCoP. Our SSCoP embraced tenets of racial literacy development for schools of education (Sealey-Ruiz, 2021), by reading critical texts, often by scholars of Color, and over time we established a common language in our dialogue with one another. More generally, we embraced tenets of racial literacy development through questioning, critical conversations, and ongoing reflexivity (Dennis-Price & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). All of this occurred across contexts of different institutions and geographic locations.

The Archeology of Self (Sealey-Ruiz, 2022) as a theory, process, and analytic tool also propelled our racial literacy development. As evidenced above, we engaged in many components of the Archeology of Self through dialogue in our meetings and journals. The critical humility that brought us to this SSCoP and the critical love we established helped us engage in critical reflection, built our historical literacy knowledge, and allowed us to have the knowledge and language to engage in an interruption in our respective contexts. We did not understand the components of the Archeology of Self as hierarchical but as overlapping or co-occurring. For instance, we needed critical love and humility to reflect and interrupt.

At the same time, we noticed, particularly in this dataset, that we did not engage in the component of the Archeology of Self, exploration of our own beliefs, biases, and ideas. Rather we excavated and explored critical incidents of institutional and systemic racism. This was certainly a limitation.

As we move forward, we must further explore our beliefs, biases, and ideas perpetuating racism at institutional and systemic levels. We need to examine ourselves in those contexts. Perhaps we unconsciously avoided this component to avoid centering ourselves as eight white women literacy teacher educators. Alternatively, perhaps our reluctance to excavate our racist beliefs, biases, and ideas can be attributed to our whiteness and niceness (Tondreau et al., 2021). Sealey-Ruiz (2022) reminds us that “if teachers do not critically examine themselves and their practice, they are likely to continue enacting a pedagogy that harms instead of heals” p. 25).

Implications for teacher education include building local, national, or international SSCoPs with an ethical commitment to caring and critical love. Within such a community, teachers can read, question, and have critical conversations and reflexivity regarding race and racism. As noted above, these are tenets that will build racial literacy. We also recommend using the Archeology of Self within SSCoP. For us, it gave us a tangible, process-oriented way into our own racial literacy development. We believe the collaborative nature of our community helped us make more progress using the Archeology of Self in our racial literacy development than we, perhaps, would have on our own. We invite other teachers and teacher educators to do the same.

Like the scholars before us, we recognize the urgency of developing racial literacy (Price-Dennis & Sealey-Ruiz, 2021). It is the first step to dismantling racism in literacy education. We also recognize there is no end to racial literacy development; it’s an ongoing process.

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Examining the Value of Integrated Arts in Teacher Education From a Collaborative Cross-Border Cross-Institutional S-STEP Perspective

Michael Flannery, Mary Nugent, & Frances Burgess

Collaborative Learning | Creative Competence | Integrated Arts | Preservice Teacher Education | S-STEP

In light of the increased focus on curriculum interdisciplinarity, this collaborative cross-border and cross-institutional research investigates and evaluates the opportunities of integrated arts (cross-curricular learning within the arts alone) in preservice teacher education. Specifically, this self-study in teacher education practices examines integrated arts practice and programme components in two higher education institutes in terms of illuminating the possibilities and pitfalls of these practices. Key methods entailed thematic analysis of transcribed online meetings and related course materials using Gibbs Reflective cycle and Brookfield's four lenses of critical reflection. Findings culminated in four key themes from two self-study cases. Two emergent themes concern the value of IA and best methods. Another theme emerged describing and reconciling the conceptual, pedagogical and relational challenges encountered. A further impactful theme illuminated how integrated arts lent itself to reflection on, and development of, one's arts teacher education practice, permitting conceptual, theoretical and methodological reciprocity between the discrete arts disciplines. Subsequently, this yielded skills exchange and innovative co-planning opportunities that altered our perspectives and practices for the betterment of our students.

Context of the Study: On the Threshold of Educational Change and Development

Initial Teacher Education Review

In November 2020, the Irish Teaching Council launched the revised standards for programmes of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in "*Céim*: Standards for Initial Teacher Education" in Ireland. All new primary school preservice teacher education (PTE) programmes must be in alignment with *Céim* and existing ITE programmes are to be realigned with Céim from September 2022 for first-year student teachers. In Céim, they explain that "a reflective professional is able to draw on an integrated knowledge base to improve practice through inquiry" (The Teaching Council, 2020, p. 6). The Teaching Council adopted three pillars titled "innovation, integration, and improvement" to underpin ITE. It requires that programmes be "designed in a demonstrably integrated way…facilitate this through collaborative and cross-disciplinary team processes" (The Teaching Council (TTC), 2020, p. 12). It asks that "assessment processes and procedures will be coherent and shall be integrated using a variety of assessment modes" (TTC, 2020, p. 15). Creativity and reflective practice are two of seven named core elements demanded of all ITE/PTE programmes in the Céim document so that student teachers foster a creative mindset as reflective practitioners, innovators, and researchers

Primary School Curriculum Review

The Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) is also reviewing and redeveloping the primary curriculum. Creativity, cross-curricular integration, and collaboration permeate the proposed curriculum framework in a myriad of ways. 'Being Creative' is one of seven identified competencies that will play a significant and central part in children's learning, and will be embedded across all curriculum areas. 'Being a digital learner' is a second competency that will seek to "support children to become curious, creative, confident and critical users of digital technology" (NCCA, 2020, p. 8). Meaningful assessment is described as "collaborative" and integral to high-quality teaching and learning (NCCA, 2020, p.6).

While it does not make a specific reference to performance-based or arts-based assessment, it advises that teachers "use different ways to document salient pieces of assessment information gathered across the continuum, including notes, photographs, videos, and more narrative approaches such as learning stories" (NCCA, 2020, p. 24). While not specifically mentioning integrated arts (IA), the primary (elementary) school Arts Education curriculum will now support learning in film, digital media, and dance in addition to visual arts, music, and drama. The framework footnotes that "learning outcomes would support *integrated* learning experiences in stages 1-2 [4-9 years]". It also appreciates "while disciplines within Arts Education have a common creative process and share transferable skills, each has its own knowledge, concepts and skills" (NCCA, 2020, p. 11).

Connected learning is at the core of the well-established Northern Ireland Primary Curriculum (NICCEA, 2007). Subjects within the curriculum are drawn together with one overarching aim, and pupils' experiences are mapped through cross-curricular core skills and 'thinking skills and personal capabilities'. 'Being creative', for example, was established as one of five cross-curricular thinking skills. The arts (art and design, music and drama) are conjoined as one of seven areas of learning. Statements related to integration are scant and inconsistent in the subject documentation. For example, the music requirements stress that 'children's response to music may also take place within the context of dance or drama' but reciprocal statements do not appear in the requirements for art or drama. These contexts motivated us to pause at the threshold and seize an opportunity through self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) to examine the value, application, and challenges of IA in PTE.

Aims and Objectives

Inspired by other self-studies (Baroud & Dharamshi, 2020; Berry, 2020; Hohensee & Lewi, 2019) and informed by Long (2017) and Loughran (2014), this cross-institutional research aimed to ascertain the value of IA from a teacher educator continuing professional development (CPD) perspective. Specifically, this collaborative S-STEP research examined arts education practices and programme components in two HEIs in terms of illuminating the possibilities and pitfalls of IA practices. HEI #1 examined an IA programme component entailing music and visual arts over a decade (2010 - 2020), while HEI #2 examined recently initiated IA (Music and Visual Arts) from 2020 to 2021. Research questions inquired:

1. What are our lived experiences of IA in PTE?
2. What are the most effective methods for facilitating IA?
3. How did we resolve issues we encountered in IA?
4. How have we professionally developed as a consequence of IA?

The shared purpose was to reframe, re-imagine, and integrate new learnings into PTE Arts Education in light of the context outlined. We opted for collaborative self-study so we could focus on our personal and professional experiences as opposed to action research that identified and addressed a specific problem within the PTE context. While we could have self-evaluated IA in our discrete PTE settings, we preferred to benefit from the constructive feedback that critical friendship affords as well as fostering community and connection with teacher art educators from a not too dissimilar PTE context.

Review of the Literature

Cross-Curricular Learning

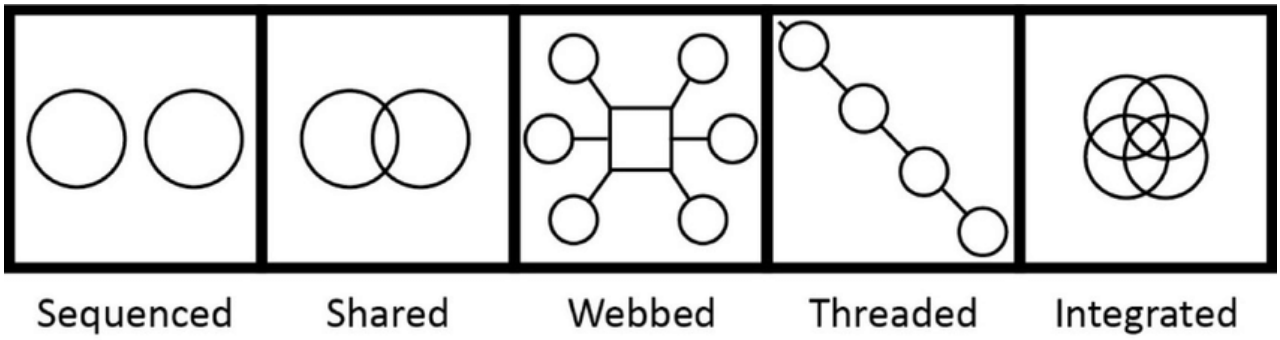
Cross-curricular learning (CCL) has been promoted over the ages by the likes of Plato, Comenius, Rousseau, Froebel, Pestalozzi, Steiner, Dewey, Montessori, and Isaacs with regard to obtaining a fuller understanding. CCL has been

adopted in diverse educational contexts for many years (Barnes, 2011; Kerry, 2015; Moore, 2009). It achieves a more holistic, comprehensive, and appealing learning experience for all learners (Bloomfield & Child, 2000; Hartle et al., 2015). Diverse learners of all ages and stages learn more effectively through CCL than through more singular and linear approaches (Burnaford et al., 2007). CCL has been used instead of more conventional mainstream education methodologies which have failed to meet the developmental needs of diverse learners (Anderson, 2014). It challenges students with regard to higher-order thinking through creative outputs and the application of acquired concepts and themes. Notwithstanding the recognised benefits of arts integration, it does not always fare well because it is often diluted, book-ended, or reduced to a methodology for learning only (Barnes, 2011).

Various taxonomies of CCL have been presented in relation to their degree of interdisciplinarity. Fogarty's continuum of curriculum integration (1991) examined integrated learning within and across disciplines and learners. Of these ten types outlined, five types concern the integration of two or more disciplines (Figure 1). Barnes's taxonomy includes hierarchical, multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary, opportunistic, and double-focused approaches (Barnes, 2011). Hierarchical integration develops aims in one discipline by utilising another. Multidisciplinary integration uses a theme to progress learning in more than one discipline and each discipline is progressed separately with some connections. Interdisciplinary approaches encourage subject fusion and prefer a more flexible teaching style. However, this can cause learning dilution and unintentional confusion (Barnes & Shirley, 2005, 2007). Bresler (1995) calls this inequality subservient arts integration and advocates for a more co-equal and mutually respectful arrangement. A double-focus approach ensures discrete time for subject teaching as well as integration echoing Fogarty's concept of shared integration. Barnes notes that all CCL can and ought to incorporate opportunistic integration, whereby learner voice and choice are accommodated. He also introduces the concept of a "performance of understanding" (PoU) that can assess learners' depth of learning through debate, exhibition, written reflection or performance.

Figure 1

Integration of Disciplines in Fogarty's Continuum of Curriculum Integration (1991)



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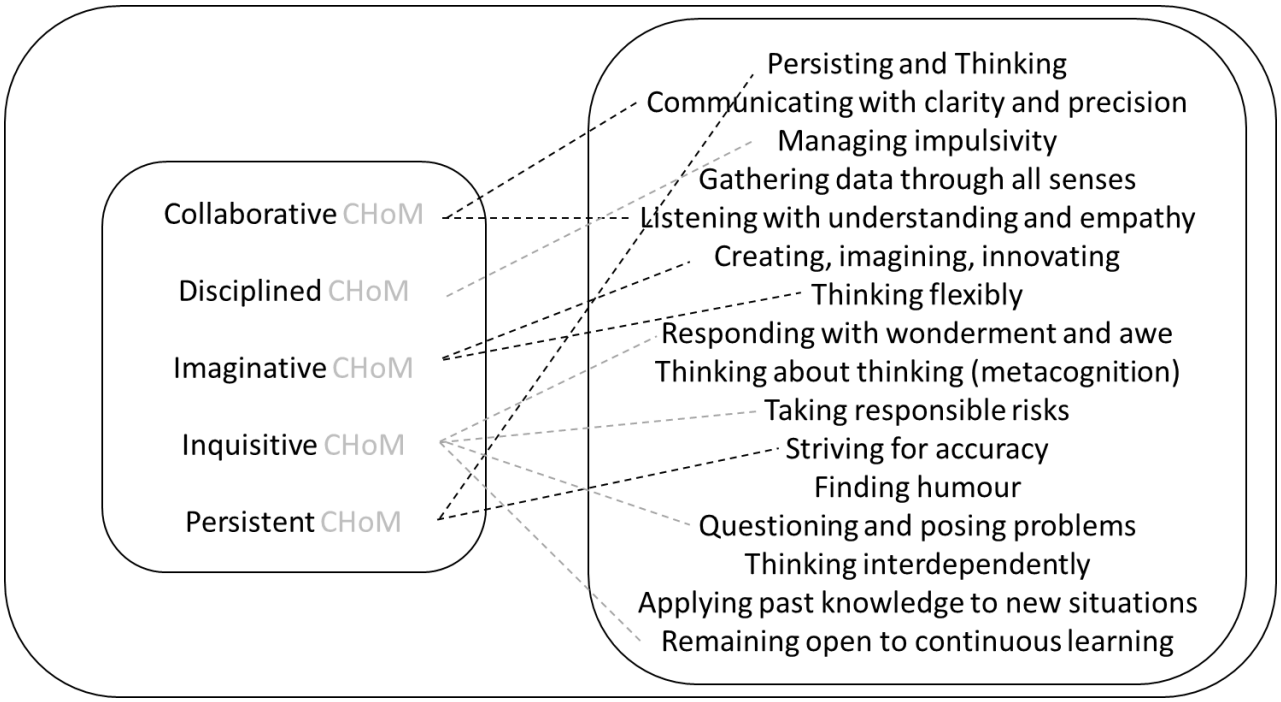
Creative Competency

Creativity has many connotations and interpretations (Carlile & Jordan, 2012; Craft, 2008; Desailly, 2012). It has been constructed as a type of possession, a product, a gift, a process, a type of cognition, an innovation, or an everyday action and attribute (Carlile & Jordan, 2012). Consequently, it can be confusing to determine if, where or how it can be nurtured and what roles and responsibilities a teacher might have in terms of nurturing children's creative competence. Different arts education paradigms present alternative perspectives from a methodology of non-intervention in permitting children's innate curiosity and creative capacity to a more directed and structured apprentice-like approach entailing observation, demonstration, and repeated practice. In light of the literature regarding low self-efficacy among teachers to teach the arts (DeVries, 2017; Henley, 2017; Hennessy, 2000, 2017; House et al., 2009), for this study, we focussed on the broader concept of 'creative competence', interpreted as the quality or state of having sufficient knowledge, judgment, skill, or disposition to engage in creativity. Theories on creativity of particular significance to this research comprise the Five-Dimensional Model of Creativity (Lucas, 2016; Lucas et al., 2012) and Habits of Mind (Costa & Kallick, 2009). In these models of creativity, attention is drawn to the importance of nurturing creativity in learning

through consciously developing learners' habits of inquisitiveness, imagination, persistence, self-discipline, and collaboration (Costa & Kallick, 2000, 2009). Figure 2 illustrates alignments between Lucas et al. and Costa and Kallick's habits of mind.

Figure 2

Aligning Creative Habits of Mind (CHoM) with Habits of Mind (HoM)



Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning (CL) is described as learning through which group members actively engage and interact to achieve a common goal (Nokes-Malach et al., 2015). It is seen as beneficial socially, cognitively, and psychologically for both the group and individual group members (Nokes-Malach et al., 2015). Group-level benefits include pooled knowledge, explanation, cross-cueing, error-correction, observational learning, and reduced memory load (Nokes-Malach et al., 2015). For the individual, CL can positively impact self-esteem, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills through increased engagement in projects, gaining complementary knowledge, and negotiating perspectives. However, there is evidence that group-level benefits have adverse impacts on individual-level gains (Nokes-Malach et al., 2015). While some learners achieve beyond their predicted potential through group approaches, others perform worse in group work than working alone due to coordination costs and retrieval disruption. Other identified CL challenges surface from ill-formed groups resulting from their formation, composition, internal competition, exclusion, or "social loafing", whereby individual group members do not invest the same effort or commitment (Karau & Williams, 1993).

Professional Learning Communities, Continuing Professional Development, and Self-Study

While there is no shared interpretation of what constitutes a professional learning community (PLC), there is agreement that PLCs comprise a group of professionals who critically reflect upon their practice in a sustained, inclusive and collaborative manner with the shared aim of improving one's efficacy (Grennan, 2017; Stoll et al., 2006). While more typical forms of CPD efforts are described as more episodic and removed from practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Kennedy, 2005; Sugrue et al., 2001), CPD within a PLC arrangement is considered to be more practice-focused, prolonged, and participative (Thompson & Wiliam, 2007). They are deemed to be more effective as they "hold real promise for improving the learning of both students and educators, and for encouraging continued innovation and improvement" (Kaagan & Headley, 2010, p. xiii).

Five fundamental components underpin effective PLCs. These include shared norms and values, the de-privatisation of practice and a collective focus on pupils' learning which are explored through reflective dialogue and collaboration (Kruse et al., 1994). Exchanging stories, challenges, and resolutions from practice is fundamental to establishing and developing interpersonal relationships essential for shared problem-solving and knowledge construction (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Grennan, 2017). Honesty, confidentiality, and collegiality permit the PLC to critique themselves, their professional practice, and the institution in which they work (Kruse et al., 1994). These principles and actions attracted us to adopt a self-study approach that would aid our CPD within our newly-formed PLC. Through critical collaborative inquiry, it was hoped our self-study would reveal alternative perspectives, extend understanding, and help resolve questions about IA through mutual encouragement and self-questioning (Craig & Curtis, 2020; LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011; Schuck & Russell, 2005; Sharkey, 2018).

Methods

The research design centered on a critical friendship between two higher education institutes (HEI)s, North and South of the Irish border (LaBoskey, 2004). Each HEI case comprised one visual art and one music teacher educator, with a shared pedagogical aim of investigating the value and improving the application of IA, albeit from differing temporal perspectives. HEI#1 had been exploring IA between music and visual arts for twelve years, and their research stance focused on reflection and theory-building. HEI#2 looked at the potentiality for IA practices within a designated course, exploring and sharing identities and interrogating our personal philosophies of enabling creativity. Table 1 outlines the key differences between the two cases. These relate to participant group type and size, duration and focus of initiative, and type of assessment. The performance of understanding (PoU) for HEI#1 was a collaborative arts performance entailing music composing, performing, and responding through visual arts.

Table 1

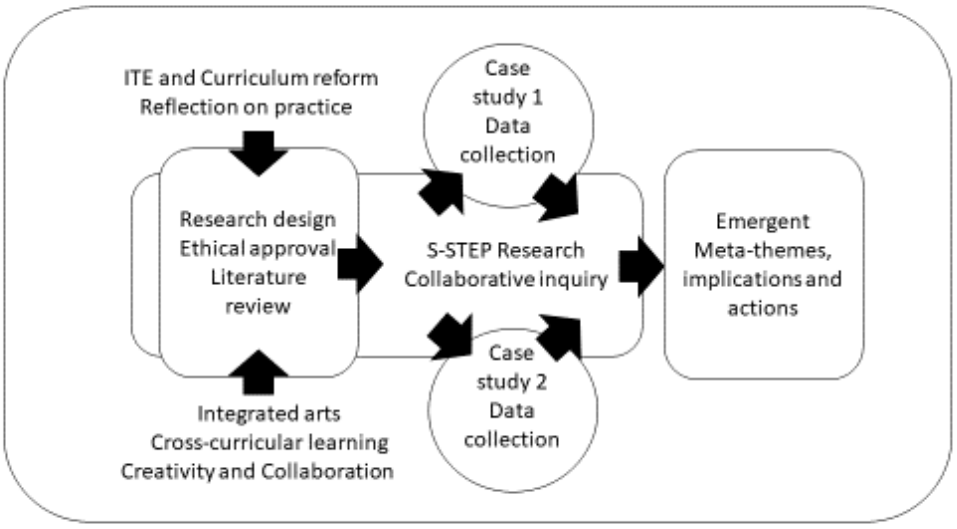
Key Differences Between HEI Cases

	HEA#1	**HEA#2**
Student type	Student teachers studying Arts education (curriculum studies and methods)	Student teachers studying an optional specialism in Arts Education
Group involved	Whole year groups	Smaller groups
Duration of IA	Initiated ten years ago	Initiated one year ago
IA focus	Process-focused and performance-orientated	Process-focused
Type of assessment	Assessed by PoU	Assessed discreetly

The research design (Figure 3) followed a multi-level case study design (Yin, 2018). The primary methods of data collection were taped and transcribed audio conversations based on loose interview schedules, within-case (HEI#1 n=5; HEI#2 n=3), and in the shared collaborative space (n=3), amounting to twenty hours of recorded material over two academic years (2019 and 2020). To elicit conversations, reflective materials were used, incorporating multiple lenses and perspectives such as past and present students' work, student reflections, and teacher-educator written reflections past and present (Brookfield, 2017).

Figure 3

Research Design Overview



Analysis

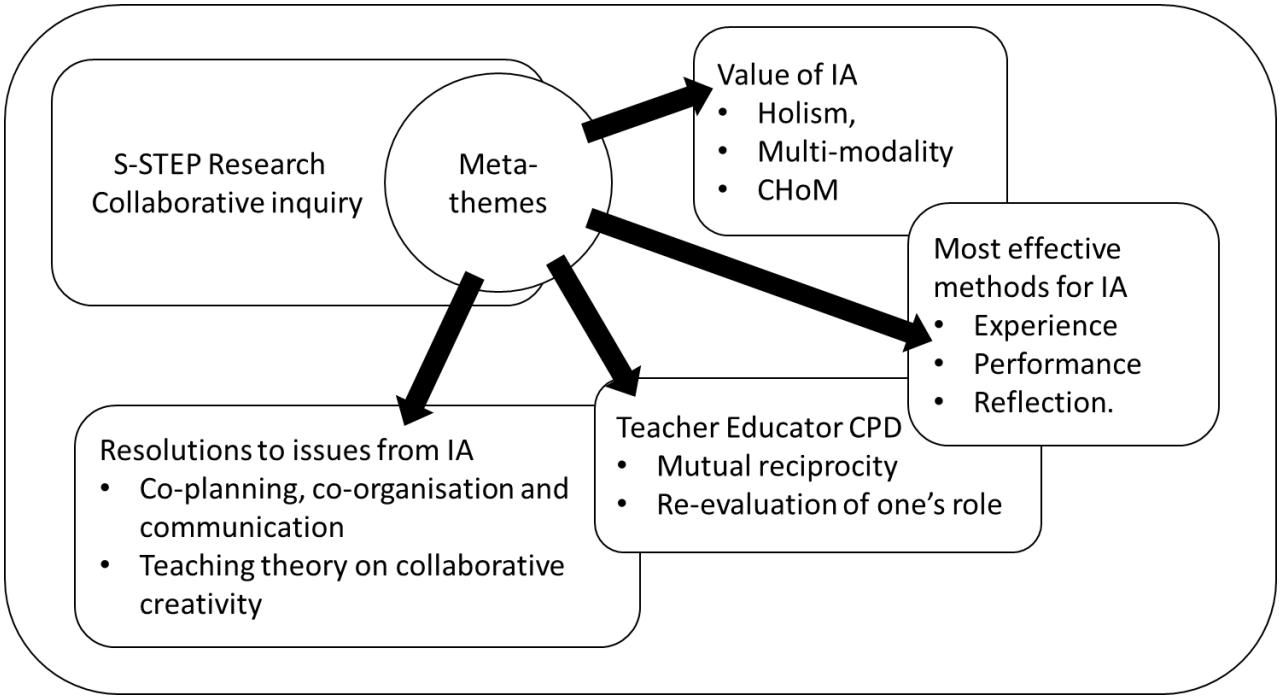
The critical collaborative space was central to helping shift the 'framework for inquiry' towards deeper meaning-making to a 'framework for analysis' (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014). Through three meetings, we sought to question and learn from each other's ongoing practice-based conversations. Transcriptions were produced and coded using thematic analysis. After each meeting, the coding process utilised different pairings across the group with the aim of bringing new understandings from emerging data. Emerging analysis and ideas were further developed in the following group meetings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2016; Clarke & Braun, 2014). The final group meeting was particularly lengthy (five hours) where each case presented a summary analysis, followed by whole-group discussion. From this, we consolidated four cross-case meta-themes addressing the research questions.

Findings and Discussion

Findings culminated in four meta themes concerning the experiences of integrating the arts, of resolving issues that arose, of best methods, and teacher educator CPD (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Emergent Meta-Themes Concerning IA Value, Efficacy, Resolutions, and Professional Development



Value of IA in PTE

Holism and Multi-Modality

Prior to IA, both music and visual arts education lecturers taught in a discipline-specific and more compartmentalised manner. They focussed on teaching knowledge, skills, concepts, and language specific to their arts discipline even though they were cognisant about shared content and experiences concerning creativity, broad curriculum aims, artistic processes, and experiential methodologies. As single-person departments, the teacher educators shouldered sole responsibility for ensuring student teachers developed competence and confidence to teach the respective disciplines. Teaching approaches were limited to the arts mode in question. "IA opened the door to greater holism through multimodal arts practices in teaching and learning" (Frances). "Music infiltrated visual arts education and visual arts threaded music education" (Michael). Through this multimodal IA aesthetic, emerged a more holistic understanding, and appreciation for the similarities and differences between them. Through IA, teacher educators acquired "greater understanding and appreciation for multi-modal and holistic processes, methodologies and performances" (Mary). Table 2 lists examples of both the former stemming from IA.

Creative Habits of Mind (CHoM)

Prior to IA, each teacher educator was aiming to develop creative habits to enable their students to create, compose, critique, and perform visually or musically. Arousing curiosity, developing imagination, persisting with process, and developing craft were integral to their PTE practice. However, IA triggered opportunities to think, plan, teach, and assess more concertedly with CHoM in mind. It shifted thinking about the role of the arts in education in terms of seeing a bigger picture whereby IA develops CHoM skills and dispositions. Collaboration, persistence, discipline, imagination, and inquisitiveness were developed - all essential to life-wide contexts and central to creativity. Table 2 lists examples of CHoM threading resulting from IA.

Table 2

Examples of Holism, Multi-Modality, and Creative Habits of Mind Evidenced From IA Across the Two HEIs

	Examples
Holism	- Cognitive: Conceptual development in relation to composing music, musical elements, visual elements and properties and possibilities of media used - Physical: Instrument playing, drawing, painting, printing, constructing and creating with fabric and fibre - Social: Interpersonal and interpersonal skills development through collaborative learning and performance - Emotional: Encountering range of emotions from initial ideation to the final performance and dependent on quality of group dynamics e.g. admiration, adoration, appreciation of beauty, amusement, anger, anxiety, awe, awkwardness, boredom, calmness, confusion, empathy, excitement, fear, interest, joy, nostalgia, relief, sadness, satisfaction, and surprise.
Multi-modality	- Visual mode: Drawing, painting, construction, fabric and fibre and overhead projector art - Aural mode: Song singing, music playing and composing - Linguistic mode: Written and oral prologues (group) and personal written reflections on process, learning and application to classroom - Gestural mode: Using hands on overhead project and shadow puppetry responses - Digital mode: Composing, audio and video recording, editing and saving in VLE
Creative habits of mind (CHoM)	- Collaborative CHoM: sSharing the PoU product, giving and receiving feedback to one another about quality of their experiential work and cooperating appropriately with one another during group work - Disciplined CHoM: Developing technique, reflecting critically, crafting and improving musically and artistically during each phase and stage of the creative process - Imaginative CHoM: Playing with possibilities, making connections and using intuition during the ideation and experiential stages of their composing and responding - Inquisitive CHoM: Wondering and questioning about one's own arts practice; exploring and investigating a theme through IA; challenging their assumptions about CLL, interdisciplinary arts - Persistent CHoM: Sticking with difficulty, daring to be different and tolerating uncertainty during the collaborative creative processes of composing and responding

Most Effective Methods

Experiential Learning

Teacher educators observed the value of learning by doing in IA through musical-visual exploration, experimentation, and invention (Table 3). Lived experience is at the root of these disciplines and their particular ways of knowing, learning, and making. A double-focused approach was deemed essential to enable students to develop the requisite skills in each arts mode, in tandem with being able to synchronise these understandings as the IA projects developed. Deliberately synchronous hands-on tasks proved particularly effective in encouraging synchronicity, cross-curricular thinking, and deeper learning and understanding. The social dimension of these practical collaborative activities also proved effective. Evidence in the more longitudinal HEI#1 case study particularly indicated that practical collaborative experiences involving peer-friendship enhanced learning. Self-chosen friendship groups enabled active sharing of knowledge and skills as students co-created and problem-solved in safe contexts. Of added value also was the motivational aspects of group music-visual art making, as they developed IA compositions and prepared for their final performance.

Performance of Understanding

IA assessment in the HEI#1 study accommodated summative performances of understanding (PoU) through music and visual arts (Table 3). Performance in the traditional sense is an expected part of the musical process. What distinguishes the IA approach in HEI#1 was "how music performance combined with an innovative performative art dimension" (Mary). These choreographed performances provided new, exciting, and worthwhile experiences for student and teacher-researcher alike, enabling students to demonstrate understanding, as they drew on discrete and cross-curricular skills and knowledge. Diverse performances and possibilities emerged over the decade of the various IA iterations including shadow puppetry, overhead projector (OHP), and 'Crankie' responses. (A crankie is a nineteenth-century storytelling device that uses a long, illustrated moving panorama attached to two spools to tell a story and that can be accompanied by playing music). "While shadow puppetry and OHP explored the pace of actual movement, scale, and silhouette to portray the elements of music, the Crankie illustrated conceptual understanding regarding implied

movement and portrayal of musical elements through painted and printed colour and tone, and pattern and rhythm" (Michael). All responses explored synchronicity and choreography so that the music and visual modes were concurrent.

Opportunities for Reflection

Taking time for teacher-educator reflection, and moreover encouraging student reflection was a strong feature of both studies in a collaborative and individual sense (Table 3). For teacher educators, this involved "an iterative process of personal reflecting and articulating identities and philosophies within the arts [through talking and writing]" (Frances) in tandem with collaborative discussion and interrogation of our assumptions about arts in ITE. In HEI#2, this was illustrated by a pedagogical shift whereby music "loosened the reins" (Frances) and adopted an incremental, reflective, and self-oriented pedagogy inspired by visual art. This further impacted the model of assessment which now focused on student learning through the creative process, rather than the assessment of musical practical skills. Both studies had student-teacher reflection at the heart of the creative work. This encouraged students to think deeply about their projects and to build in experiences of individual and collaborative reflection on the creative process involved in each course. Experiences such as conjoined arts group reflections and discussion, and student writing about their personal learning journeys through both courses were important aspects of professional learning through IA.

Table 3

Most Effective Methods for IA

Experiential Learning	- Visual Arts studio work comprising drawing, painting, printing, construction, and creating with fabric and fibre - Music studio work comprising active listening, song-singing, playing instruments, composing, and conducting
Opportunities for performance of understanding (PoU)	- IA performance (Music and Visual arts) using voice, instruments and synchronous visual re sponse e.g. crankie, overhead projector, shadow puppetry
Opportunities for reflection	- Class discussion - Individual written reflection - Group written prologue - Collaborative inquiry

Issues and Resolutions

Preliminary and Responsive Co-planning, Co-organisation, and Communication

As with any initiative, there emerged a number of issues from the pragmatic to the pedagogical. Pragmatic issues and resolutions necessitated timetabling negotiation, additional rehearsal room booking, art room reorganisation and equipping for self-directed learning, and "making multiple musical instrument box-sets available for group composing and rehearsing" (Mary). Pedagogical changes stemming from IA required a re- and co-design of teaching and learning experiences and related assessment, grade descriptors, and mark sheets. It necessitated increased shared email communication with student participants. Table 4 lists more examples of related actions in tabular format.

Teaching Relevant Theory on Collaborative Creativity

Issues stemming from a small number of ill-formed groups that impeded group communication, collaboration and creativity were resolved by teaching relevant theory on collaborative creativity to students. "Book-ending theory regarding collaborative creative group work" (Michael) and including individual summative meta-cognitive written

reflection equipped students with knowledge and strategies. Recursive theoretical understanding ensured their collaboration continued to be inclusive, positive, and productive and the latter reflections afforded them to express and be acknowledged for individual effort. Table 4 tabulises other actions taken.

Table 4

Resolutions to Issues That Arose from IA in PTAE

Preliminary co-planning, organisation and communication	- Co-designing IA experience, project descriptions, e-mail communication, related assessment, grade descriptor and mark sheets - Accumulating or creating VLE related resources - Negotiating timetabling preferences - Booking rehearsal rooms for group composing - Equipping Art Room for self-directed learning - Making instrument box sets available
Responsive co-planning, organisation and communication	- Responding to student group queries - Responding to group troubleshooting - Tweaking arrangements for PoU - Updating other teacher educator on progress made in discreet sessions and tweaking accordingly - Audio visual recordings of PoUs
Teaching relevant theory on collaborative creativity	- Integrated arts versus arts integration - Merits of collaborative learning - Theory on group dynamics - Taxonomies on cross-curricular learning - Merits of arts-based assessment - Theory on creative habits of mind

Teacher Educator CPD

Conceptual, Theoretical and Methodological Reciprocity

Having engaged in a collaborative reflective process, as well as multiple analytical coding processes, all teacher researchers noted a shift in professional understanding of their individual arts practice. The data showed three sub-processes that helped us achieve this. Firstly, developing an integrated conceptual lexicon concerning the arts elements as tabulated in table 5. Secondly, shared ideation through exploring and developing specific IA arts practices past and present in each HEI. Thirdly, mapping, applying, and developing theory which would point to further IA approaches. Comparative approaches in arts education in the island of Ireland are emerging (for an example see O'Flynn et al., 2022), and the self-study framework further enabled us to assess the possibilities of IA within our respective policy and curriculum frameworks (DENI, 2016; NCCA, 2020; NICCEA, 2007). These curricula suggest the notion of some IA activity, but their outworking in practice is left to teachers and to teacher educators to decipher.

As preservice teacher educators, and given the prevailing themes of interdisciplinarity and connectedness in our respective primary curricula, what was valuable from the project was the dispositional shift to openness and awareness. The project initiated a consideration of how these processes could be made visible to student teachers as they engage with any integrated or interdisciplinary practice. In PTE there are course structures and spaces which lend to collaborative learning, where IA can be modeled and trialed with peer learning communities in advance of professional engagement. As it is widely documented that student and practising teachers have varied levels of confidence and self-efficacy in arts teaching, "IA in PTE affords opportunities to explore safe spaces where these

problems are managed and negotiated" (Frances). In creating these collaborative spaces, this further leads to the deprivatisation of practice where skills are distributed and shared across the groups. (Kruse et al., 1994). Table 6 lists examples of this symbiotic professional exchange.

Table 5

Understanding Musical Concepts Through Visual Elements

A sense of pulse: visually portrayed or performed as steady illustrated line or shape (Crankie) or shadowed action (OHP and shadow puppetry)
A sense of duration: visually portrayed or performed as long/short patterns and rhythms using visual element line, shape and colour
A sense of tempo: visually portrayed or performed by swift or slow shadow action, or relating 'action' or abstract expressionist paint or print effects such as slow or swift brush strokes or clustered/ distant prints
A sense of pitch: visually portrayed or performed by relative height and positioning of line, shape and pattern
A sense of dynamics: visually portrayed or performed through relative size (OHP and shadow puppetry) and use of colour and tone intensity (Crankie)
A sense of structure: visually portrayed or performed through space and spatial organisation of visual elements or shadow actions
A sense of timbre: visually portrayed or performed through colour, scale and tone (Crankie) or opaqueness/ transparency (OHP and shadow puppetry)
A sense of texture: through layering of line, shape, colour or silhouette through overlap and texture gradient
A sense of style: visually portrayed or performed with an appropriate visual approach relating to colour palette, choice of geometric versus biomorphic shape or silhouette

Re-evaluation of the PTE Role

The themes of role and identity resonated throughout the data. For HEI#2 this involved a discursive, temporal shift from 'endpoints' to 'the now'. Data showed discussions moving away from a preoccupation with skills acquisition and competence, to current, student-led practical exploration, and their reflection and adaptation. For HEI#1, the data reflected the tensions of "being both creative facilitator and assessor to the students" (Mary), and of being collaborator and critical friend to each other's practice. The first represents a process and a role that needs to be made visible to students, and practised through collaborative, cross-disciplinary learning which is mindful of the CHoM to sustain students' career-long CPD. The second perhaps represents one of the pitfalls or dilemmas of IA and opens up space for further reconsideration of the hows and whys of assessing IA practice.

Table 6

Continuing Professional Development From IA

Mutual reciprocity	- Conceptual exchange regarding arts elements, principles of design - Curriculum knowledge exchange about each other curriculum area resulting in deeper understandings and appreciation for similarities and differences between the arts modes - Digital skills exchange in relation to audio-visual and VLE - Co-teaching/ co-assessing afforded methodological exchange in relation to teaching and assessment methods and strategies
Re-evaluation of role, practice and methods	- Evaluation of arts education teacher practice in light of observations, discussions and feedback from other arts education lecturer and collaborating on IA ITE component - Self and joint-evaluation of current values, emphases, methods and processes that aided continuing professional development

Conclusions and Implications

This paper provides what we determine are useful insights into the beneficial experiences and enhanced perspectives of teacher educators who explored IA in their PTE arts education practice. Whilst recognising the limitations of self and case study research in terms of their generalisability, the emergent themes have been highly valuable to the teacher-educator researchers involved and have implications for PTE. From a so-what perspective, our collaborative inquiry found that IA was highly valuable for student-teacher, teacher-educator, and PTE programme development and satisfied the new requirements of Céim (TTC, 2020), the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020), the Learning Leaders strategy (DENI, 2016) and the Northern Ireland Curriculum (NICCEA, 2007). While interdisciplinarity in PTE arts education poses some challenges, our study found that collaborative pre-emptive and reactive thinking anticipated, scaffolded, and resolved any pragmatic, programme, pedagogical, and interpersonal group-related challenges. Adopting a double-focused approach ensured that appropriate time was dedicated to discrete arts teaching in addition to IA. Bookending IA with formative theory on collaborative creativity and CCL and a summative evaluation of process and performance enabled students to self-manage and self-evaluate more effectively regarding collaborative creativity. Weaving meta-cognitive written reflection permitted them to self-examine their classroom practices in relation to the arts, creativity, and CCL. Concluding IA with an integrated arts-based PoU was an effective assessment of understanding that integrated celebration, validation, and evaluation in a social, memorable, and impactful way. From a self-study researcher perspective, IA lent itself to reflection on and development of one's PTE practice. It promoted conceptual, theoretical, and methodological reciprocity from one arts discipline to another. IA necessitated skills exchange and development between teacher educators. It fostered co-planning opportunities and provoked innovative thinking and problem-solving. It aligned our practices and programmes more closely with recent curriculum and teacher education expectations around interdisciplinarity and collaborative learning. The key implication from this study is that while IA in PTE is very worthwhile, and is effective particularly when it is *double-focused, process and performance orientated, reflective, collaborative* and infused with related *theory*. Not implementing all of the former may result in a more shallow or tokenistic interconnected learning journey that supplants the discrete teaching of the arts discipline involved.

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Liberating Our Anti-Racist Selves

A Collaborative Self-Study

Tanya Manning-Lewis & Kerry Robertson

Collaboration Dialogue Anti-racism Intersectionalities

We undertook this self-study after we began leading an anti-racism project awarded to the Teacher Education Program through the University of Victoria's anti-racism grant. The purpose of the grant was to support instructors and teacher candidates to embed equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practices more intentionally and skilfully into their practice. We determined that engaging in a self-study would help us identify our individual and collective motivations for anti-racism work, unpack our contexts, and develop a relationship of trust as we engaged in the project. Through an exchange of letters and conversations, we were able to learn more about ourselves, each other, and the intersections and differences of our particular contexts. The self-study allowed us to move from courteous colleagues to committed partners, with a deeper understanding of our motivations, curiosities, hesitancies and tensions as we engaged in anti-racism education.

Context of the Study

In the spring of 2021 the University of Victoria Teacher Education Program (TEP) was awarded an anti-racism grant, bringing together both authors, Tanya of Afro-Caribbean descent and Kerry, who is white. The project was designed to support the TEP in collaborating with instructors and teacher candidates (TCs) to develop the skills and confidence needed to embed equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into their classroom practice. A key component of the grant was the creation of the role of an "Equity Educator in Residence" (Tanya) to support the instructors and TCs in their EDI efforts. While we were eager to begin the work as the new school year approached, we realized that it was critical to unpack our own contexts and motivations for engaging in anti-racism work, acknowledge our insecurities, and develop a relationship of trust as we took the first steps on our journey.

Since we were both new to, and therefore nervous about how to do anti-racism work, we chose to undertake a self-study. We understood that our work required us to delve into our own understandings of self, racism, and anti-racism and the tensions within it, which we each understood in very different ways. This exploration of the tensions within the work became the genesis of our self-study, the space to engage in our own growth and exploration of self and self-in-practice. Consequently, the purpose of the study is to uncover for ourselves, the challenges, fears, and tensions of leading an anti-racism project and to explore ways of overcoming these challenges to meaningfully engage faculty and students in this work. We aim to explore the following:

- How have our experiences impacted our readiness to engage in anti-racism work?
- What role do our individual stories play in the challenges and fears we experience?
- What are the reflexive and interrogative processes impacting our collaboration and deepening understanding of our contexts and anti-racism work?

Our Personal Contexts

Tanya

I am an Afro-Caribbean woman, teacher, researcher, immigrant, and mother who is coming to a deeper understanding of what it means to be the Other. I engaged in this self-study as an emerging racialized scholar from a non-western country reflecting on the ongoing systemic inequities in education and the challenges this poses to my commitment to disrupting these systems. I write with a sense of urgency, intention, and purpose that now is the time for change. I acknowledge that I have been marked, placed and geographically confined to an idea of what I should be, and it will take real work to undo those perceptions. It is important for me to reflect on the weight of my position, knowledge, and voice within the project and how these will likely impact relationships with others and the progress of the project.

Kerry

I am a white woman who is a graduate of and currently manages the TEP at the University of Victoria. Anti-racism work is new to me, who, as a white woman, has had an entirely different experience with respect to race and racism. I would previously have described myself as “not racist”. However, recent occurrences, in particular the murder of George Floyd and the ongoing discovery of hundreds of unmarked graves on former residential school sites, provoked me to read and explore further. And I thought back to things I had said (“I don’t see colour.” “That happened so long ago.”) and I was ashamed. But feeling apologetic or remorseful is not enough; sitting with the uncomfortable thoughts and emotions provoked me to engage in learning more about becoming consciously anti-racist.

Collective and Intersectional Contexts

As we consider ourselves as individuals and in relationship with one another, we resonated with LaBoskey’s (2004) words: “We all have issues to overcome, ‘isms’ to undo, strengths to enhance, limitations to minimize in our ongoing efforts to construct and reconstruct our identities as teachers and teacher educators for social justice” (p. 175). We entered into this work as women from diverse backgrounds, races, classes, and experiences. The intersectionalities of our experiences have challenged us to recognize our own privileges and the tensions within ourselves and with each other. As Tanya shared in this narrative with our critical friend via our Zoom meeting, it is an opportunity to move beyond our discomforts individually and collectively:

> *I have been thinking quite a bit about what we envisioned this to be, and for me, it is starting the groundwork. How do we initiate conversations to begin with? How do we push beyond the discomforts? Kerry and I have had many polite conversations over the years but we have never sat and spoken to each other prior to doing this work. We never took the time to understand each other's experiences. So for me, part of the work is how do we get our conversations going where we're moving beyond superficial interactions; where we're having those real conversations where we're deepening our understanding of each other and our experiences…*

As such, we seek to find out how we are coming to understand anti-racism work and how we deepen our understanding of self and selves as we move forward with the work.

Contextualizing Anti-racism Work

Ibram Kendi (2019) challenges us to be more than ‘not racist’ but to become anti-racist. We contend that being an anti-racist educator is a call to action to fight against racism in all forms. It requires us to actively work to change systemic racist practices and policies that continue to impact generations of racialized people. As hooks (2015) and Kendi (2019) warn, racism is rooted in power and policies that have to be uprooted to create equity for racialized groups. Golash-Boza (2016) reasons that when a group of people holds power over institutions, they strongly influence the everyday thoughts, expectations, and behaviour of individuals by directing the normative practices of such places. In this case,

white culture is normalized and elevated above all others, rendering people of colour to the periphery and status of Other. For Dei (1996) it is important to operate from an anti-racist and anti-colonial framework to understand and disrupt the harmful knowledge being reproduced. He notes that this discursive framework allows the anti-racist scholar to interrogate self, practices, and complicity in systemic racism. He further theorizes that an integrative anti-racism approach that examines the intersections of difference through a race-centric analysis is necessary for this to be effective.

Methodology

We turned to self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) to provide the framework for exploring our individual selves, and ourselves in relationship with one another as teacher educators working together on anti-racism. S-STEP was appropriate for our study as it met the criteria described by LaBoskey (2004) in that it is self-initiated and self-focussed; improvement aimed, interactive, uses qualitative methods, and defines validity as a process based on trustworthiness.

Although methodologies such as narrative inquiry, action research, and autoethnography all contain elements also found in self-study, for us, what solidifies self-study as our mode of research is the emphasis on self and practice. As LaBoskey (2004) iterates

> *self study seeks to determine whether or not our practice is consistent with our evolving ideals and theoretical perspective as we wish to transform ourselves first so that we might be better situated to help transform students, their students, and the institutional and social contexts that surround and constrain us. (pp. 820-821)*

We are cognizant of the different ways in which our identities and practices are changing, evolving, and transitioning during the project.

Collecting Stories

Kerry had been reading self-study research about letters as data sources (Fletcher & Ní Chróinín, 2021; Pithouse-Morgan et al., 2012). Taking our cue from this, we wrote letters to one another as we embarked on the anti-racism project, and revisited those letters in subsequent conversations. Kerry initiated the first letter triggered by her fears about leading the project and this led to many letters being shared over the two-year period. There were no rules around how the letters were written, we simply wrote to each other whenever we encountered perplexing events in our professional and sometimes personal lives relating to equity and our roles as project leaders and teacher educators. In the first 10 letters we exchanged between September and February, we took steps in getting to know one another as women and colleagues by including as many background details about our lives as possible. We shared our letters on Google Drive and let one another know “You’ve got mail”. We then connected weekly (usually by Zoom) where we considered and reconsidered the letters, noting how much we appreciated the “slower” format of letter writing, and how it somehow separated our conversations from prosaic email interaction.

We also recorded a one-hour Zoom meeting with our critical friend that provided opportunities for us to reflect on our thought processes, learning, and growth while engaging in the project. We thought it was necessary to have a third objective voice in our conversations to allow us to reflect more critically on our letters and conversations. As such, prior to our Zoom meeting, we shared our letters with our critical friend, an education professor, who helped develop the trustworthiness of our findings (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2015). Our critical friend provoked our thinking with questions arising from our letters that directed the conversation during the Zoom meeting. These included: What brought us to the work and why? What do we imagine the work will look like? What are we learning about each other and ourselves? What makes the work urgent? Her intentional questions, asking us to circle back to assumptions, clarify our thinking and identify how we had changed were essential to our insights. We came to understand “the work” encompassed both our relationship and commitment to exploring ourselves as we worked together as well as the urgency to connect with TCs to support their growth.

Analyzing the Data

To make sense of the data, we went through two rounds of coding of the letters, and a video conversation with our critical friend. The first step in analyzing the data was reading and rereading the letters separately to get a sense of our thought processes and generate open codes. That is, we went through the data and identified emerging themes and recurring ideas to unitize the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Some of the open codes included connections, authentic dialogue, self-reflection, and tensions. In the second round of coding, we identified segments of the data that described our developing relationship and deepening understanding of selves.

Outcomes

At the onset of this study, we sought to understand our experiences as white and Afro- Caribbean women engaging in anti-racism work in a dominant white teacher education program. In this process, we engaged in dialogue about our disparate and similar experiences to reflect and interrogate our experiences with the project. We used Berry's (2007) framework of tensions as we resonated with trying to capture the feelings of internal and collective pulls on the energy we experienced, wondering how to attend to the complex combinations that work both in opposition and tandem. These tensions are between:

1. Our internal dialogue and external collaboration
2. Urgency and intentionality
3. Commitment and hesitation

Tensions Between Internal and External

The tensions in our lived experiences were evident at the onset of the project. For example, after Kerry mentioned in her letter that the conference they would be attending would be in England, in her response, Tanya shared a particularly disturbing racial encounter there that made her averse to visiting the country. After more dialogue via letters, Tanya began to feel safe to be vulnerable with Kerry, which gave her the courage to share her racist experiences with her own family, something she was very embarrassed about for over two decades. This breakthrough was significant to both Tanya and Kerry in establishing a relationship of trust. In response to Tanya's shared letter about her encounter in England, Kerry wrote:

> *I know you said there was no way I could have known and that there is no right response. That it **never initially occurred** to me that this might have been your experience is, I believe, an essential part of **my** work within our work. That I can have an intellectual understanding of racism and its persistence in the world (hence not being surprised), and the **privilege to have it remain in the intellectual realm**, is powerful, powerful learning. I thank you, Tanya, for having the courage and trust to share your story with me.*

Stories such as Tanya's have helped Kerry move her intellectual understanding to her heart. For Kerry, the revelation has helped her understand the importance of slowing down and taking the time to develop an authentic connection, to listen deeply to others' experiences without assumption. One of Tanya's comments during our Zoom conversation with our critical friend spoke to this as well:

> *How can Kerry and I collaborate in an authentic way so that we can develop a greater understanding of each other as we move forward with the work itself? We didn't realize how important it is for us to have that honesty with each other and to connect to understand each other…So I'm feeling so grateful for the opportunities to really have these honest conversations as we're growing to understand each other better but we're becoming better at the work because we are being more authentic with each other.*

From these encounters, there were two elements that revealed themselves: we needed to collaborate with each other to learn about one another and understand how racism manifests itself, so we can learn how to be anti-racists. As Desmond Cole (2020) writes: "We need to cultivate listening, partnership, and solidarity to carve out a better collective future" (p. 12).

Tensions Between Urgency and Intentionality

With growing conversations on anti-racism issues and the call to action, our Zoom conversation with our critical friend revealed that we undertook our work with some urgency, but our intentionality was lacking. Kerry notes:

> *When we got this grant I felt this urgency–the tendency is to want to rush into doing things because either I've got the energy or the commitment or there's a time frame. What I've noticed is exactly what Tanya said, that actually until we know one another better and understand one another and have some of those conversations and some of the most profound things were in the communications that Tanya and I had, and in some of the letters, how much more there is in terms of the relational parts of this work and how much trust is involved and how many assumptions that are easy to make because at least for me in my head there's 'OK, let's get moving' and realizing it's actually been very helpful to work together to get to know one another at the same time as trying to imagine how the work can unfold.*

While there is an overlay of urgency as we consider the global shifts in conversations on racism, we discovered in our conversation with our critical friend that sometimes 'doing' is sitting, reflecting, and learning about ourselves. It is in these quiet moments that we recognize our own privileges and how we can use these intentionally to create change. It is also through this intentionality that we examine how we were deepening our knowledge about self, and identities and how our collaboration was shaping our experiences within the anti-racism project. Tanya notes:

> *I know the George Floyd incident sparked a lot of ongoing conversations and new conversations. For the BIPOC folks that I've been talking to, many of them have expressed that they feel like now is the time. They have a small window to really push conversations to push for change. There is this sense that if it's not done now that's going to be a missed opportunity. I feel like there is that window where we're having that opening where we can have some of those conversations and we can make that change…because I feel like it's not going to be there forever.*

Once we began quiet reflection both individually and together, the work of looking in and then out, the project took on new meanings. We recognized that our identities and concept of selves were shifting daily as Tanya wasn't questioning her ability to be an 'Equity Educator in Residence' as much, and Kerry began to feel more confident in conversing with others about racism. Through reflections with the critical friend Tanya noted:

> *I am discovering that once we're comfortable with each other and we're having those honest conversations I feel more confident moving forward. I don't speak for other BIPOC folks but some of the conversations that I've been having seem to suggest similar kinds of feelings where someone white might have done something to you and you take that hesitation into other conversations with folks you don't know. Maybe even my initial fear about the anti-racism work within the department stems from my fear that I don't know folks enough to initiate that kind of work and it's coming to that understanding that I can do the work and I can let go of some of my own weight around that as well.*

Tanya now recognizes that rushing to do as many workshops and initiatives as possible robs her of the breadth, voice, confidence, and depth she needs to help TCs become anti-racist educators. She is learning to slow down, focus on small initiatives and embrace her human errors in doing this work and not be burdened by it. As we continue to reconcile the tensions between urgency and intentionality, Kerry's poignant words are a reminder of how we can learn from the project to inform ways forward in changing teacher education. She notes:

> *I'm new to this, but it's important to do…so how do we just get things going? Because we can make strategic plans and we can write fancy phrases all we want, but unless people actually take up the work and are willing to put themselves out there and take risks and be vulnerable and not know all the answers and dust themselves off, and all those kinds of things, I think we will just keep doing the same practices.*

Kerry felt an increasing sense of agency and ownership as she read about systemic racism, engaged in dialogue with Tanya, and worked to take those intentional first steps. Identifying herself as someone who is new to leading an anti-racism initiative she hopes will be a way to continue with courage and vulnerability, and support others in taking action.

Tensions Between Commitment and Hesitation

Our letters and conversations indicated that there was tension between our commitment and our hesitations. For instance, in one of our reflective sessions, Kerry was surprised that Tanya was terrified of the idea of doing anti-racism. Kerry notes:

> *A pivotal moment in our relationship was during a Zoom call after we had been notified that our proposal was accepted. During this call, Tanya acknowledged that she was "terrified" of doing the work. I was speechless, completely caught by surprise that someone I saw as confident and knowledgeable approached anti-racism work with trepidation. I knew I was terrified, what did I, a white woman, know about anti-racism? Tanya's honesty created a space, an opening in the project that had hitherto been more about "how do we support others?" rather than also considering "how do we support each other"?*

Why were we terrified? Both of us acknowledged that we did not know enough about how to do anti-racism work. The revelation that Tanya was just as terrified of the work united both scholars in learning together. In learning together, Kerry begins to understand the weight of assumptions Tanya faces as she is expected to inherently be an anti-racist educator despite having no formal training in this field. Kerry later reflected:

> *I thought about that and I still think about that a lot. It was so surprising to me that the work was terrifying. I could understand why I was terrified but I couldn't understand why Tanya might be. That was really helpful to remember that because Tanya is an Afro-Caribbean woman does not mean that she is confidently able to do anti-racist work. So that assumption I made was obviously incorrect… and so that was the first of those things that just kind of stopped me in my tracks.*

It is through our mutual vulnerability the real change began. We began to really see each other, free of assumptions. As Tanya reflects on Kerry's statement and the conversations that followed, there is also a deep shift in her consciousness as she comes to accept it is not her responsibility to 'know' anti-racism work. Instead, what Tanya discovered is that her strength lies in collaborating with others to deepen her understanding of experiences.

Kerry also experienced a fear of trespass (Restoule & Chaw-win-is, 2017), a worry she is treading where she has no experience or authority. This hesitation is both a pause for reflection and a pause from fear. It is important for Kerry to be aware of these pauses and hesitations, using reflection to resist the excuse to avoid the work but rather an opportunity to refocus and recommit. She reasserts:

> *We are called to do this [anti-racism] work and I believe very strongly that we need to, and I am mindful of…the professional standards that say it's our responsibility to keep learning…We can't wait for someone else to do the work or to become the expert… it was about if 'I believe in this then I need to do something about it and I need to find people who I can have these conversations and learn alongside'*

Conclusion

Throughout this self-study, we reflected on what led us to anti-racism work and what steps allowed us to move forward in this work and in our understanding of ourselves and one another. We have discovered that a trusting relationship, commitment to the work, and forging ahead despite challenges is necessary for us to thrive. We have had to reconcile our sense of urgency in completing the project and making use of the grant funds within a specified time by taking the time we needed to really understand the work we were required to do. In many ways, we were able to liberate ourselves from the constraints of a system that does not facilitate slow and intentional anti-racism work and, in the process, free our anti-racist selves. We have learned to confront our fears of not 'knowing enough' about anti-racism work as we come to a new understanding of the work itself and what 'doing' means. We recognized that for the project to be a success, we have to continue interrogating ourselves and our practices to allow for authentic actions and outcomes. Through honest dialogue and collaboration, we can develop new insights on what works and doesn't work and use these to inform our future actions. Coming to these conclusions has reaffirmed our commitment to continue anti-racism work and research about this work.

In the two years since the project began, much has happened, including Tanya accepting a position at another university. We have continued our engagement in self-study, sharing letters and examining our experiences, dilemmas, challenges, and successes. Our next steps are to explore how to build capacities among teacher candidates, engage faculty on a broader scale and get parents involved in our conversations. We have led several workshops, courageous conversations, and equity labs with students and will continue this work in the coming year. While we recognize the immediate value of this self-study to our transformation and practices as anti-racist teacher educators, we hope it will allow others to consider how they might engage their students and themselves in meaningful and intentional self-reflection.

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Looking Back to Move Forward

Identifying Value in Collaborative Self-Study

Tony Sweeney, Richard Bowles, & Maura Coulter

Initial Teacher Education | Physical Education | Collaborative Self-study | Meaningful Physical Education | Value Creation Framework

Researchers engaging in self-study "are committed to their ongoing professional learning and explore their assumptions, beliefs and actions as they are enacted in practice" (Casey et al., 2018, p.56). Maura, Richard and Tony are primary physical education teacher educators working with generalist pre-service teachers (PSTs) in three different universities in Ireland. We previously undertook a collaborative self-study project to explore our pedagogical approaches in introducing the Meaningful Physical Education (MPE) framework to our students. Following the completion of this study, we sought to evaluate our own professional learning outcomes and use self-study to consider future directions for our practice. We decided to focus this inquiry on our interactions within a 'social learning space' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 13). The Value Creation Framework (VCF), currently presented as eight value-creation cycles (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020), was used as a lens to analyse our reflections and discussions. Three themes were generated: developing identities as teacher educators, the influence of collaboration on individual practices within physical education, and professional learning beyond the specific subject area. Exploring our experiences through the Value Creation Framework (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) provided us with opportunities for personal and professional learning and enabled us to model reflective practice.

Context

Maura, Richard, and Tony are experienced teacher educators based in three different universities in Ireland teaching physical education (PE) to primary student teachers (PST's). In Ireland, primary teachers are generalists in the main, so the Bachelor of Education and Postgraduate Masters courses we teach cover methodologies across 11 subject areas and religious/ ethical education, and the PST's also have periods of school placement throughout their course of study. As we were all interested in deepening our practice in the pedagogy of Meaningful Physical Education (MPE), we embarked on a collaborative self-study during one semester to explore how we might best embed the pedagogical principles of this approach in our PE lectures in our three different contexts.

In recent years, concerns have been expressed about the quality of childrens' experiences in primary PE, (Hardman & Marshall, 2000). Jess and Gray (2019) have noted how these concerns have prompted attempts to re-envision curriculum and pedagogy. MPE is a framework for quality physical education (Beni et al., 2016; Ní Chróinín et al., 2017).

Maura and Richard had previously taught a module integrating the features of MPE which include social interaction, fun, challenge, motor competence, personally relevant learning, and delight (Beni et al., 2018). Tony had more recently discovered the framework and was invited to engage in exploring the five guiding pedagogical principles of MPE, as outlined by Fletcher et al. (2018). The aim was that meaningful participation should be a central focus of our planning, teaching, and assessment, and that this emphasis should prompt student inquiry into the meaningfulness of their PE experiences as learners, physical activity participants, and as teachers of peers and children.

Current literature supports the use of collaborative self-study to examine how teacher educators learn more about their practices (Tondreau et al., 2021). Collaboration with colleagues facilitates the development of trust and critical friendship (Fletcher & Bullock, 2012), and may help to break down a sense of isolation that often exists among teacher educators (Martin & Dismuke, 2015). A key responsibility of Self Study of Teacher Education Practice (S-STEP) researchers is to make the private insights public to extend the knowledge base of teacher education (Beni et al., 2018; Vanassche & Kelchtermans, 2015). In our context, having national collaborators beyond our own institutions avoided defensiveness by providing a confidential sounding board, and an outsider's perspective free of institutional politics (Roose, 2010) while at the same time understanding the Irish educational system, with particular knowledge of national and international PE curricula and contexts. We were particularly interested in how our use of the principles of MPE was impacting our pedagogical practice generally. In contrast to the research by Lynch and Sargent (2020) who examined student teachers' experiences of MPE, our work is focused on our experiences as teacher educators. Our specific research question at that time was: how did our collaboration support us to integrate a new pedagogical approach into our teacher education practice?

Having completed the initial self-study and reflection (Sweeney et al, 2020) we now wish to reflect (and *look back*) on our experiences. We also *look forward* to considering the potential directions of our future practices. To scaffold this new inquiry, we seek to situate this exploration within social learning theory, with a specific focus on our interactions within a "social learning space" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 13). Specifically, we use the Value Creation Framework (VCF), currently presented as eight value-creation cycles (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020). The creation of value within these non-hierarchical cycles (Immediate, Potential, Applied, Realized, Enabling, Strategic, Orienting, and Transformative) involves the development of value-creation stories that illustrate how participants are "learning to make a difference" while focusing on agency and meaningfulness (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 76).

The concept of a VCF was first proposed by Wenger et al. (2011). Since then, the framework has been used in a number of different contexts and has been revised and updated by Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020). Using the five cycles of the initial VCF, Booth, and Kellogg (2015) affirmed the framework's use in the identification of learning within a community of practice, but also perceived overlaps between some cycles. In order to achieve greater clarity, they note the suggestion from Wenger et al. (2011) that a more robust understanding of the value created could be achieved by complementary use of quantitative indicators. An example of this is evident in how Cowan and Menchaca (2014) used network analysis in conjunction with their qualitative analysis of their data. Using a theoretically driven quantitative approach, Dingyloudi et al. (2019) concluded that the VCF is a useful lens through which to highlight the potential learning that may take place within a community of practice.

Despite these reservations, the VCF has been applied successfully to identify learning in a range of diverse contexts. In the context of a group of youth soccer coaches, for example, Bertram et al. (2016) used qualitative methodologies to describe how each coach created value across the five cycles of the VCF in ways that were personally relevant for themselves as learners. In a separate study, the same authors used the framework to explore learning within a community of practice made up of university coaches (Bertram et al., 2017).

As Bertram et al. (2014, p. 10) have noted, "the type of value garnered by members is not important, but rather that they are indeed gaining value, and that such value is relevant and timely given the community's practice and the members' respective intentions for participating in the group". Although learning can be viewed as unique to each individual, the learning process, and the inherent values observed, "are nested within a wider social context" Bertram et al. (2014, p. 10). In a context relevant to our study, Clarke et al. (2020) used the revised 8-cycle version of the framework to focus on

specific aspects that related to their own experiences of a professional learning network. Their work highlighted how the VCF, and the development of value-creation stories, can help to give voice to the experiences of participants in a learning community (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2019). In our situation, we were also drawn to the suggestion that researching using the VCF "could look at the longitudinal value of nurturing social learning spaces" (Duarte et al., 2021a, p. 358).

Aim

The aim of this paper is to develop what we have learned through our previous participation in a collaborative self-study of our practices in physical education teacher education (PETE) (e.g. Sweeney et al, 2020). We seek to reflect (and *look back*) on our experiences, through the perspective of the value-creation framework and we also wish to interrogate our values as we *look forward* to considering the potential directions of our future practices.

Methods

LaBoskey (2004) suggests self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) research is improvement-aimed, interactive, and includes multiple, mainly qualitative methods to collect data. We demonstrated LaBoskey's criteria of being improvement-aimed through our efforts to understand the implications of pedagogical approaches more fully to teaching. We have drawn on critical friendship framed as co-mentoring (Allison & Ramirez, 2020), whereby there is a mutual and collective benefit of collaborators on the same journey.

Following an initial discussion, we began the 'looking back' process by writing individual reflections in September 2021 to consider whether further collaboration was worthwhile. Prompt questions which we had found to be a suitable stimulus in our initial study guided these reflections. These reflections looked to consider what we had gained from our initial collaborative self-study, future directions to be explored, and broader thoughts on the value of self-study and reflection. Once shared via Dropbox, each partner commented on the personal reflections to promote further dialogue and inquiry. Following an initial reading of Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), we recorded and transcribed an online conversation on Microsoft Teams. To advance our inquiry in January 2022, each participant wrote a meta-reflection to consider their personal learning to date and specific needs to be addressed through the next stage of collaboration. An online discussion on January 26th was auto-transcribed by Teams software and it was decided that we should again act as critical friends (MacPhail et al., 2021) to comment on these meta-reflections. We used interactivity by seeking critical perspectives from each other, and qualitative data sources for this project, therefore, included two sets of three reflections with comments by two critical friends and two group online conversations.

The Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020) value-creation framework provided us with a lens to reflect on our social learning space and collaboration. Data were analysed deductively using the eight cycles of the framework. Following the completion of these commentaries, a shared coding key was developed by Tony based on the typical data sources and data indicators outlined in Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2020), This was then used by each participant to retrospectively code this transcript, the three meta-reflections and commentaries on an individual basis. Finally, in April 2022, all the coded data from the three participants were subjected to a meta-analysis to identify significant data and to develop themes from the value-creation framework analysis we had undertaken.

Outcomes

Through this meta-analysis, it was evident that, for the most part, relevant data were frequently identified in common across all participant coding. Significantly, however, our interpretation of the values identified through the use of the VCF key varied at times depending on our individual context, experience, and personal perspective (Bertram et al., 2014). Following our analysis, we present our findings under two headings. The first section looks retrospectively at our perspectives on what went before, and this is followed by a consideration of potential value outcomes from future practice.

Looking Back

Looking back at the various experiences we had during the lifetime of the collaboration there were opportunities where we were "learning to make a difference" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020, p. 76), as we focused on the agency

afforded to us through our work together and how we found this collaboration meaningful. Using the VCF, we will identify what values were created through the themes of immediate, realised, and strategic value. Firstly, we will explore the immediate value gained from the collaboration, followed by the realised value and the impact this has had on our professional identities as academics, and finally we will present the strategic value through the lens of our pedagogical practice.

As we were working and researching in a social learning space, created through this collaborative self-study, we had a strong connection with the innovative pedagogical approach, MPE, and the content of the curricula we were facilitating. This connection with each other, the content and pedagogical practices we were exploring and the students we teach gave rise to focused learning and ensured we engaged with each other and our practices more deeply. This immediate value was evident through our regular engagement with each other through reflections shared and our discussions. We mutually recognised each other as learning partners. Tony expressed this in recognising the context for the self-study as it happened for him at a time when his students were using a similar approach as he reflected on a "valuable chance to personally engage in self-study and action research which is a key part of our course in recent years" (Tony, Reflection 1). The learning we experienced in this context was both meaningful and immediate for us. Tony again pointed to 'productive discomfort' (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020 p.81) and the immediate value of "discussing our experiences and learning from each other" and also pointed to the experiences as "helping me to commit to the process…" (Comment on Richard's Reflection 1). In Ireland, our PSTs study physical education as one of 12 subjects, and our time with the PSTs is limited therefore having ongoing support throughout the modules, we were exploring provided us with immediate value in this learning space, allowing for regular sharing of pedagogical practice which both helped understand the approach we were implementing and informed improvements to our practice.

While we experienced immediate value through our direct experiences as learners, we were also cognisant of the positive outcomes because of reflecting on our practice as individuals and as a group. There was a significant overlap of values arising as we equally recognised the strategic value of links established through the project, and indeed the publication of associated papers and the opportunity to present at conferences could be seen to be a realised value. These positive outcomes, or realised value, were obvious in a personal, collective, and professional sense. Individually we noted the realised value in professional learning and the personal satisfaction we got from participation, "so I think there is that CPD element and I think that's really important' and engaging with others' perspectives, "support, push/nudge, [provide] direction, resources, practical ideas though Covid… and it's massive for professional learning" (Maura, Online Discussion). We each identified professional outputs such as book chapters, conference presentations and proceedings papers, and a journal article both from an individual perspective as noted by Richard "From the perspective of my own research profile, the project has yielded (and continues to yield) opportunities for papers, presentations, and book chapters" and from a collective perspective, "Great to get AERA, Castle, Routledge publications and … to showcase our work …at ESAI". He also evidenced personal development and personal advancement as a researcher and as a practitioner: "I feel more confident in my own ability to research in the MPE and SS areas. This confidence is supported by regular individual and collaborative reflection" (Richard, Reflection 1).

The realised value of publications and presentations also had strategic value for us as noted by Richard in the same reflection, "our research outputs, in turn, can help raise our profiles within our own institutions". Each output led to another opportunity for publication helping to build our profiles further and providing opportunities for us to engage with colleagues in our physical education departments, and with PETE internationally, around an innovative pedagogical approach in MPE," so that our pedagogy will enable our PST's to develop their own pedagogical approaches to maximise teaching and learning" (Tony, Reflection 2). We recognised the realised value of modelling best practice with our PSTs, "reflecting with students is a priority - to have their feedback on what worked and what didn't in class and also what they understood and might take forward…it allows PSTs to see what reflecting is and how it might work" (Maura, Reflection 1). Our learning through this collaboration also provided opportunities to share our knowledge on our engagement with self-study with colleagues within our own institutions and beyond "with the potential to be involved in other projects" (Tony, Reflection 1). We each found a value in working with others who understood the process we were going through and wanted to work through that process, in this case learning about the meaningful physical education

approach. Developing and maintaining these productive relationships with colleagues and other researchers in our field provided further opportunities for us to learn in this space, both as PETE and as researchers.

Looking Forward

Our use of the VCF also helped us *look forward* as we sought to identify value that may have accrued during the course of this project. We express our learning through three themes. Firstly, we discuss the potential impact on our own identities as teacher educators. Secondly, we examine how our collaboration may influence our practices within physical education. Finally, we explore our learning in the context of looking beyond our specific subject area.

As each of us examined our involvement within this collaborative self-study, we identified opportunities for "my own professional development and moving myself forward" (Maura, Online Discussion). In this way, our collaborative self-study has sensitised us to the possibilities for each of us to engage in continuous professional development, supported by our colleagues. Furthermore, our regular "conversation and dialogue help you make sense of your own learning" (Tony, Online Discussion). This focus on lifelong learning, and the possibility of the generation of transformative value, aligns with the experiences of some participants in other studies (Duarte et al., 2021b). The supportive nature of our collaboration was valuable because it provided us with the means to discuss our specific engagement in physical education pedagogies, along with issues relating to our teacher education practice more generally. In terms of immediate value, this has given us a means to look inward at our own practice, with a focus on making improvements in the future. As Richard pointed out "for me, the collaborative self-study provides a consistent framework with which to reflect on, and enact, some changes in my practice" (Richard, Reflection 2). In conjunction with this inward-looking focus, our self-study also prompted us to adopt a more outward-looking orientation, and it was "a stimulus to look at something in a different way or in a different direction" (Tony, Online Discussion). We noted orienting value in this observation, as we developed a greater understanding of our current position within our teaching environment. We suggest this interplay between inward and outward foci is important because it helps us to learn more about ourselves as physical education teacher educators.

Our engagement with the VCF heightened our awareness of the potential value of our collaboration on our review and revision of our existing practices. As Maura noted, "[it is] important that we understand what we currently do, and why we do it – if something needs to be changed, first why, and then how?" (Maura, Reflection 1). Her assertion was that "there is always something that can be improved upon, even if a little bit" highlights how participation in this self-study enabled us to interrogate our current practices, with a view to improving them in the future.

Our involvement in this project provided us with possibilities to develop and create links with the wider physical education teacher education community. Realised value was identified, for example, through an invitation we received to present at a pre-conference workshop hosted by an international organisation. This opportunity, in turn, had orienting value for us, as it has helped us to engage with practitioners beyond our own universities, and has forged links that can facilitate further collaborations in the future.

As we reviewed our collaboration, it became clear that much of the value that was accruing for us could be applied to some of our academic roles beyond PE. Crowe (2020, p. 775) argues that "self-study has a history of crossing disciplinary boundaries and not confining itself to predetermined academic silos." By re-examining our data, we have noticed how our collaboration has provided us with opportunities to look beyond our specific subject area, leading to the potential for transformative value because "we're stepping out of the silo...of our own institution, and we're getting a chance to broaden the perspective" (Richard, Online Discussion). Within our conversations, we highlighted how our specific engagement with physical education practice, and the learning therein, can be applied more broadly. Presentations about our research to teaching colleagues have presented us with possibilities to engage in other self-study research. These interactions can, in turn, lead to interactions with practitioners in the broader educational landscape, including teachers and policymakers. As Maura noted, "this experience has encouraged me to become involved in other self-study groups as a participant and leader and I am encouraging colleagues...to support their learning through collaboration with others" (Maura, Reflection 2). We identified orienting and transformative value in this aspect of our collaboration: orienting because of the potential to extend our professional networks, and transformative in the ways that we may be able to support institutional change and contribute to the shaping of national policy.

Duarte et al. (2021a, p. 348) use the metaphor of "zooming in and zooming out" to explore how different perspectives of a social learning landscape can be attained. In our context, a process of *zooming in* on our individual practices helped us to identify how we now better understand ourselves as teacher educators. By *zooming out* to varying degrees, we gain a better perspective on how our learning can guide our work more broadly within the PE teacher education community and, subsequently, across our educational practice landscape more generally.

Implications

As practitioners with previous experience of S-STEP, the decision to use the VCF to aid our reflection was a productive one. Applying this lens gave us a fresh perspective on the outcomes of our previous work, and this learning process supported us in considering the potential value that could be gained from our future practice. In reflecting on our approaches to pedagogical innovation with MPE, we gained a deeper understanding of framework outcomes in light of this insight. By collaborating, we could move beyond the confines of our personal contexts and 'silos', and through interaction with our self-study research partners, interrogating each other's reflections as critical friends, a broader perspective and consequent understanding of our pedagogical practice and the value outcomes of the VCF we were expressing, was gained. While we must acknowledge the occasional dissonance of the values being identified in our personal coding during the project, as cited in Bertram et al. (2014), the resulting dialogue and reflection was a positive outcome of the data analysis because it helped us to reflect on our individual and collective learning.

We are reminded that the opportunity to reflect as teacher educators through self-study, either individually or collaboratively in this instance, is of benefit, not just to us as practitioners, but significantly our modeling of reflective practice in our work with our student teachers is supporting their learning, and is very much in keeping with the expectations of The Teaching Council (2020, p. 23) that require our students to be able to "reflect critically on the effectiveness his/her practice on an ongoing basis so as to inform and adjust his/her practice"

As teacher educators and self-study researchers, looking back helps us as we look forward to the future, and from our experience in this study, taking the time to 'Pause at the Threshold' and explore the Value Creation Framework (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2020) was a valuable opportunity for our personal and professional learning and practice.

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“We Are Going to Need a Bigger Bottle”

Surfacing and Leveraging a Decade of Relational Knowledges

Linda Abrams, Charity Dacey, Kathryn Strom, & Tammy Mills

Relational Knowledge | Listening Guide | Critical Complexity | Assemblage

Current circumstances and shaping forces (e.g., COVID-19, shifting professional and personal lives and responsibilities) produced in our self study collective of four members a need to pause and re-consider the contours and established commitments of our group, what our past contributions have been, individually and collectively, and the potential and possibility of future contributions to a variety of audiences. After meeting only in digital spaces for 18 months, we intentionally spent embodied time together on the California coast to renegotiate our collaboration and make sense of our current situation. While there, we recorded conversations and started journals. We also engaged in our usual activity of exploring. traveling, and experiencing together. Upon return to our respective homes, we continued to journal and meet regularly by Zoom. These recordings, journals, and transcripts became our data sources. We employed the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) and critical complexity perspectives to examine the data. Emerging themes included the surprising depth of our relational knowledges, how that depth guided our intra-actions, and how we use those knowledges to navigate neoliberal systems. We also discovered the need to attend to elements beyond language-to the material affective elements within complex assemblages to more fully account for and articulate the power dynamics within the group.

Context and Objectives

> *[People said]..., ‘oh, have your fun...you're gonna fall apart.’ And ... if we're only working within the structures that we’re given in academia, we're going to fall apart. But if we engage with the trauma, and we create alternatives that continue to be fulfilling, so that we can become otherwise, then we subvert the system, and [create] something new... doing academia differently and affirmatively. (Et Alia Dialogue, 7/18/21)*

The four of us are a self-study collective who have been working together for an extended period of time. As summer 2021 dawned, eighteen months into the COVID-19 pandemic, we found ourselves feeling fractured as a group and uncertain about our future together. In response, we planned a three-day retreat in a remote coastal area and engaged in a series of discussions to navigate our healing process and decide what we wanted the future of our group and collective self-study work to look like--or indeed, whether we wanted a future together at all.

In this paper, we inquire into a process of self-study community redevelopment and healing in the aftermath of a global pandemic, examining the retreat as a critical moment. Our aim is to identify what facilitated this redevelopment-healing

process. Utilizing critical complexity perspectives, we employed the Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) to analyze the personal-professional entanglements that emerged during the writing retreat, focusing on affects/power flows and materialities. From this analysis, we constructed several types of relational knowledges that we had developed over time, through different phases of career/life, that served as facilitating tools. We use these analyses to discuss how the process of self-study enabled the growth of our relational practices to support ongoing healing and sustain a commitment to engaging with/in academia affirmatively.

Conceptual Framework

To frame our study, we draw on critical complex and feminist perspectives. By "critical complex" perspectives, we mean a continuum of trans-disciplinary theoretical orientations that resist rational humanism and anthropocentrism (Braidotti & Hjavalova, 2018), which underscore dominant, white, masculinist ways of thinking (Braidotti, 2013). Instead, critical complex perspectives emphasize a relational, multiplistic, difference-rich, explicitly political, always-in-process onto-epistemology (Strom & Viesca, 2021) that attends not only to human elements but also the non-human (Bennett, 2010)--both in terms of material (e.g., physical objects, places) and incorporeal (e.g., discourses, affects, power flows) (Barad, 2007; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). In such a perspective, individual humans are not the solely agentic actors and narrators of our reality. Social activity, rather, is produced collectively by assemblages–that is, temporary constellations or multiplicities of human-nonhuman elements suffused with affect (e.g., relational forces that increase or decrease one's capacity to act per Massumi (1987). They are also intra-active (Barad, 2007): in other words, the elements present are co-constitutive, or collectively co-create each other.

We have drawn on these ideas to theorize that our work is enabled by more-than-human critical friendship, or a relational becoming that spans the material, corporeal, and affective, "an assemblage of our bodies, histories, shared experiences, common knowledges and language, intimate knowledge of each other, and collective identity" (Mills et al., 2020, p. 484). This relationship assemblage is itself an agentic actor in our knowledge-practice transformations over time, both individually and as a collective, as we sustain and affirm ourselves in neoliberal systems.

Methods

We draw on LaBoskey's (2004) criteria for self-study research which helps us to better understand how we, our relationships, our practices, and our world are co-constituted, often through our dialogue and embodied experiences, in composition with agentic other-than-human elements (Strom et al., 2018). We are engaged in a "more than critical friendship" (Mills et al., 2020) to construct knowledge that moves beyond our collective to provide implications for the larger field (Loughran, 2005). In light of our question, "What enabled the (ongoing) redevelopment-healing process of our self-study collective and how might this inform our self-study practice?" We employed Gilligan's (1982) Listening Guide, a feminist, relational, qualitative, voice-centered method of inquiry (Gilligan, 1982) as an analytic tool to examine audio recordings and transcripts from our retreat and six subsequent Zoom meetings.

The Listening Guide attuned us to our voices, both as individual self-study researchers and as a collective assemblage. The Listening Guide method requires the researcher to listen for three distinct types of information, starting with the "plot:" attending to who is speaking and to whom, telling what stories, and in what societal and cultural frameworks. Second, we listened for "I"/ first-person voice, or how participants speak about themselves. We highlighted what we said about ourselves in relation to others in the transcript, and used this highlighted text to write "I poems," separating out each I phrase in order of appearance. These poems pick up distinct cadences and rhythms and "draw out the internal conversations so that they are audible and the nuances can readily be seen" per Raider-Roth as quoted in Woodcock (2016, p. 4). Next, we listened to the contrapuntal, which refers to "listening for different voices and their interplay, or harmonies or dissonances within the psyche, tensions with parts of itself" (Gilligan & Eddy, 2017, p. 79). From this listening, we noted that when we moved from individual stories to multi-voiced dialogue, we revealed different layers of our experiences and facets of the stories we told (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). We also noticed gaps, conflicting understandings, or responses that we revisited for clarification. The final stage of the Listening Guide helped to explore themes and how they related to one another. Building on emergent themes, we engaged in focused coding using the following analytic questions:

- What are the material/discursive/human elements in this assemblage?
- What might the intra-action among those elements be doing/producing in terms of affect, powerflow, and materialities?
- What tools/affordances were available or produced to support our collective process of coming into a renewed relationship?

The inquiry and analysis procedures of The Listening Guide (Gilligan, 1982) were challenging but effective, and not impervious to the inherent limitations. During this study, we explored the concept of voice and what it can do: we also found clues that later revealed hidden, withheld, or difficult-to-express feelings by returning to these pauses during further analysis. Breaks in dialog proved to be areas to mine later; they revealed tensions and complex emotions that required looking below the surface of what was initially said, and these even concealed or revealed withheld feelings. The opportunities and the challenges presented in using a voice-based method were myriad: simply listening to our meetings together, and focusing on our voices was often not enough to be able to really hear what each of us was saying. Our authentic yet sometimes incomplete reflections about our healing process required further probing and analysis between the second and third listenings.

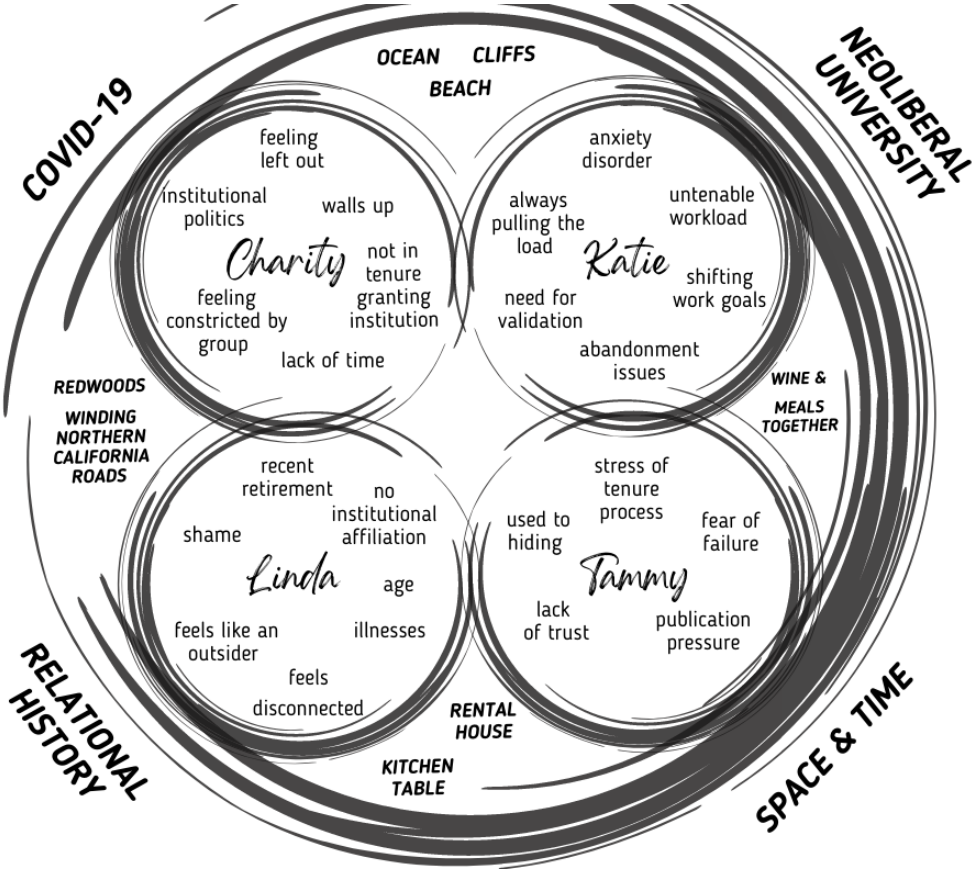
Findings

Material-Affective-Discursive Elements of Our Assemblage(s)

Within the distinct time and space of our Irish Beach retreat, we collaboratively constructed an understanding of the macro-level overarching forces that were having material and affective impacts on us individually and collectively (see Figure 1). These forces, including the coronavirus pandemic, neoliberalism, space/time, and our relational history, framed and infiltrated our conversations, elicited emotional responses and reverberated in our bodies. The local material surroundings we encountered at Irish Beach were also agentic for expressing our authentic experiences, needs, power flows, and material circumstances. There, we were awed by the beauty of the place, challenged by its wildness, nourished with plentiful food and wine, and cradled in the house perched on a cliff. Sharing, listening to, and connecting with each other as multiplicities we carried with us to the retreat produced an open-heartedness–a physical and emotional effect of mutual empathy and vulnerability. In concert, the three layers of intra-acting assemblages–macro-level, local, and personal, and each composed of material, discursive, and human elements–comprised our collective “Irish Beach” assemblage (Figure 1). Understanding that the whole of our assemblage did not pre-exist the connections that created it, we were inspired to examine these entanglements for new ways of being in a relationship together upon our return home.

Figure 1

Assemblages



During our time at Irish Beach, we identified, deconstructed, and repurposed the conditions that contributed to the unraveling of the ties that had previously bonded us. The COVID-19 pandemic, pressures and barriers of our neoliberal institutions, space/time, our own life changes, and our sometimes damaging patterns of interactions operated as forces of relational disconnection. Attending to how these affected our capacity to maintain and grow our relationship, we confronted and challenged the ways these forces acted to assert their dominance. For example, we recognized the material affects of academia, including dominant systems of thought, employment practices, and research and publication standards, that determine how and to whom power flows. When Tammy took a bedroom far removed from the others and spent time separated from the group, it was noticed, discussed, and taken up as a group. Tammy shared a complex work situation that implicated the tenure process, including the forced isolation of academia, something that had slowly, but steadily, been overwhelming her for the past few years. At that particular moment, Tammy was stressed about a specific proposal and deadline. Listening to her and reconnecting across common experiences of our subjectivity as being in relation with academia activated empathetic responses to Tammy's situation and thereby regenerated our capacity for being in-relation-with each other and worked to transform our relationship.

We also took accountability for interrogating the affect of our relational history on our work. While it was pleasant to conjure our shared history through metaphors and short-hand references to experiences we shared, such as "Le Reminet", "nasty women", and "at the table", and to use them as touchstones for understanding what we are becoming, our analysis also showed that we raised our awareness of more damaging elements of our shared history such as how power flowed through our group. We saw this play out in an exchange during the retreat when in response to a comment from Charity about dominance in the group, Katie drew attention to the pressure she felt to complete work explaining, "... we've fallen into patterns about who takes the lead on things. And so... I was kind of compelled to take the lead or for whatever reason felt like I had to." The comment led to a discussion on how and whether our individual and collective needs were being met, revisiting these in light of changes in our individual personal-professional circumstances, and responsibilities. We concluded that to become otherwise, we had to be more intentional in how we organize our time and work together. Articulating these circumstances and examining them in connection to the way they affected our relationship as a self-study collective was an affordance in our redevelopment process.

Irish Beach was an occasion for recognizing the materiality of our bodies–ways we are different when we move away from our shared workspace, the table. The home where we stayed abutted the Anderson Valley wine region of northern California–a good thing, because to get through the difficult conversations we planned, one of us joked, "We're gonna need a bigger bottle." The local wine and food were agentic for deepening our relationship as we relaxed and exposed intimate details of our lives beyond our collective relationship. Walks on the beach, over piles of driftwood and up the cliff where the Irish Beach house perched, highlighted our deep relationality to nonhuman entities and the limitations of believing we are autonomous and capable on our own. Car rides on winding roads in which we were physically separated by the partition between the front and back seats alerted us to divisions in our relationship and prompted two members to share their hurts around patterns of interactions. Sharing their very different perceptions of those interactions, they constructed the understanding, "we define caring for others in very different ways."

Exploring our individual and collective subjectivities during our time at Irish Beach, we learned that as a group we are composed of and intra-active with overarching macro-level forces, our personal and shared histories, our human bodies, and the discursive and material contexts that connect us. We learned that our relationship is dynamic and affectual with active agency to sustain and transform us when we engage in the relational affects of mutual vulnerability and empathy and learn from and with each other--"to become in relation to".

Relational Knowledges and Other Facilitating Agents

Each of us arrived at Irish Beach with a story of how the pandemic was affecting us personally and professionally. With time spent in person reminiscing over shared memories, over the span of several days we found the courage to share our difficult feelings about one another together in a safe honest shared space. This dialogue turned into one of many conversations exploring our relational patterns. Ultimately, they yielded a set of relational knowledges, which we identify as understandings that are created from or emerge from relationships over time and across locations. They are both individual and collective and are constructed from our histories, our experiences together, including the experience of data analysis. These relational knowledges became tools for us to identify powerful aspects of our work together, as well as forge new ways of being together that met each of us where we were, leaning into the ebb and flow of our relational assemblage.

We Develop and Renew Seed Knowledge

The first type of relational knowledge, which we see as a sort of seed knowledge that is integrated through everything, is our complex understandings of each other individually and as a collective. In our shared decade of history, we have loved and cared about each other, supported each other through hard times and celebrated life milestones. We self-studied, traveled, cried, and laughed together–and in the process, we learned every aspect of each other's lives: our upbringings, our strengths and joys, our insecurities, and our fears. We also have learned how we, as a collective, have interacted over time, which creates opportunities for us to enact agency in particular ways.

To represent our seed knowledge as the product of the intra-action of personal and collective self-understanding, we provide below excerpts from an Irish Beach conversation. We had returned from a walk on the beach which included a strenuous scramble over piles of driftwood. In these excerpts, Linds's first person voice is identified by underlining and her second person voice is bolded.

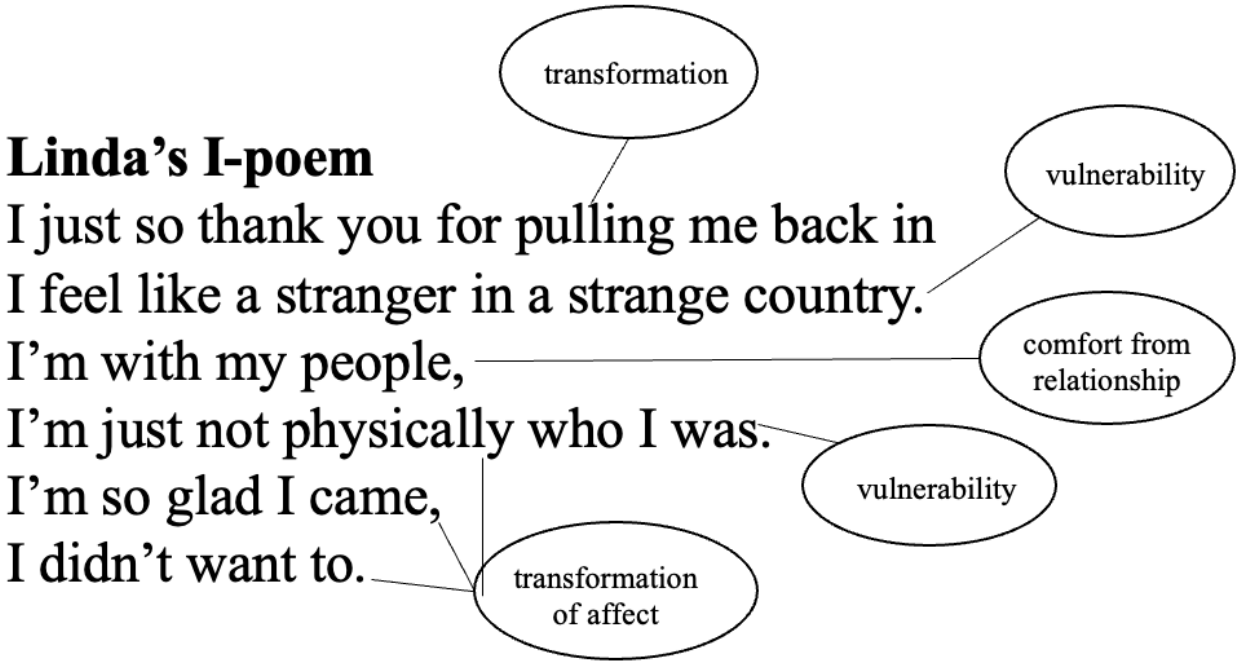
> *Being at this place in my life. It's like I feel like a stranger in a strange country…I just so thank you for pulling me back in. There's another thing that's gone on for me. And I think I don't know if* ***this is hard for you to understand****, because I'm not you. I'm thinking of myself. As a younger woman, it would have been hard for me to understand.*

Here, we see Linda's first person voice intra-acting with knowledge of self-in-relationship to our Irish Beach assemblage. While she grappled with her vulnerability as an older person, she began to clarify her emotive and embodied experiences and knowledge of her connections to and within the assemblage. After nearly two years of separation from the group, the conditions that created Linda's subjectivities required renegotiation. Thus, she drew upon our collective seed knowledge to rebuild her knowledge-of-self in relation with renewed enthusiasm for what the group was becoming.

Linda continued to distill her knowledge of self-in-relation by recapturing the knowledge-producing experience of Irish Beach in the following I-poem (Figure 2.), composed and analyzed during a Zoom meeting following the retreat.

Figure 2

I-poem



The I-poem reflects a transformation in Linda's seed knowledge about the affects of our relationship, including vulnerability, connection, comfort, and openness to transformation, that facilitate our longevity as a dynamic and productive collective.

We Leverage Our Bonds of Affection

Woven through each of the individual stories we shared were specific requests for support that invoked the power of our relationship for overcoming professional challenges. For instance, when describing feeling "stuck", a member of the group connected to another's journal entry and commented, "...we're like supporting each other on doing a better job at being us on the things that we're working on...it's such personal learning, even though it's connected to our professional selves." We understood that by leveraging our bonds, including our knowledge of each other and our individual work, we are able to amplify or augment our resilience for working within neoliberal systems that foster individualism, competition, and productivity.

Returning to Linda's example above, we noted that her initial comment about feeling "like a stranger in a strange country," was entangled with her experience of being retired from her position at an education foundation. Arriving at Irish Beach, she was uncertain about what she would have to contribute and whether she would be able to continue as a member of our self-study collective. However, Katie reacted to Linda's estrangement, "...working with you, as part of our relational collective, right, that makes us collectively better individually and fulfilled. And when I say better…I mean, like enhanced." Tammy added, "...we are otherwise we would not be the same without you". Because Irish Beach enabled us to reassemble in ways that opened new intersections and connections, Linda could envision new ways of contributing to our work and how she and the collective would adapt together.

> *I was able to recognize my own power and privilege because I am not hindered by a full-time job or stressed to be productive. This freedom opened-up possibilities for how I could position myself in the*

group. I was also able to shed my sense of being a victim of the system which gave me the confidence to examine my part in the breakdown of our relationships.

Linda assumed an affirmative stance in taking up her power and privilege in recognition of the freedom available to her in retirement to pursue the role of mentor, interrupting our habits of thinking about "worth" as being limited to our paid work.

We recognize that the personal-professional resilience we are developing together has active agency and matters beyond our group to transform relations with and in academic institutions. By intentionally attending to our entangled professional-personal relational assemblage we are able to "do academia differently"--not only to ensure our own thriving in such systems but also as broader interventions to disrupt the conditions of academia. For example, in one of our meetings Tammy shared a conversation she had with a doctoral advisee: "… you cannot do this work by yourself… you have to have a group of people that you trust and have a relationship with." Our knowledge that developing affirmative bonds of affection can generate the power to act differently in harmful conditions is applicable to our everyday practices. As such, we understand that working in solidarity with colleagues, challenging power dynamics and institutional structures that marginalize and alienate us has potential for transformation beyond us.

We Disrupt Patterns of Interaction

During our time at Irish Beach, we surfaced and discussed ways power flowed in our collective to influence the roles we played when we worked together and our more general patterns of interactions. We came to understand that our lack of attention to and consideration for changes in our individual circumstances generated unvoiced hurts that had accumulated. During one of our follow-up meetings Katie commented that the pandemic had stopped time in some way, "...but we all did change. We are all in the process of renegotiating."

We were challenged to reconsider assumptions about our collective as a cohesive unit, characterized by stability over time. Linda revealed, "Although we had agreements about working outside the group, the way we have done it makes me feel left out". On the unpredictable flow of power during one conversation, Tammy observed, "[In CA as we talked] I could feel it shifting and changing lots of assets flowing through our group, the mood the temperature the vibe whatever…I could sense it so many times and I couldn't say anything which I found really interesting." Aware of the tension, the energy produced at the intersections of power in the group, Tammy tested what it would be like to detach from us and decided to engage intellectually but not emotionally in our conversation, reverting to deep-rooted ways of shielding herself from the conflict that coincides with connection.

As the retreat progressed, we came to an understanding that we needed to think differently about our challenges and intentionally disrupted patterns of participation that had become status quo so that our power relations could become more flexible. We agreed that roles for the production of this paper would be shifted to allow Katie a respite from the pressure of "always having to be productive" and to open space for others to take the lead. Our knowledge of the possibilities of this change was partial at the time, but later, as we analyzed data in ways we had not previously considered, we learned that we were capable of rebuilding our relationship as an assemblage of ever shifting, always expanding opportunities for renewal.

Conclusion

The material-discursive assemblage of Irish Beach and the relational knowledges we developed in that space and time mattered in terms of enabling us, as a self-study collective, to move forward and heal. As one of us wrote, "I thought this was going to be the death of us, but it is actually a rebirth." At the heart of this process of redevelopment and healing was our shared subjectivity which we claimed by writing this paper. We understand self-study as a deeply personal, vulnerable, and creative project that affirms the importance of belonging to a community of educators and rests on the endurance of relationships with members who will act as more-than-critical friends. For us, critical friendship extends beyond the research project to encompass opportunities for expansion of the self-in-relation with others. As such, self-study is a tool for liberating and transforming.

Extending our understandings into larger academic settings as a way of transforming gatekeeping and policing relations is part of our enactment of what Braidotti (2019) refers to as affirmative ethics: engaging with pain and trauma to generate shared knowledge, and then using that knowledge to rework negative affects that produce isolation, exclusion, anxiety, and burnout. Through this reframing, self-study has the potential to create new structures that enable support, collaboration, and proliferation (for another example of this reworking of negative academic affect, see Authors, forthcoming, on affirmative peer-reviewing practices).

We also bring our relational knowledges into our own teaching and mentorship practices by purposefully creating educational communities that value diverse ways of knowing, validate multiple experiences, and recognize vulnerability and relational resilience as essential to the learning process. Katie, for example, has added a community-building component to every class session: students collaboratively develop a set of collective agreements for learning together at the beginning of the course. Further, we encourage pre-service teachers, practitioners, and school leaders to turn their gaze outward, to enhance their understanding of their own practice by examining it with others, and to build relationships grounded in mutual vulnerability and support.

Finally, we see implications for relational knowledges in ethical qualitative research practice. In particular, from understanding the ways that our relational knowledge mattered in our analysis, we began to recognize that this process was a practice of *relational reflexivity*. In other words, our relationship (and its history and related knowledges) was part of the assemblage we brought to our analysis, and as such, became a mediating factor producing our reading of our data. However, typically in qualitative research projects with multiple researchers, reflexivity is something that is articulated on an individual level: for instance, each researcher might state her own positionality and offer how that might shape the knowledge production. Seldom do we address our relational positionality and the ways that might turn us toward and away from particular readings. We suggest that the idea of relational reflexivity is a topic worthy of further exploration.

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Dancing With Others

Exploring Critical Friendship as Creative Collaboration

Tanya van der Walt & Tamar Meskin

Critical Friends | Collaborative Self-study | Self-study of Creative Practice | Creative Collaboration

Critical friendship is one of the key tenets of validity in self-study research. In this paper, we expand our understanding of critical friendship by exploring the intersection between collaboration, critical friendship, and our disciplinary expertise in creative processes. In the methodological discussion presented here, we map the links between our own understanding and experience of critical friendship, and the eleven criteria for creative collaboration developed in Tanya van der Walt's earlier study (2018), exploring how creative collaboration and critical friendship overlap and intersect. We discuss critical friendship and creative collaboration comparatively, mapping the parallels, convergences, and points of overlap between them. By looking at our own critical friendship through the lens of creative collaboration, we articulate a space where criticality, friendship, and creativity intersect to drive the development of new meanings, drawing attention to the generative and catalysing power of critical friendship within self-study research. In so doing we are able to (re)imagine critical friendship as creative collaboration, a relationship that we term critical creative collaborative friendship.

Context of the Study

Critical friendship is one of the key tenets of validity in self-study research (Costa & Kallick, 1993; Samaras, 2011; Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). Self-study is usually imagined as a collaborative process between researcher and researched (Bodone et al., 2004; LaBoskey, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). In the paper, we expand our understanding of critical friendship by exploring the intersection between collaboration, critical friendship, and our disciplinary expertise in creative processes. We seek to understand the concept of critical friendship as an act of creative collaboration, using a theoretical understanding of creative collaboration (Bennis & Biederman, 1997; Farrell, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000; Sawyer, 2003, 2007; van der Walt, 2018) as the lens through which to explore our own process of self-study research. We interrogate how our critical friendship exhibits the specific qualities of creative collaboration (van der Walt, 2018), shaping both our research thinking and our creative work as theatre-makers and university teachers in Durban, South Africa.

Aim/Objectives

This study poses the question: how and why does critical friendship work as a process of creative collaboration? The paper aims to map the links between our own understanding and experience of critical friendship, and the eleven criteria for creative collaboration developed in Tanya's earlier study (van der Walt, 2018), exploring how creative collaboration and critical friendship overlap and intersect. The underlying dynamic within critical friendship relies upon a

tacit and implicit relationship of creative collaboration between the individuals involved. Here, we make that relationship and its underpinnings explicit. In conceiving of critical friendship as a form of creative collaboration, we broaden the framework of how critical friendship acts as a generative, creative, supportive space for researchers to explore their wildest ideas, and their bravest wonderings.

Method(s)

Our methodological discussion here draws on our theoretical understanding of creative collaboration and our lived experience as creative, collaborative partners. We discuss critical friendship and creative collaboration comparatively, mapping the parallels, convergences, and points of overlap between them. By engaging in co-reflexive, reciprocal dialogue about our own critical friendship and then applying the lens of creative collaboration to the insights generated, we articulate a space where criticality, friendship, and creativity intersect to drive the development of new meanings. In so doing, we draw attention to the generative and catalysing power of critical friendship within self-study research.

Critical Friendship in Self-Study

Critical friends are "trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research to gain new perspectives in understanding and reframing of their interpretations" (Samaras, 2011, p. 5). Our own long critical friendship is an honest, open, and caring space of critique and thinking, benefitting both our research processes. This relationship involves the essential element of trust, which creates the space for the exchange of ideas and critique, in a "community. . . filled not just with critique but also with caring" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 89). An ethics of care must underpin any critical friendship to enable divergent opinions without destroying the community spirit. Thus, the critical friend must combine the qualities of caring and emotional support with intellectual rigour and critical insight. There are often divergent opinions and disagreements within any collaborative relationship, but constructing a strong, supportive, and caring space mitigates these difficulties and acts as a generative phenomenon since, out of the different thinking, new and better understandings will emerge.

Critical friendship is rooted in dialogic interaction (van der Walt & Meskin, 2020); the characteristics of such dialogues include "community, respect, caring, strong voices/listening, . . . difference, commonality, inquiry, critique, reflection" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 95). These resonate with our understanding of any collaborative process that requires the exchange of ideas, feelings, and conclusions. The dialogic process is significant both for creative collaboration and for critical friendship, not least because of the complexity of collaborative work (Samaras, 2011, p.8).

Collaboration with a critical friend helps "practitioners to see beyond their own 'world views' and to broaden their perspective on situations in meaningful ways" (Loughran, 2004, p. 158). In creative collaboration, we move beyond the singular world view to explore a multitude of shared possibilities. Positioning critical friendship as an act of creative collaboration allows us to occupy a liminal space, where we are not only creators or receivers of knowledge, but something beyond either of these constructions.

Creative Collaboration – an Overview

Collaboration does not simply mean working with someone else on a project or task of some kind. Rather, we see collaboration as

> *people working together - sometimes by choice, sometimes not. Sometimes we collaborate to jump-start creativity; other times the focus is simply on getting things done. In each case, people in a good collaboration accomplish more than the group's most talented members could achieve on their own. (Tharp, 2009, p. 4)*

By extension, the defining characteristic of 'creative collaboration' is that it is *creative*; it engages a pair or a group of people in a task that requires that they solve a problem in a new and innovative way. Creativity itself is "a complex, abstract, 'fuzzy' concept" (Isaksen & Murdock, 2008, p.1), which links "together two or more ideas so as to produce something new and useful, or something new and beautiful, or both" (Farrell, 2001, p. 114-115). Thus, the difference between collaboration in general, and *creative collaboration*, is this drive to create something *new*.

Building on these ideas, in her earlier study, Tanya (van der Walt, 2018) synthesised the following definition of creative collaboration:

> *Creative collaboration is based on mutual, interdependent friendships or close relationships. . . .[It] depends on a shared vision, which encompasses both a shared goal, and a shared view of the domain and field in which that goal is to be achieved. Through the process of shared thinking, creative collaboration involves the co-construction of meaning. . . [It] involves learning from each other, through a process of mutual appropriation. . . . Creative collaboration attracts people who are divergent and non-conformist thinkers. . . . [and] involves both problem-finding and problem-solving, in a complex, ongoing, and iterative process. In creative collaboration, the process is the product, and is the central focus of research. Creative collaboration is generative, and emergent, as it is concerned with the making of something that is new, practical, and unpredictable. Creative collaboration involves 'flow', which is an optimal, autotelic activity. Because of the different ways that men and women are socialised, creative collaboration is often gendered, with marked differences between the ways in which men and women collaborate creatively. (pp. 215-216)*

Understanding Critical Friendship Through the 11 Tenets of Creative Collaboration

The definition above elucidates eleven key tenets of creative collaboration. We have used these as a structuring device, mapping the ways in which critical friendship can be considered a creative collaboration.

1. Creative Collaboration is Often Based on Friendship or Some Other Close Relationship

Collaboration is based on relationships between people; thus, relationships are vital to the process of creative collaboration (Bennis & Biederman, 1997; Farrell, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000). Even if they begin casually, these relationships grow to have enormous significance in the lives of the participants, since "the dynamics of the group transform the work of the members. . .[and] working together, very ordinary people make extraordinary advances in their field" (Farrell, 2001, p. 2). Members of such creative, collaborative groups, over time, deepen their sense of commitment to each other and their shared work, building a sense of trust, and emotional connection. Out of this arises "instrumental intimacy" (Farrell, 2001, p. 151), where members of a group come to trust the others enough to share their "most current, least finished work" (Farrell, 2001, p. 151). This emotional connection allows creative collaborators to feel that they are equals in the relationship and equal owners of the process and product of the creative collaboration (Bennis & Biederman, 1997; Farrell, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000), since, "In a true creative collaboration, almost everyone emerges with a sense of ownership" (Bennis & Biderman, 1997, p. 28).

Our own collaborative relationship began as a casual work acquaintanceship but evolved and matured alongside our growing friendship. We have shared many hours and many cups of tea and glasses of wine, talking, laughing, and working together, developing a creative partnership that has endured for almost 20 years. The most important factor underlying this longevity is our friendship and the multi-layered support we derive from it. We have written about the centrality of our friendship to our work, and being "interested, invested partner[s]" (Meskin & van der Walt, 2014, p. 9). We see our friendship as a "safe space, protecting us as we grapple with the most challenging aspects of our work" (van der Walt & Meskin, 2020, p. 348).

2. Creative Collaboration Depends on a Shared Vision

Central to creative collaboration is the notion of a shared vision, which encompasses the participants' ways of seeing their discipline, and the world in general (Farrell, 2001, p. 11). Shared vision, then, lies at the heart of creative collaboration; as Bennis and Biederman (1997) assert: "The dream is the engine that drives the group. . . [it] is a kind of contract, a mutual understanding that the process itself, will be worth the effort to create it" (p. 19-20). Our collaboration is premised on such shared vision, which is rooted in our sense of closeness, trust, and friendship, but also in a shared sensibility.

Overarching our work together is a sense of a common understanding of theatre, of what we think theatre is for, and of how it should work. This shared ontological position in relation to the theatre serves as a meta-structural intention (Colin & Sachsenmaier, 2016) that underpins everything that we do. In our experience, having a shared vision – whether

it be for making a theatre piece, writing a paper, or co-teaching – is liberating, as it frees us from the burden of being solely responsible for absolutely everything about the work from start to finish.

3. Creative Collaboration Involves the Co-construction of Meaning

In creative collaboration, success lies in the use of "joint thinking" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 3). Implicit in this is the co-construction of meaning. If two (or more) minds are working together creatively, their ideas and insights are constructed through dialogue and mutual meaning-making. This *collective sensemaking* facilitates a "thought community" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 196), which "enable[s] participants to engage in the co-construction of knowledge as interdependent intellectual and emotional processes" (p. 196).

For us, co-constructing meaning is a familiar habit since in theatre, any production requires a collaborative effort. We have transferred a similar process to our research and our writing (see Meskin & van der Walt, 2014, 2022). Through dialogue and wrestling with each other's ideas, we co-construct the meanings embedded in our work. These emerge out of and are constructed by our dialogic thinking, and the entanglement of our respective subjective thought processes. In this way, we engage "connected knowing" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 101); we call this our 'dual consciousness', which functions to improve and enrich the work, as with the dialogic relationship between critical friends.

4. Creative Collaboration Involves Learning From Each Other

Along with shared thinking and co-construction of meaning, creative collaborators engage in a process of "mutual appropriation" (John-Steiner, 2000) where we "learn from each other by teaching what we know" (p. 192). Our creative collaboration clearly reflects this. Despite our similar socialisation into our discipline, we have very different, and in some ways, discrete skills. Tamar's training as an actor, dancer, and singer, musical knowledge, and many years of directing experience have given her a particular skills set. By contrast, Tanya's very different skills set emerges from her background as a stage manager, her knowledge of the technical aspects of theatre, and her experience in Drama Education. Because of these different skills, we work in quite different ways, and have evolved different roles within our collaborative creative practice, as we bring our respective skills and *knowings* to bear upon the work. Thus, we make space for the plurality of our voices in the work. Because we are not doing the same things in our process, or looking at the work from the same perspective, we each find our own way to make the work 'speak' for us. In doing so, we are enacting a dynamic relationship between the self and other that results in synergistic practice and ongoing learning from each other.

5. Creative Collaboration Attracts People Who Are Divergent and Non-conformist Thinkers

Creative collaboration is seen as a divergent, non-conformist act, resisting "the powerful belief in a separate, independent self and in the glory of individual achievement. . . . The very effort to work together. . . is a creative act" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 204). Farrell (2001) suggests creative collaborators are often "marginalised in their fields" (p. 19), and argues that this makes them "more likely to be a source of new ideas than are people at the center" (p. 268). Because they occupy the periphery, creative collaborators often work to counter the prevailing tradition or status quo of their discipline. Working together with other like-minded rebels, allows creative collaborators to 'think outside the box' of the received wisdom of their discipline. This is a position that resonates strongly with self-study.

We both view ourselves as divergent, and not 'on the fast track'. We feel comfortable working on the margin in terms of our world views, our methods, and our approaches. Our creative collaboration engenders "a space for work that is slightly off the mean" (van der Walt, 2018, p. 239). We seek to challenge the conventional constructions of a single directorial vision in a theatre work, or a single voice in academic writing, and as outsiders, have found in each other a community of practice to support those pursuits.

6. Creative Collaboration Involves Both Problem-Finding and Problem-Solving

The purpose of most collaborations is to solve specific problems, often posed by the context within which the group works. Creative collaboration, however, can also be a way to find *new* problems. Sawyer (2003) asserts that "the creative process is a constant balance between finding a problem and solving that problem, and then finding a new problem during the solving of the last one" (loc. 2557). Thus, creative collaboration can involve both problem-finding and problem-solving, as different phases of the same creative process.

When devising a play, for example, we usually begin with a shared goal, but without specific plans for attaining that goal; these emerge through the process in a constant cycle, where each solution generates the new 'problem' or possibility. A similar process emerges in our collaborative research, finding the questions, and discovering answers which themselves generate more questions in the iterative cycle that is characteristic of the self-study method. Thus, our creative collaboration operates as a generative practice, as we bring the processes of problem-finding and problem-solving to bear in the creation of something new.

7. Creative Collaboration Is Process-Focused

Traditionally, research into the arts has focused on the *products* of a creative process; the object of study has been the painting, the sculpture, or the play text. However, this perspective is changing, as researchers begin to understand that, "the process is the product" (Sawyer, 2003, loc. 255). Foregrounding process-focused thinking offers unique potential to explore the *how* of practice, feeding into such emergent methods as Self-Study of Creative Practice (Meskin & van der Walt, 2022).

The creative experience, thus, is to be found in the *making* of the work; creativity is key not to the final play or the paper but in *how* we get there. We experience a sense of equal ownership of both the processes and the products of our creative collaboration; neither of us 'owns' specific parts of the work that we do. When we look back at our work, we do not differentiate who 'created' what, and it is this organic melding of our ideas that allows us to speak with a shared 'voice' through our work.

8. Creative Collaboration Is Generative

Creative collaboration is generative since it generates, innovates, and produces a new product. This can be an object, a new style of doing things, or a new idea. Thus, in creative collaboration "a collective product emerges that could not even in theory be created by an individual" (Sawyer, 2007, loc. 1061).

We have written about our critical friendship as generative (van der Walt & Meskin, 2020), noting our shared experiences as crucial to that process. The forces of creative collaboration propel us into different directions that we might otherwise not have discovered. Important for us is the delight that comes from seeing things from another's perspective and the opening up of our individual horizons through each other's input. The expanded possibilities that emerge from this sharing transcend individual contribution and generate new thinking, new meanings, and new understandings.

9. Creative Collaboration Is Emergent

Emergence is a slippery concept. To us, the concept of emergence has to do with the bringing into being of something new, which arises as a natural consequence of action. Thus, creativity and emergence are interrelated processes. Sawyer (2003) characterises creative collaboration as emergent, observing that it "is ephemeral, changes with each utterance, and emerges from collective interaction" (loc. 2677). Our understanding of the word also includes the notion that something that is emergent is in a continuous state of becoming; it is never completed, but always coming into being.

In our creative collaboration, we are always aware of the *unfixedness* of knowing. As directors, even after the last performance, we might imagine new ways of staging a particular scene or an actor's characterisation. This is the function of theatre's liveness; it is ephemeral and never static. Similarly, in our research, every discovery leads to new questions and so, this knowledge too is always in a state of flux. Even our collaborative relationship is not static but constantly evolving and emerging. It is the very *unfixedness* of our understanding that allows always for an iterative cycle of re-visioning and re-imagining ourselves and our practice.

10. Creative Collaboration Involves 'Flow'

One of the most important concepts emerging from the study of creativity is Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) notion of 'flow', which he defines as *autotelic*, and describes as a state of complete absorption in, and enjoyment of a specific task. Building on this notion, Sawyer (2003) introduces the concept of 'group flow' which he says creates "a magical kind of high" (loc. 1169).

We often experience group flow in our creative collaborations. In this state, we are in tune with the energy of the creative relationship. It is playful and pleasurable and facilitates the sparking of ideas, seeming to work almost instinctively and seamlessly, whether in devising theatre or free writing. In our theatre-making practice, for example, problem-finding and problem-solving are happening simultaneously, and we simply 'make it up as we go along'. In this heightened working state, we have access to our individual and shared imaginative skills and theatrical knowledge, allowing us to make conceptual leaps from one idea to the next, as we grapple with more and more challenging and complex ideas. Our ability to foresee what each will think or do, allows us to work together without even articulating what we think into words. This is based on years of experience, and on a deep emotional and intellectual connection that results from our friendship.

11. Creative Collaboration Is Often Gendered

Scholars of creative collaboration point to qualitative differences in how men and women collaborate creatively, arguing that women's socialisation makes them better able to embrace a state of interdependence and mutuality (Farrell, 2001; John-Steiner, 2000). John-Steiner (2000) highlights gender differences in socialisation in Western contexts, where males "experience a powerful push toward independence, competition and autonomy" (p. 122), while women are "responsible for maintaining the social fabric" (p. 122) and are "more at ease with interdependent modes of work" (p. 100). Thus, it may feel more natural and easier for women who work together to experience the relational, mutual, and interdependent nature of the creative relationship.

Our collaborative relationship allows a shared burden, and the creation of a nurturing, supportive relationship in pursuit of shared ideals. Part of our working method is to 'divide and conquer', allowing one person to fulfill everyday responsibilities while the other works on the project itself, and vice versa. Because we are women, we have greater insight into each other's lives and responsibilities, and so we are able to offer each other greater support. This is paralleled in the critical friend relationship in self-study, which also offers an ethos and a community of supportive scholarship.

Creative Collaboration Meets Critical Friendship

Having explored how our creative collaboration intersects with our critical friendship, we can see both of these constructs as fundamentally collaborative acts. It is clear that friendship, trust, caring, and dialogic thinking are key components of both practices. Similarly, both embrace the possibilities of divergent thinking and privilege the co-construction of meaning. Like creative collaboration, critical friendship functions because the members of the group share a vision or goal and because they choose to learn something from each other. Both processes are employed to generate something, be it a research article or a creative product, that is improved through a collective process rooted in open communication, honesty, and support. In such an environment, a cycle of problem-solving and problem-finding is facilitated, which frames emergent meanings and understandings allowing for ongoing inquiry and invention. Both relationships are thus generative in literal and metaphorical ways – generating material, but also an ever-deepening experience of "connected knowing[s]" (John-Steiner, 2000, p. 101). Sharing these experiences makes possible the feeling of group flow.

Critical Friendship As Creative Collaboration

What makes critical friendship creative? It is creative because when we work with a critical friend, we do so in the context of a quest for new knowledge, new understanding, new awareness, and new thinking. Using a critical friend ensures one's self-study does not become the self speaking alone, but rather the self in dialogue. It is used to test methods or findings, to deepen ideas, to source data, to formulate responses, and so on; but, it can also be, itself, at the centre of the process. Through engaging with one's critical friends, the process and results of research are changed, and so the relationship becomes a change agent too. If the defining characteristic of creativity is that it should make something "new and useful, or something new and beautiful, or both" (Farrell, 2001, p. 114-115), then critical friendship certainly belongs in the creative sphere.

What makes critical friendship collaborative? It is collaborative because it functions on the basis of shared goals and mutual benefit. If "Self-study requires critical collaborative inquiry. . . personal and interpersonal with learning, thinking,

and knowing arising through collaboration and the appropriating of feedback from others" (Samaras, 2011, p. 10), then critical friendship is one of the key aspects of collaboration. It is the key to self-study practitioners accomplishing more together "than the group's most talented members could achieve on their own" (Tharp, 2009, p. 4).

Along with creativity and collaboration, we must not forget the vital *critical* component of critical friendship. Certainly, critique can be destructive if mishandled, but rendered constructively within a relationship of creative collaboration, it is a positive, generative factor because the act of criticism itself is what generates new thinking and deepens one's understandings.

The critical friend relationship is best imagined as a dialogic interaction between people who are not afraid to embrace their own vulnerability as researchers or to engage in honest and forthright debates as research commentators. To us, this is best accomplished through (re)imagining critical friendship *as* creative collaboration. Perhaps we might even coin a new phrase to encompass this phenomenon: 'critical creative collaborative friendship'. Both creative collaboration and critical friendship liberate one "from the prison of the self. . . Genius is rare, and the chance to exercise it in a dance with others is rarer still" (Bennis & Biederman, 1997, p. 29). This sense of 'dancing with others' lies at the heart of critical creative collaborative friendship, and is its greatest reward.

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Three Thresholds in a Single Crossing

Harnessing New Alliances Within a Critical Friendship

Eve Zehavi, Diane M. Miller, & Laura J. Link

Collaboration | Pre-service Teacher | University-community Partnerships | Teaching Licensure

A multi-faceted, university-based team emerged from a year-long project having discovered much about their professional selves in the midst of accomplishing a shared goal of preparing pre-service teachers for a newly mandated certification exam. Their team, composed of an Assistant Professor of Early Literacy, an Associate Professor of Literacy and Curriculum and Instruction, and the Associate Dean for the College of Public Service, demonstrated a uniquely componential yet collaborative response that resulted in noteworthy success, despite the limitations of a worldwide pandemic. An iterative five-step model developed from their work, and they found that the five steps of needs assessment, team formation, ongoing coaching, codifying processes, and frequent celebrations were both complicated and enriched by persistent tensions in the areas of teaching, systems, and communications. These strategies guided their approach to renewed curriculum development, innovative instructional delivery, and improved assessment readiness. Through the nexus of their individual and collaborative identities, they embraced new ways of leading and producing content for internal and external stakeholders.

Introduction

What was it about that night?
Connection—in an isolating age
For once the shadows gave way to light
For once the shadows gave way to light
For once I didn't disengage.
~Mark and Roger, "What You Own," RENT, by J. Larson, 1997

For most educator preparation programs (EPPs), it is de rigueur for teaching certification licensure exams to have significant impacts upon matters such as institutional reputation and program accreditation, so teacher education faculty must navigate the paths from theory to practice and from pedagogy to assessment for their students (Peck et al., 2010; Warner et al., 2020). Lest we despair and ineffectually bemoan the loss of academic excellence in the face of high-stakes testing, the three of us chose instead to pause and connect through an "everyday courage" (Pignatelli, 2010, p. 233) that we did not know we had.

Our narrative of self-study begins with a state-mandated, high-stakes reading test that threatened to cast a shadow over our existing curriculum and instruction and to make matters worse in the midst of an isolating pandemic. Much like Pignatelli (2010) suggests, we opted to eschew shadows of circumstances, engage with one another, and "imagine ways of keeping the conversation going about alternatives, even as we remain open to revising and rethinking how best to proceed" (p. 235). What follows is our story of three educators responding to one, new teacher certification test or, to rephrase, three educators coalescing around a single goal to engage in a critical friendship.

The Task

As of January 1, 2021, individuals seeking our state-administered teaching certification for Early Childhood through Grade 8, including bilingual education, must pass an additional exam in the Science of Teaching Reading (SoR). While this new exam presented significant instructional shifts for our department, community partners, and EPPs across the state (Mosley Wetzel et al., 2020), our team's uniquely componential yet collaborative response resulted in noteworthy success.

To present this as a state-specific policy issue, though, would be misleading. State departments of education, both across the US and internationally, are foregrounding scientific approaches to reading instruction (Seidenberg, 2013; Solari et al, 2020; Dehaene, 2009; D'Mello, & Gabrieli, 2018). Moreover, our reflective study centers particularly *on our professional growth through the development of a test preparation instrument* rather than the content of the instrument itself. Thus, our collaborative learnings are illustrative beyond the scope of literacy education.

State and national mandates of change for EPPs are not new, but there was something about the circumstances of this one that brought us out of the shadows of an isolating pandemic into a collegial, engaging connection. Our work to develop a highly effective, innovatively designed teacher preparation tool was the immediate, tangible goal, but it was our systemic stance of self-reflection and identity analysis that led us to discover "what it was about" this collaboration that connected and grew us as professionals in unexpected yet deeply valued ways.

Perspectives

Our collaboration includes an Assistant Professor of Early Literacy, an Associate Professor of Literacy and Curriculum and Instruction, and the Associate Dean for the College of Public Service. As we share below, we each contributed individualized components—content, instructional design, and administration—to our collaborative work.

Eve's Content Perspective

As the early reading content specialist, I completed significant training and embedded new insights derived from SoR into the curriculum. I considered key issues, such as the tension between content knowledge and pedagogy: making content accessible and relevant to practice, determining what/how to condense, and pushing the instruction beyond mere assessment competencies. Embedded in this challenge was the necessity of getting buy-in from faculty on an emerging literacy paradigm and educating them in the pedagogy of SoR so they could effectively and confidently integrate the new curriculum into their courses.

Diane's Instructional Design Perspective

Because this new certification requirement emerged during the height of the pandemic, I was compelled to seek new ways to deliver the literacy curriculum. Moreover, I was tasked with the problem of how to consolidate this work for multiple stakeholders: our undergraduate students, our community partner, who provided an alternative certification program, and potential new graduate students. With a turnaround time of less than a year, I sought an innovative instructional design via an asynchronous, portable, and pedagogically-sound module-directed virtual course that would be accessible to thousands of pandemic-impacted pre-service students and educators throughout Texas. Bringing together my virtual product design, development, editing, and project management experience to serve as an anchor, we ensured alignment between those involved in developing the virtual course framework–the reading-content expert and university technology consultant–to meet the consistency, design, and functional demands of the asynchronous learning environment.

Laura's Administrative Perspective

As our college's associate dean, I developed strategic K-16 partnerships that brought our traditional teacher preparation program and other alternative certification programs to the same problem-solving table. I broadened leadership levers to include expert faculty working alongside cross-functional teams of university and district administrators and departments, thus setting out to make our newly developed SoR curriculum and virtual course accessible and portable state-wide for a variety of stakeholders. I extended stakeholder benefits by creating pathways for students across the state of Texas to enter our Master of Arts in Teaching program by linking successful completion of the SoR online learning modules to eligibility for graduate course/program entry and credit.

Aim

While our larger project was to develop an online exam preparation course for a newly mandated state exam (see "The Task" above), embedded within that project, we soon realized, was a second but-no-less-important aim: studying our own development as teachers and leaders to share our learning with a broader community. It is that realization that made us pause. Our project represented the intersections of interests—the university and community partner, academic department and university administration, deep pedagogical learning, and high-stakes assessment preparation—and it was on the brink of those thresholds that our real work of self-study began. This question guided our reflective research: What steps and stances steered and fostered the pandemic-impacted pedagogical work of a hybrid faculty and administration team?

Methodology

Our study adopted the framework of Paulus, Woodside, and Ziegler (2008), who stated that collaborative practice is "emergent and iterative," that data includes collaboratively constructed meaning, and that findings and outcomes are only part of an ongoing conversation (p. 226). Essentially, we did not know what to expect, but we knew we needed each other. As noted in Schuck and Russell (2005), self-study is difficult for the individual because there is no distance between assessment and practice. Critical friendships offer a view often obscured in self-assessment but visible to outside perspectives. Our work was critical in the sense that it was essential and, in fact, urgent. With so much at risk for each of us, it was important that we all be able to be critical in the sense that we were also able to challenge each other's perspectives.

Our collaboration was supported by both qualitative data, such as personal observation, correspondence, and dialogue, and quantitative data, such as enrollment numbers, teacher responses, and testing outcomes. Although the focus of this study did not center on the quantitative results of our project, we acknowledge that the students' exam results influenced our qualitative reflections. Notably, the results collected at the close of the first calendar year of the SoR assessment administrations revealed a 97.2% passing rate (278 out of 286) for our university students and a 99% passing rate (131 out of 132) for the alternative certification students from our community partner. The qualitative data for this study span over 18 months and include 7 Zoom meetings, 221 emails, countless texts, and reflective writings.

With respect to trustworthiness, "dialogue, collaboration, and critique" were at the heart of our work (Samaras & Sell, 2013, p. 93). Using Creswell's (2013) constant comparative approach, we examined all the data, negotiated meanings, and drew out themes through in-person and Zoom discussions. Finally, to address quality and validity, we adopted four guidelines from Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) related to self-study: our work should "ring true," "promote insight and interpretation," "take an honest stand," and be grounded in "problems and issues that make someone an educator" (pp. 16-17).

Understandings

Berry (2007) defined tensions as a "way of representing and better understanding the elements of ambivalence and contradiction so intrinsic to the complex nature of pedagogy" (p.139). This project was steeped in the overarching tension of policy versus learning, but in the tradition of previous work in S-STEP research (e.g., Ritter, 2018), our reflective analysis revealed distinct tensions specific to our learnings during this project.

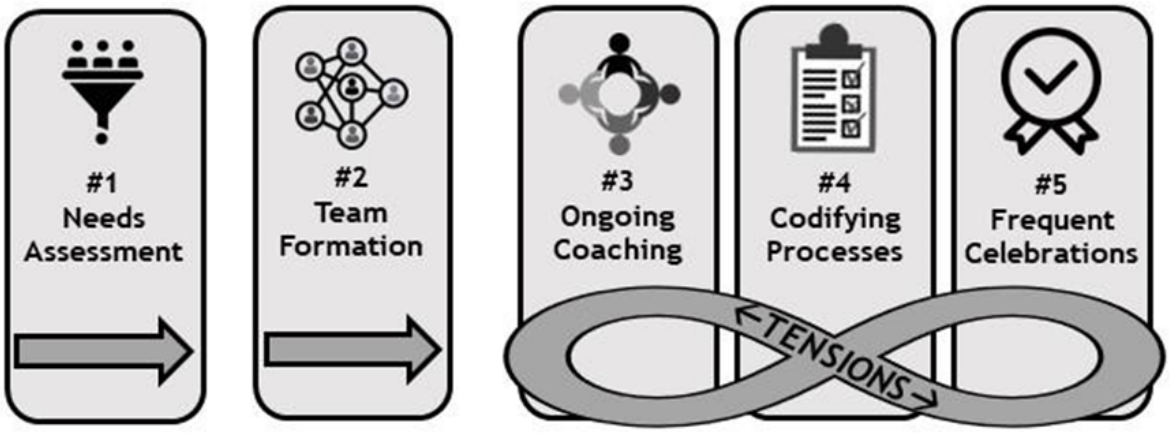
To best serve our certification-seeking students, we acquiesced early on that we had a job to do and that we needed to do it well. However, we did not have a previously established script for anything like this, and the pandemic isolated us from our usual informal collaborative habits. Similar to reports by other S-STEP researchers, we felt the tension of our usual human and proximate work with the disembodied nature of virtual teaching and learning (Bullock & Fletcher, 2014; Strom et al., 2016). The comfortable structures of office and conference-room chats were supplanted by the inhospitable squares on a Zoom screen, buffeted by hundreds of emails and text messages. As previously stated, it is common for educator preparation programs to grapple with the tension between the pragmatic demand of certification exams and the academic yearning to provide rigorous and unique engagement. We balanced these needs by using as data our acknowledgment of the external forces at play, our discussions of potential problems inherent in our project, and the identification of tensions that surfaced during our work (Haniford & Pence, 2016).

Throughout our collaboration, our knowings have been emergent. As Pinnegar, Hutchinson, and Hamilton (2020) observe, knowing is contingent on "context, humans, and knowledge" (p. 107). Our narrative outlines our processes and negotiations while trying to meet the high-pressure demands of a mandatory teacher-certification assessment project, a challenge similarly faced by other states and countries as they adapt to SoR requirements. The areas of instruction, systems, and communication all contributed tensions that, ultimately, were our thresholds to cross together.

The lessons learned and the success of our collaboration resulted in the development of a five-step process model that is both linear and cyclical in its forward-moving practice: (1) identifying the needs and barriers of all stakeholders in the pedagogy of SoR; (2) forming a cross-functional design and implementation team; (3) facilitating multiple and ongoing coaching/feedback sessions; (4) codifying written policies and processes; (5) and communicating and celebrating often. (See Figure 1 for a visualization of how our project's process intersected with the tensions of our self-study).

Figure 1

Five-Step Process Model for Projects



We had as checks and balances what Fletcher, Chroinin, and O'Sullivan (2016) referred to as multidimensional interactivity, such that our stakeholders influenced each of us who in turn brought those voices to our critical friendship. It was both surprising and reassuring that despite our different positions and goals, we were experiencing similar tensions within our collaboration. From our reflective conversations and writings, three common tensions emerged.

Tension 1: Theory vs. Pedagogy

This tension was in no small way influenced by the pandemic. From the very beginnings of this project, we understood that pedagogical methods would, by necessity, have to be digital and flexible. But with a new and essentially unwritten curriculum that had never been taught and that was in some ways contradictory to previous literacy paradigms, the amount and method of learning and teaching seemed insurmountable. Eve analyzed the new curriculum and how best to align resources and delivery models to it:

> *After some 160 hours of training and I don't know how many books and articles, I still sometimes think that I can't teach this. How do I condense it? What is important for the test? What is important for actually teaching kids to read? There is lots of science out there, and lots of discussion over why it's important, but little in the way of methodology. And because "direct, sequenced, structured instruction" isn't really part of the previous literacy paradigm, I have to address new ways of teaching and find resources to support it that are developmentally appropriate for pre-service teachers. And I have to put it in a digital, interactive, format? I am way out of my comfort zone.*

Diane deliberated the negotiations between a breadth of content and the practical nature of the project:

> *Eve comes to this work flooded with training hours, newfound knowledge, and a passion for SoR. I'm a literacy person, but the EARLY literacy world always makes me a bit nervous. The intermediate and secondary levels are more my speed. I'm coming to this project, then, as a somewhat nuanced learner who is in awe of her detailed mastery of this material. I have the basic framework, but I don't have the deep drive for it like Eve has. I think that's going to help me guide her as we negotiate the broad swaths of research she brings to the project and the necessary saturation limits that we must keep in mind for an asynchronous course. We teach the same students—pre-service teachers in a minority-serving institution —so I believe I can bring that shared perspective to our planning.*

Laura considered the tension between theory and practice that surfaced in our initial discussions:

> *In theory, I understand the work to be accomplished, but the practicality of delivering substantive learning for students aligned to the SoR expectations is difficult to conceptualize, especially through a leadership/ administrative lens. I know traditional change models call for the organization to develop a vision before proceeding with change, but it seems better to allow our vision to emerge from, more than precede, our action, especially after reflecting on our college's traditional structure and historical patterns of how we work. To enact change, a truly shared vision must emerge from our joint work with administrators and faculty over time as we engage in the change process together, and we must allow it to be refined over time to evolve with our college's changing conditions.*

Tension 2: Traditional vs. Innovative Systems

Given the rapid changes we are encountering in demographics, technology, and geopolitics, our traditional methods were inadequate to the task of educating our pre-service teachers, helping them attain certification, and readying them for both today's and tomorrow's K-12 classrooms. In contrast, innovative and dynamic systems, ones that are agile and possess the capacity for continuous change, can more effectively meet the evolving needs of pre-service teachers, K-12 schools, communities, and societies (Edwards & Chapman, 2009). Dynamic systems are more interactive than traditional systems; and when they are fully functioning, different forces, structures, or processes within the system interact in a coherent manner bringing about clarity, meaningfulness, and improvement. Eve expressed misgivings about moving faculty from traditional to new understandings:

> *The chatter of the Twitterverse has so much pushback. I want to find a way to have SoR be well received. I don't want to insult my peers—have them thinking, "Oh, so you're telling me that what I've been teaching for all these years is wrong." How do I get them to embrace this? Will they accept the intrusion of the natural sciences into education? I just remember my "Aha!" moment when I saw the MRI and fMRI data. If I could only show them…the whole idea of neuroscience leading reading educational practice seems almost like science fiction.*

Diane combined university resources across departments to produce an instructional infrastructure:

> *When teaching our classes, even as the pandemic is shoving us all to completely online working environments, we can tweak materials and explain the twists and turns of our thinking to our students in real time. For this project, we are producing something that must stand asynchronously with built-in, anticipatory supports for pre-service teachers working through dense, important material. I converse with*

Eve constantly, via text, email, and Zoom. I'm starting to understand her vision for the material. Since it's a reading curriculum, I've designed a structure in which the students will explore, explain, engage, extend, and evaluate their way through eight "chapters." I take Eve's ideas, fused with my structure, to our instructional technology department. One of the designers and I strategize to produce a multi-functional course that can serve both internal and external audiences.

Laura coalesced individual faculty expertise, varying capacity levels, and program improvement potential:

To me, it is essential to utilize faculty who have the content-area background to support our project's reading focus. Yet, our education department is small and consists largely of new pre-tenured faculty with heavy teaching loads. Additionally, the need to reach future participants working remotely doesn't guarantee that a content-area faculty specialist is also an adept online instructional designer. I also realize the value of creating portable virtual learning pathways to maximize our student reach, better meet students' learning needs, and to move beyond our default (and often ineffective) in-person group test preparation held during class hours. This project can be the catalyst our education department needs to "see" a differentiated learning delivery model for our students' benefit.

Tension 3: "Silo" -ed Communication vs. Cross-Functional Communication

Typical top-down, stratified university organizational structures often drive the goal-setting conversations of today's higher education environments. Faculty voice is often drowned out by the demands of service, research, and teaching upon their time. Furthermore, we often insulate ourselves from criticism in the drive for promotion and tenure. Whether borne of intention or necessity or a mixture of both, silos are built and habitually reinforced. While this may not be the intent of administrators or of faculty, the reality of the frenetic pace leaves faculty to fend for projects and productivity individually. Eve identified the impact of her usual isolation on her work and her reticence to partner with someone else on this project:

I think what has surprised me the most is my personal growth in my identity as an academic within a community…I generally don't play well with others and do not like asking for help. But trying to learn software tools to create digital content while at the same time making sense of the science of reading for undergraduate, never-before-in-the-classroom teachers, had my head swimming. When Laura reached out and tried to partner me up with Diane, I was reticent. Yes, she had the instructional design and technological skills, and yes, she was a literacy educator, but…what if she didn't like the content? What if she didn't believe in the science of reading? Having someone reviewing my material, constantly asking questions, and reigning in my passion turned into someone looking at my work from a learner's eyes, asking for clarity when the content was too dense, and ultimately bringing the work to a place where both reader and writer could celebrate what I believe so strongly.

Diane noted how strict communication protocols gave way to more seamless interactions that supported the goal:

When Laura assigned me to this project, I was honored but nervous! I knew that Eve had been attending multiple trainings working diligently on this material for months. Who was I to interrupt? I wrote to her, "I'm super excited (and stressed!) about joining you on this project." I was intentional and transparent about my vulnerability with the early reading content, and then I was purposeful and reassuring about my ability to package Eve's brilliance into a workable instructional design. I also filtered and organized administrative requirements from Laura, who, in turn, graciously grew my leadership abilities. At every turn, balance is key.

Laura considered the role of traditional feedback and what type of feedback was needed to enact desired change:

Even prior to working in a fully online and remote working environment, we weren't good at eliciting and providing feedback to each other. Yes, we participate in formal annual evaluations that include narrative feedback, but that feedback often lacks specificity, doesn't happen in a timely manner, and is usually kept between one or a few administrators and a small group of faculty members serving on an annual review

committee. When significant improvements are needed, we're often too timid to work more broadly together out of fear that we'll be viewed as lacking in knowledge or ill-equipped for our roles. In order to conduct the change needed to meet the demands of new SoR expectations, we have to communicate differently than we have in the past. We need to build in feedback mechanisms for coherence and stability. We all need ongoing feedback, focused on our product, process, and progress, to properly monitor and assess our change efforts. And this feedback must come from multiple data points, including informal and formal quality checks, third-party reviews, faculty, students, and more. We must collect meaningful data on the ongoing results of our change efforts, and this data must be made available to all stakeholders involved. Everyone must be given opportunities to reflect on the data and redirect their change efforts accordingly so building in an intentional, cross-functional feedback loop will be essential to our success.

Discussion

We were asked to "reflect on how we might realize the contributions...[we] could make to different communities and audiences" (S-STEP, 2021). It was precisely this dilemma—serving multiple communities and audiences—that spurred the design of our work. Our multifaceted team was a collaboration of necessity, with each of us pursuing distinct individual goals within the context of a shared goal.

Educational researchers have documented that all organizations resist change; and historically, higher education has been at the forefront of disruption avoidance (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Glickman et al., 2018). Our university is no outlier. It relies on traditional practices and structures to perform our work: isolation and individualism, lack of dialogue about instruction, and a reflexive resistance to curricular innovations have been observed across all departments. In the College of Public Service where we all work, these characteristics have particularly negative effects on teacher educators and pre-service students.

As a result, we first asked how we could act consciously to reshape our static organization into a purposeful collection of individuals who intentionally interact in an ongoing manner to meet our project's goals. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, we asked how we could illustrate our belief that universities are for students, learning, and improvement rather than for insularity, self-protection, and complacency.

The strategies of our 5-step process model became visible as consequences of our approach to renewed curriculum development, innovative instructional delivery, and improved assessment readiness. Diacopoulos and colleagues (2021) presented six signposts of self-study, which guided our reflections. Specifically, signposts #3: "Examining practice through collaboration," #4: "Identifying changes in practice," and #6: "Sharing with others" held particular relevance for the work we describe here. Through the nexus of our individual and collaborative identities, we became and emerged in new ways of leading and producing content for internal and external stakeholders.

Future Directions and Conclusions

Though we continue to collect resultant quantitative data, answering our broader, more qualitative question of self-study will inform our future projects in terms of feedback loops, working protocols, leveraging strengths, and seeking unique opportunities. Our initial project was spurred by a state-mandated requirement, but "for once, the shadows gave way to light." During the creation of the test preparation modules, partnership negotiations, and implementation, we realized that we were growing as professionals—for once we "didn't disengage." This knowledge led us through our individual thresholds to cross to the collective path of self-study; it prompted a personally reflective stance that continues alongside our data analysis from the project outcomes. How lovely that, amidst a grim pandemic that threatened all we knew of education, we found "connection—in an isolating age."

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Taking Stock

Retracing and Recalibrating Our Self-Study Learning Journey

Richard Bowles & Anne O'Dwyer

Coaching | Teacher Education | Collaboration | Landscapes of Practice

This paper explores how two teacher educators and volunteer sports coaches in an Irish university engaged in collaborative self-study to examine our learning over the course of six years. Using the landscapes of practice theoretical framework (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015), we detail how participation in a number of self-studies, together and with other colleagues, has provided us with many learning opportunities over this time. Our data generation and analysis followed the processes of a meta self-study (Hamilton, 2020). We reviewed our whole dataset of reflection journals, critical friend engagements and publications, and identified key landmarks within our learning landscape. In this paper, we discuss three significant landmarks that represent our learning experiences as coaches and teacher educators on a longitudinal collaborative self-study journey. This collaboration enabled us to make connections within, and between, these different activities. Rich learning opportunities were apparent at the boundaries of our coaching and teaching domains, allowing us to learn together, with others, and from others. We gained a deeper understanding of our teaching and coaching within this landscape of practice, enabling us to take stock of our individual and shared learning. The process has also sensitized us to possible learning opportunities in the future.

Context

Collaborative self-study affords teacher educators with opportunities to better understand their own practices within the complex context of their research and practice activities (Martin & Dismuke, 2015). As teacher educators and volunteer sports coaches in an Irish university, we have, over the past six years, explored our experiences in each of these areas together, and with other colleagues at various times. Richard is a physical education teacher educator, while Anne has a similar role in science education. We also coach one of the university sports teams together. In this paper, we use the landscapes of practice concept (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015) to frame our learning within a longitudinal collaborative self-study. The landscape of practice metaphor is used to explore the social learning that takes place within, and between, a complex network of communities of practice (Vinson et al., 2020), and describes a journey composed of "various interrelated practices, their boundaries, and peripheries" (Duarte et al., 2020, p. 117). Because of this complex network of learning experiences, "boundaries of practice are interesting places" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 18). Encounters at these boundaries may lead to knowledgeability, which "reflects a person's connection with a multiplicity of practices across the landscape" (Kubiak et al., 2015, p. 81). Within that landscape, Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner (2015, p. 23) use the term "to refer to the complex relationships people establish…which make them recognizable as reliable sources of information or legitimate providers of services". In that context, "a claim to

knowledgeability…has to be negotiated socially in different circumstances" (Omidvar & Kislov, 2014, p. 271). As teacher educators and sports coaches, we fulfill boundary-crossing roles (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) across our campus. These boundaries are 'places where perspectives meet and new possibilities arise' (Wenger, 2000, p. 233). Accordingly, our dual roles spanning these boundaries between coaching and teaching provide us with opportunities to "trigger dialogue and negotiation of meaning" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 150).

This paper presents a retrospective reflection on our learning journey across our landscape of practice over the course of six years, from 2015 to 2021. During this time, we have worked together and engaged with formal and informal critical friends on independent, collaborative, and overlapping self-study journeys. We have learned to recognise that engaging in self-study is a learning and developmental process that scaffolds personal professionalism, collective professionalism, and improvements in practice (Gallagher et al., 2011). As we viewed our practices through the landscape of practice lens and explored our experiences as teacher educators and coaches, we were also prompted to consider how learning about practice can be enhanced by making connections through a series of self-studies (Fletcher, 2016). These connections were more pertinent, perhaps, because of the many similarities between teaching and coaching, where both have some common pedagogical foundations (Cassidy et al., 2009; Light & Harvey, 2019), and a recognition of the importance of reflection (Gilbourne et al., 2013; Stodter & Minto, 2020). Crucially, the temporary cessation of our coaching activities and a pivot towards online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic gave us the opportunity to pause, take stock, and reflect on our collaborative learning over this preceding six-year period. This pause gave us space to take stock of our individual and collective experiences and to pinpoint examples of our shared learning across our coaching and teaching practices. Adopting a landscape of practice perspective can help to identify "new spaces opened up for knowledge sharing and creation" (Duarte et al., 2020, p. 124). In our practice situation, it enabled us to take a broad view of our activities within our teaching and coaching practices separately, and between these practices as we connected our learning across their boundaries.

Aim

The aim of this paper is to illustrate how collaboration together, and with others, enhanced our understanding and practice of self-study. Sharing our experience of longitudinal collaborative self-study may be useful for those beginning their self-study journey to help them identify a clear focus to explore in their practice. We highlight the potential for rich learning to take place through collaboration and critical friendship. Our research may also act as a guide for experienced S-STEP researchers, as it highlights the potential to scaffold meta-reflection (Hamilton, 2020).

Methods

Self-study provides researchers with opportunities to "examine the intertwined nature of self and practice" (Casey et al., 2018, p. 55). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) describe self-study as something more comprehensive than just applying the study of oneself, noting the importance of the interaction between self and others. Furthermore, Pinnegar and Quiles-Fernández (2018) emphasise the importance of building good relationships between researchers in collaborative self-studies. The collaborative nature of our self-study journey has been strengthened by the trust and openness developed over time, providing us with opportunities to explore our personal and professional identities within our practice context (Casey et al., 2018). Our friendship has evolved to support the co-construction of knowledge and understanding through collegial inquiry, conversation, and collaborative reflection within a climate of mutual vulnerability and risk-taking, trust, and support (Fuentealba & Russell, 2016).

Given the longitudinal nature of our collaborative learning journey across a shared landscape of practice, there was an opportunity to deepen reflection guided by the concept of single and double loop learning (Schön, 1992). For us, the single-loop learning was in real time over the past six years. Taking time during the COVID pandemic to pause and reflect on our practice provided an opportunity for double-loop learning which went beyond the initial actions and further helped us to understand our underlying beliefs, values, and attitudes. By taking those opportunities to reflect on our previous self-studies together, we engaged in what can be described as a meta self-study. Hamilton (2020, p. 213) characterised meta self-study as the retrospective analysis of data sources across a range of self-study work and communicating the learning about, and the learning from, that process.

Recognising that it can be challenging to ask critical and constructive questions related to one's own practice (Hauge, 2021), this paper illustrates the benefit of a longitudinal collaboration and meta-analysis to enhance our understanding of self-study, ourselves, and our practices. For us, envisaging self-study as a journey of learning, with a destination that can be arrived at in many and diverse ways, was a useful perspective to adopt. Using this metaphor of a journey across a landscape of practice to reflect on our self-study learning (Loughran, 2018), we identified landmarks that offered support, encouragement, and direction. In our journey, boundary encounters and incidental moments have been landmarks in our learning.

Our approach to data analysis was informed by the guidelines for thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021). As this meta self-study is a culmination of six years of collaboration and data collection, we first took careful steps to prepare and organise all our existing data for analysis:

- Data organisation: We began by documenting a shared portfolio of our self-study practices to date, firstly by collating a table including all journal and conference papers and presentations from 2016. This document became a useful point of reference when reflecting on the meandering focus of our collaborative self-study learning.
- Data familiarisation: We collated all raw data (personal reflections, shared reflections, transcriptions of critical friend meetings) from all previous collaborative self-studies in one shared online folder. This cumulative data set enabled each of us to re-read and review our whole dataset. Re-reading allowed us to reflect on data from previous years with hindsight as a new lens.

The later stages of data analysis (coding, theme generation, and refinement) were further informed by synchronous collection of new data in Autumn 2021 and Spring 2022. During this meta data analysis stage (2021-22), written and recorded reflective conversations helped us to refine and define themes as we continued to reflect, record and share our previous and new learning. Our meta-self-study involved this concurrent data collection and analysis to support our understanding of our non-linear learning journey.

- Coding & Theme Generation: Individually, we each made connections between our shared collaborative work and other self-study work we engaged with, with others over the same period (2016-2021), recognising how and where our longitudinal collaboration influenced and was influenced by other self-study learning journeys.
- Refining, Defining, and Naming themes: We analysed our collaborative self-studies, and more specifically our most recent data set (2021-22) to develop and categorize themes from our shared learning.
- Writing Up: We constructed these themes as three landmarks on our landscape of practice and used quotes from the data to illustrate their meaning to us. We composed short vignettes to exemplify the landmarks. The writing-up process provided us with opportunities to clarify our own thoughts and highlight significant experiences.

Our process of meta data analysis supported a deep and meaningful reflection to help us better understand how our collaboration and interaction with others informed and guided our understanding of self-study and our practices within our landscape of practice.

Findings

We present our findings as three key landmarks evidencing how collaborative interaction with ourselves and others guided our engagement with, and deepened our understanding of, self-study. Our learning was not linear as we meandered through our landscape of practice, as boundary spanners, between coaching and teacher education settings. The landmarks outlined here evidence how collaboration with ourselves and others guided our learning journey, which was underpinned by the time taken to develop authentic relationships to support self-study.

Landmark 1: Starting Out

> *Our coaching had finished about 8 weeks ago, losing the semi-final (again!). We met in the college staffroom a week after the grading deadline and just before school placement visits began. It had been a busy semester...but a few weeks off the pitch had given both of us time to reflect on the previous season. Richard brought his laptop, Anne had her notepad... After some coffee and a further post-mortem on the final 10 minutes of the semi-final, we began making plans for next year. Richard suggested using self-*

study to formalise our collaborative coaching journey. Anne had never experienced self-study before now but was open to the suggestion, as she had worked well with Richard over the past 18 months coaching.

The development of self-study research is typically prompted by an explicit intention to improve practice and is self-initiated (LaBoskey, 2004). Our experience of beginning a collaborative self-study aligns with this focus. Having coached together during the season, we had arranged to meet to review the year's efforts. We set out to discuss our experiences, with a view to improving our coaching practices during the following season. As Richard had already engaged in a self-study of his own coaching practices during the two preceding seasons (Bowles, 2016) and had participated in a collaborative self-study focused on teacher education practices, he was familiar with the approach. In that context, he was conscious that a collaborative self-study with Anne might be a useful way through which to explore their coaching together and suggested that this approach could support our learning as coaches. Anne was happy with the suggestion, as it provided an opportunity to provide a structure for our coach learning and also learn about self-study as a research approach. Our prior experiences were important to assist us in establishing a sustainable and supportive collaborative self-study.

While our decision to collaborate on a coaching self-study seemed like a 'logical' progression for our coaching relationship, our reflections over the following months suggest that two important factors had helped to set sound foundations for the collaboration. Firstly, our coaching together over the previous 18 months helped develop trust and understanding. This ensured that our collaboration was starting from a position where we were familiar with each other, knowing that we worked well together, and valued the opportunity to collaborate more formally. Anne recognised this in an early critical friend meeting "I suppose we're like a community of practice because it's both people learning and working together because we're definitely working together in co-planning, setting the goals, delivering the sessions. And then I suppose learning from each other from…" (Critical Friend Meeting 2, Nov 2017).

Secondly, our coaching conversations suggest we had a shared interest in learning to coach better, by engaging in regular, structured reflective conversations (Gilbert & Trudel, 2006; Stodter & Minto, 2020). This ensured that our collaboration had a clear focus on learning individually, and together. Our coaching philosophies were influenced by our experiences as teachers and teacher educators. As boundary spanners, we recognised many similarities between coaching and teaching, as both are relational and dynamic and involve complex layers of social interaction (Cushion, 2007). We both had a shared interest in athlete-centred coaching (Pill, 2018). Athlete-centred coaching is consistent with social constructivist theories of learning (Penney & Kidman, 2014), and so aligned with our interest in student-centred learning in our teacher education practices. As we developed confidence in our coaching collaborative self-study, we also developed more confidence in crossing boundaries, as we sought to share what we had learned about self-study with other coaches and those involved in coaching education and research (Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2019; O'Dwyer & Bowles, 2020). This sense of developing confidence was underpinned by the dialogue we had between us (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

Landmark 2: Getting Help

Critical Friend Meeting 2017

Dorothy (Critical Friend): And I suppose in terms of the learning from each other, it's always kind of a little bit tentative so it's all nice... But let's imagine a scenario where something goes wrong or you disagree with something or that something didn't work...

Richard: There's probably two angles to what you have said there. I think from the point of view of reflection, yes, it's really important that we are honest about what we say and that it does help each other but on the training pitch I think it's important that we are seen by the player to be working in harmony rather than contradicting each other.

Critical Friend Meeting 2019

Nora (Critical Friend): There's just a genuine partnership where you're feeding off each other and... it's almost like it happened organically but at the same time you've been documenting it but you're each

reacting to a situation, and you could almost predict what Richard would do or vice versa…

These excerpts from meetings with two different critical friends in our collaborative self-study journey evidence how our learning was enhanced by our critical friends' participation. In our first collaborative self-study, Dorothy helped us to improve our reflection, deepen our deliberations and recognise our learning (O'Dwyer et al., 2019). Later, working with Nora, she helped scaffold the development of our mutual mentoring relationship and also encouraged us to be more focused in our weekly diaries and reflections which helped us recognise our learning.

The interactivity that underpins self-study research (Fletcher et al., 2016) frequently relies on critical friendship to explore experiences and understandings. Within our collaboration, we agree with the contention that it can be difficult to foster critical friendships that provide "supportive feedback that is at the same time critical" (Fletcher, 2020, p. 284). These excerpts from different critical friends over a number of seasons evidence how a longitudinal relationship where we worked together over time supported our individual and shared learning experiences. Since 2017 friendships have evolved whereby we were critical friends to each other, and where we involved colleagues as critical friends in our collaborative self-study. In line with other collaborative self-studies (e.g Richards & Ressler, 2016) engaging with critical friends played an important role in our learning. Our use of critical friendship enabled us to provoke, critique, and understand (Loughran & Brubaker, 2015).

In a cascade-like effect, since Richard began his own self-study project in 2015, we had learned with other more experienced self-study researchers as critical friends (O'Dwyer et al., 2019) and continued to learn together. Our learning within coaching helped us to be boundary spanners as we began to work with others in teacher education contexts and we embarked on individual self-study journeys within our own teacher education practice. Anne used self-study to improve her relational teacher education, inviting Miriam, a fellow science teacher educator, as a critical friend. Collaborative self-study helped Anne (O'Dwyer et al., 2020) and Miriam (Hamilton, 2020) in their different but shared experience as novice science teacher educators. Self-study had also supported Richard's collaborative learning with other physical education teacher educators beyond our institution (Coulter et al., 2021). Our longitudinal participation in collaborative self-study enhanced our reflective practice, thus enabling us to integrate learning from formal and informal connections. A long and meandering self-study journey led us to engage with several others through formal and informal critical friendships. A labyrinth of relationships evolved based on open, honest, and trusting friendships (Schuck & Russell, 2005).

Landmark 3: Navigating the boundaries

> *It was April, and much cooler in Toronto than in Ireland… Miriam joined us, and we decided on where to go for dinner, finally getting our bearings in down-town Toronto. We chatted about parallel sessions we had attended that afternoon when sitting in the hotel lobby, tired after the third day of the conference. As we waited for another colleague to join us, we shared our experiences of the S-STEP SIG and the idea of establishing an S-STEP hub in our own university faculty….*

Attending the 2019 conference in Toronto was our first experience of an AERA conference. The welcome in the SSTEP SIG and the constructive critical conversations that spilled into coffee breaks after each conference session was a warm and memorable experience. Feeling accepted by the experienced members of the S-STEP SIG gave us the confidence to participate in meaningful discussions about self-study. It was evident that although some SIGs may be well colonized and well-guarded (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015), we found that the self-study community, even at a global level, was open and welcoming. While at the conference, we chatted with another colleague [from our institution] who had experience in self-study and had been part of our learning journey. We each reflected on how the essence of self-study, learning with others, was captured in our S-STEP SIG experience, and in our S-STEP journeys to date. Our reflection on our self-study experiences at the AERA conference in 2019 prompted the establishment of an S-STEP Research Hub in our own institution. Since June 2019, this S-STEP hub has become an open and collaborative space for other novice and experienced self-study researchers in our institution.

During our meta data analysis, we reflected on the welcome we felt from the S-STEP community. During our conversations, we contrasted the confidence we felt there with the apprehension we felt when invited to speak about

our coaching research at a national webinar to coaches in Ireland in mid-2021. While we felt comfortable talking about self-study with our S-STEP colleagues, we felt significant discomfort in how we could communicate our coach research and learning with other coaches who were unfamiliar with the practice or methodology of self-study. Anne acknowledged that she had never felt as nervous as she did before presenting on that national coaching webinar. This prompted us to reflect on how we felt vulnerable outside our teacher education domain. While we had developed confidence in this sphere due to our longitudinal self-study reflective practices, we were unsure how this would transfer to the coaching domain. We were fearful that the coaches might perceive our research as remote from their own practical experiences. While self-study research seeks an improved understanding of practice (Casey et al., 2018), sports coaching can sometimes be more oriented toward product rather than process. We were mindful, then, that coaches might pass judgment on us based on the success of the teams we coached, rather than on the reflective processes that underpinned our practices. Therefore, our growing confidence in teacher education was less evident when we presented our research in the coaching environment. This experience highlighted our unique roles as boundary spanners between teaching and coaching, and our contrasting personal and professional identities in each area.

These intricate boundary encounters added richness to our learning. As we developed some knowledgeability in coaching and each of our teacher education disciplines, this opened opportunities for us to work with a broader range of practitioners, and importantly, to present our research in novel contexts such as practitioner workshops (e.g. Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2019) and conferences (e.g. Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2021a) as well as traditional research papers (e.g. Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2021b). As we interacted with different groups in different contexts, we became more mindful that "the landscape…is well colonized and some hills are well guarded. Some communities may welcome us, while others may reject us" (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015, p. 20). This, in turn, heightened our awareness of our positions within coaching and teacher education communities. Over time, we have learned that our work in these different settings required us to adopt different communication styles and approaches. We became more aware of how this developed as a result of our core collaboration and helped orient us on the broader landscape. Being practitioner-researchers helped us to make connections with other practitioners, as we navigated our positions within the teacher education and coaching communities.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have identified three significant landmarks that trace our collaborative journey in self-study over the past six years. This meta self-study has taught us the importance of taking time to step back and obtain a broader overview of our learning landscape. The unplanned hiatus in our practices due to COVID-19 provided us with opportunities to reflect on our learning, with the privileges that were not afforded to us in 'real-time': time, space, and detachment from the practice. Retrospective reflection has helped us to learn more about ourselves and identify possibilities for future learning. Butler and Branyon (2020, p. 167) suggest a central objective for self-study researchers may be "to democratize the self-study scholarship…and shift the use of self-study more widely past education". This view resonates with us, as we navigated our own collaborative learning journey across our landscape of practice.

By exploring our experiences of collaboration across our teaching and coaching contexts, we hope that we have addressed how self-study might "contribute to the improvement of practice in other fields" beyond teacher education (Kitchen, 2020, p. 1037). As Crowe (2020, p. 765) asserts, "crossing boundaries and engaging with a wide variety of disciplinary knowledge, perspectives, and approaches is a way for us to continue to extend self-study research". In our experience, the landscape of practice approach provides us with a useful framework within which to understand these learning experiences that extend beyond specific boundaries.

During our retrospective reflection, we recognised how our practices as coaches and teacher educators are intertwined. Formally examining our coaching prompted us to make explicit links to our teaching. Coaching in an athlete-centred way (Pill, 2018) encouraged us to be more authentically student-centred as teacher educators. Navigating between these two distinct practices helped us to better understand ourselves as teachers and coaches. As boundary spanners linking the teaching and coaching domains on campus, we were in a unique position as we learned about a range of pedagogies, learned more about our students, and learned more about ourselves as teachers and coaches. Across our landscape we were "learning to do" and "learning to be" (Fenton-O'Creevy et al., 2015, p. 41).

Using self-study to explore learning across multiple spaces has the potential to be “transformative” (Williams, 2013, p. 128). In our case, we have enhanced our knowledge about ourselves as teachers and coaches. We can relate to the assertion that “knowledgeability is not just information, but an experience of living in a landscape of practice and negotiating one’s position in it” (Farnsworth et al., 2016, p. 142). Accordingly, we have learned how trust and understanding underpin self-study research, and are more attuned to the possibilities and the challenges of extending our practice across boundaries on our landscape.

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Developing a Sense of Belonging in Spaces for Community Curricular Collaboration

A Self-Study of Indigenizing and Localizing

Elaine Marhefka

S-STEP | Culturally Sustaining/Revitalizing Pedagogy | Indigenizing | Curricular Dissonance | Sense of Belonging

This study documents the experiences of co-constructing curricula toward educating the public about the lifeways of a local Indigenous community. As part of a social studies methods course, we are exploring the ways to create meaningful field experiences toward overcoming harmful curricular oversights in elementary education. I investigate my initial sense of belonging through participation as a new member of this Indigenous Collective (IC), and the experience of creating curricular artifacts with preservice teachers through guidance and support from Indigenous and non-indigenous community members. These outcomes inform organizational elements for navigating, what I conceptualize as sites of curricular dissonance, through the perspective of Indigenous leaders, a community teacher, a preservice teacher, and a teacher educator. Findings describe the nature of this collaborative space which fosters curricular agency, mutual learning and teaching, and a sense of belonging. This research investigates how the tensions inherent in this work become sites for teaching and learning, when community teacher educators inform the design of public justice-oriented curricula.

Context of the Study

Curricular challenges, such as perpetuation of false narratives, marginalization of social studies instruction, (Heafner & Fitchett, 2012), and silencing of minoritized histories, necessitate teacher education which engages elementary educators in critical research, and creative design. To engage in critical work, teacher educators are calling upon iterations of Freire's (1970/2000) critical pedagogy, such as critical pedagogy of place (Gruenewald, 2003), culturally relevant pedagogy, (Ladson-Billings, 1995) culturally responsive pedagogy (Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017), and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017). In the context of an elementary social studies methods course, I encourage preservice teachers to explore these pedagogical approaches as they inform the design of these curricular collaborations. Various studies from Indigenous and non-indigenous scholars illustrate how these collaborations challenge who is considered a teacher educator (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gullen & Zeichner, 2018; Gorlewksi & Tuck, 2019; Johnson, 2017; Paris & Alim, 2017; Phelan et al., 2020; Pirbhai-Illich et al., 2017; Price-Dennis, & Souto-Manning, 2011; Whetung & Wakefield, 2018; White et al., 2020). Most relevant to the context of this study is McCarty and Lee's (2014) critical culturally sustaining/revitalizing pedagogy which goes beyond sustaining toward restoring life and the presence of culture.

Not only are glaring curricular misrepresentations evident, but educators are overlooking the benefits of prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing for our future. San Pedro (2017) argues for centering Indigenous paradigms in colonizing spaces through awareness of human and environmental interactions within political, social, economic, and ecological places. Tuhiwai Smith (2021) argues that even the concept of space, or "Indigenous space, has been colonized" (p. 58). For non-indigenous educators, 'indigenizing', or integrating Indigenous cultural and historical expertise, and 'localizing', or integrating local cultural and historical expertise, requires acknowledgment of their own positionality, inhabiting stolen lands. As Tuck and Yang (2012) critique, "we have observed a startling number of these discussions make no mention of Indigenous peoples, our/their struggles for the recognition of our/their sovereignty, or the contributions" (p. 3).

As teacher educators in the university setting, we are designing field experiences that engage preservice teachers in curriculum development with local organizations that may be critiqued and shared with a public audience. My initial experience with this local Indigenous Collective (IC), sparked my contemplation into my sense of belonging within this space. Looking to Bourdieu's (1979/1984) discussion of one's sense of belonging, Page (2020) describes how this develops through familiarity with the habitus or everyday social practices and actions. From this sense of belonging, I developed research questions to explore aspects of the *habitus* of the space that "enable placemaking and a sense of belonging" (Page, 2020, p. 108). Placemaking incites conflict, as we all see, experience, and understand place, space, and land from our perspectives. This research explores the patterns of work necessary for working within the inevitable conflict, which I conceptualize as 'curricular dissonance', where curricular possibilities and limitations meet. This collaborative space accommodated *curricular agency* toward *localizing* and *indigenizing* elementary social studies curricula for a public audience. I conceptualize 'curricular agency' as making decisions that acknowledge curricular limitations, however, continue to work toward curricular possibilities.

Objectives

As S-STEP prioritizes, I investigate how a collaborating Indigenous Collective (IC), seeks to reposition, reframe, re-imagine, and integrate new learning. A department initiative to connect preservice teachers with the community through field experiences brought our coursework into the context of this organization. As part of this field experience, students attended at least two, two-hour meetings, via Zoom, with the Indigenous Collective to inform their curricular artifacts. They also were invited to education working group meetings, which consisted of the vetting team that would evaluate our contributions to a curricular project centering the lifeways of a local tribal community. We began the course, recognizing our positionality as no students identified as having Indigenous heritage. This became a rich site for self-study of teacher education practices to understand how these community members strengthen and further complicate our curricular approaches.

Lunenburg, Korthagen, and Zwart (2011) remind readers that teacher educators, acting as agents for change, design questions for self-study based on a "fascination or problem rooted in the researcher's own practice" (p. 407). The urgent problem of curricular oversights that proliferate elementary social studies instruction, combined with my fascination with this initial sense of belonging where I could meld my background in earth science, environmental education, and elementary social studies, welcomed opportunities for curricular agency. Within the tumultuous context of culturally sustaining and revitalizing work, this self-study explores teaching practices informed by Indigenous and non-indigenous critical friends, non-traditionally considered teacher educators, to explore the following questions.

Research Questions

- What creates and fosters one's sense of belonging and agency in collective educational spaces?
- How might a sense of belonging and perceptions of place inform or inspire teacher education practices toward co-construction of justice-oriented curricula?

Methods

Since 1992 self-study scholars have been inventing ways to study teacher education practices. Vanassche and Kelchterman's (2015) review of Self-Studies of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) prioritizes the essential principles of focusing on one's own practice through qualitative research and centering collaboration. As Peercy and Sharkey

(2020) advocate, “This ‘turn to self’ by the researchers illustrates how self-study methodology can bring together questions of identity and one’s practices as a teacher educator” (p. 112). Kenyon (2022) writes “You Can’t Be a Nice White Lady and Do Anti-Racism Work: A Self-Study on Teaching Against Racism” and explores the tensions of teaching social studies methods courses from the positionality of a white female. This aspect of my identity echoes the need for pause, self-reflexivity, “and willingness to publicly problematize [my] taken for granted beliefs” (Berry, 2015, p. 964).

Participants

I interviewed two of the Indigenous founding members of IC, Heather and John, who are head speakers of their tribal community. I am using pseudonyms, as naming the specific community would not allow for anonymity. However, it was imperative that specific community names, language, and knowledge be used in the curricular artifacts. Lily, a member of IC for almost three years, identifies as an educator, activist, and Indigenous grandmother, as her daughter has three native children. These members and I were part of the education working group, which conducted the vetting process of preservice teacher research and artifacts. I also interviewed one preservice teacher, Amy, who continued work beyond the course.

Data Sources

Using ethnographic approaches, immersed in the space of this organization, I triangulated with multiple sources from organization members, students, and my own documentation of the process.

- Observational jottings from meetings, educational working group exchanges
- Interview transcripts
- Preservice teacher field experience log
- Organization meeting notes
- In-class field notes

I created jottings during and after course sessions, Zoom meetings with IC, and the education working group, and expanded jottings into field notes. With each significant field note, I created a reflective memo to capture any potential themes, codes, and shifts in teaching practices.

Data Analysis

I looked for themes within and across these sources using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) and recognized my role in interpretation. Using member checking, I shared the interview transcripts with participants to minimize misrepresentations. During exploratory coding, I looked for in vivo codes that would best illustrate the phenomenological experiences. Organizing alphabetically, I looked for codes that may be combined through the process of pattern coding (Saldaña, 2021) using Atlas.ti software. I conducted reflexive thematic analysis phenomenologically which “focuses on meanings suggested by the data through the use of 'is' and 'means'” (Saldaña, 2021, p. 259). Through thematic mapping, I organized my interpreted codes and themes.

Outcomes

Preservice teachers in the course shared their lack of knowledge of Indigenous histories and concerns about how these curricular gaps may inhibit their participation in the project. These tensions, sites of *curricular dissonance*, where they see the possibilities, but feel the clash of curricular limitations, needed to be explored. I began recognizing these sites of curricular dissonance through data analysis and considering how they relate to teaching practices. Using the teaching practice of iterative lesson design, students chose a topic of interest surrounding Indigenous seasonal practices to research using resources from IC. Students shared their work with their peers and me through two cycles of feedback. Following these cycles of review, the education working group, including Indigenous and non-indigenous volunteers, reviewed curricular artifacts of interest with these guiding questions.

“We've developed 4 guiding points to inform your feedback in this initial round:

- Accuracy: To the best of your knowledge, is the content accurate?
- Clarity: Is the lesson plan clear? Would you be able to use it easily as an educator? Is there anything that would help it be more clear or easily usable?
- Resources: If the lesson plan includes external resources, are those resources good quality? Should any of them be replaced with other more accurate or decolonized resources? Are you aware of any other resources that might be relevant?
- Representation of Indigenous Perspectives: To the best of your knowledge, does the lesson plan do justice to the traditions and to Indigenous history and ongoing presence in [state]? Does it steer clear of common stereotypes and pitfalls?"

Direct written feedback on artifacts and classroom visits from the Indigenous and non-indigenous founders enriched this list of curricular goals:

- Providing tactile, hands-on experiences
- Overcoming misconceptions and false narratives
- Centering/using/speaking language of the Indigenous community
- Making language accessible for K-12 and public audience
- Avoiding cultural appropriation
- Vetting resources
- Incorporating outdoor experiences

I documented the feedback from these collaborative meetings to inform my teaching practices and curricular revisions.

> *Discussion with [Heather] and [John] about academic views and use of Indigenous knowledge, pinged with me, how might we frame the sharing of this knowledge through this curriculum project . . . with the intention of keeping awareness on the active Indigenous community (Field note, 10/26).*

Similarly, Amy reflected in her field experience log, a course assignment that documented her participation through the curricular project,

> *The vetting process that materials go through to be included on the [organization] website is extensive. The process that Heather and John go through to make certain that everything . . . is as accurate as possible is truly a gift to the [Indigenous community] (Field Experience Log Entry).*

As she elaborated in her interview this "encouraged her to think about what I am reading, and how accurate it was and the sources I was getting it from". Although the students and I were positioned to inform on curricular structures, these community teacher educators challenged our assumptions, and truly transformed our approach. Amy states, "they wanted to really be clear about current day connections . . . it's not just a past thing. . . we want to say the Indigenous people were here and then they weren't". Following an educational working group meeting, seeing the energy and knowledge from this team of experts, I reflected upon subsequent correspondence.

> *This email provided enthusiasm, gratitude, and recognition for students and collaborators for this collective curricular project. . . Hopefully, and ideally, these perspectives may inform my future actions and curriculum development. It is also helpful to show students the willingness of a local organization to value their expertise in a public space (Reflective Memo, 11/3).*

I interpreted five primary teaching practices or elements of the organization's habitus that enabled the navigation through the curricular dissonance inherent in localizing and indigenizing elementary curricula: 'fostering interdisciplinary relationships', 'positioning oneself as a learner', 'evaluating for truth', 'critically analyzing places', and 'exercising curricular agency'.

Fostering Interdisciplinary Relationships: "You're not alone."

John and Heather emphasize, with the third non-indigenous founding member, IC was founded based on bringing people from various disciplines together toward symbiotic discovery and revitalization of Indigenous lifeways. Heather explains,

> *"the majority of the time their goal will benefit our Indigenous goal. Because we are really trying to preserve our environment and our culture and our knowledge . . . we're relearning old Indigenous knowledge as well, . . . we are on that road together".*

John added, "You're not alone", Heather echoed, "I've got friends!" which illustrated Lily's characterization of the organization, "the relationships are very genuine. . . I think people mean what they say, they want you to help". Heather emphasized through stewardship of the land, contributions should benefit all involved. The educational space does not support the unidirectional extraction of information, a site of curricular dissonance, which mimics the colonial extraction-based economy. Lily speaks to the affective support necessary for this work, as the space allows "a wide range of emotions . . . They entertain humor, they entertain anger". I documented in my meeting notes times when tensions and discord were palpable as Lily describes, "they encourage people to join, but they are very careful. . . they don't want them to be takers, they want them to be doers". I witnessed multiple interactions with people entering the space, whether intentionally positioning themselves to extract or not, and the emotions and intense discussions that ensue. What Lily characterizes as genuine, also entails blunt honesty and direct communication with members and non-members. Although my intentions of increasing exposure for preservice teachers, elementary students, and me to Indigenous lifeways through curricular decisions, the curricula needed to be useful for Heather and John, IC, and their Indigenous community more broadly.

Positioning Oneself As a Learner: "Really put myself in the place of not knowing and being."

Lily has acted as a critical friend for me throughout this experience, asking specific questions that made me question my own curricular decisions during the vetting process. She describes what I interpret as another site of curricular dissonance, "My lack of knowledge. . . you grow up with these myths . . . you don't learn the history. . . That was the most challenging. To get educated". She emphasizes the importance of developing this education as a collective endeavor, informed by various contributors including those who "haven't had any exposure to the history" and she clarifies "it is not always peoples' faults". Through ten semesters of teaching this course, this lack of exposure arises and becomes an important motivator for preservice teachers toward overcoming this gap. Lily observed, "When you bring your students to our meetings . . . they all introduce themselves as learners". Amy, a preservice teacher, discusses her motivation to learn and participate in this work to "do justice for the organization" by being "open to any suggestions and collaborations". She explained sitting in on meetings, researching, and having conversations with Heather and John during class,

> *just made me more sensitive to the fact that . . . I can't truly understand how people are feeling, but I can be mindful and as careful as I can be . . . to make things accurate. . . and be a more understanding person . . . really put myself in the place of not knowing and being.*

Heather and John, as critical friends with members of the educational working group, guided our curricular decisions on our artifacts. Heather characterized their intentions when working with students, as "to encourage and uplift, not to criticize". This approach is fundamental to the critical friends' protocol, maintaining a stance toward improvement. Amy discussed some of the important revisions,

> *we wanted to . . . make sure that it was accessible to all kinds of people, . . . that a parent could pick it up . . . that there was a lot of opportunity for work in the environment and out of doors and hands on activities. . . words and pronunciations . . . the greeting, and the land acknowledgement.*

Amy was instrumental in operationalizing the suggestions from the Indigenous and non-indigenous members of the educational working group sharing her motivation that "it would be useful to people beyond our classroom, not just useful to me".

Evaluating for Truth: "The real story is slowly coming to the surface."

Although one may argue there is no one truth, as it is reliant on interpretation, a quest for truth as a curricular emphasis was reflected through IC meetings, educational working group exchanges, course materials, visits from the founding members, and most notably during the interview as Heather,

> *But as far as educational material, it is just about teaching the truth . . . you don't want to continue to rehash the wrong story, because then it becomes a debate, and which is right, and which is wrong . . . We're correcting the wrong, and we're not erasing.*

To which John added, "Because the truth is out there you just have to recover it". Heather and John modeled that they do not claim to know everything either, "that's what we're trying to do. You know through IC and all the help we get through students and professors and others; it's slowly hashing, the real story is slowly coming to the surface". However, evaluating and sharing these stories becomes a common site of curricular dissonance, as people feel discomfort or fear when gathering new perspectives. However, Amy describes when making content developmentally appropriate, "I don't think that's the point, to make a kid feel bad about the past, but to recognize what it was". When considering the harm that is occurring, John and Heather are in a state of conflict and associated discomfort, which they navigate through action as illustrated in my meeting notes, "doing what is right for our culture" as they are "tired of being told we are extinct".

Critically Analyzing Places: "This is about local history, period."

Localizing requires learning about our historic and contemporary places, from local people as efforts toward improving the accuracy of minoritized narratives through curricular decisions. The Indigenous leaders, Heather and John commonly emphasized concepts with the prefix 're', "re-narrate", "re-envision", and "reeducate the public" to illustrate this active practice of growth and change in our teaching approaches. As Heather asserted, "This is about local history, period". Through learning from local experts and community members, Amy recognized a site for unlearning, "the ways that Heather and John, and you described it, it, I felt silly not understanding it before that it was so local, and so place-oriented, that each group would have very specific, cultural differences and the way they live their lives with nature".

Lily highlighted that localizing with some communities is challenging as "they want sanitized versions of colonial history only". This site of curricular dissonance mirrors the backlash, prevalent in our local schools, where sanitized versions of local history are barricading students away from exploring balanced perspectives. Instead, she argued that in terms of Indigenous knowledge, many students are starting "from scratch" however "they'd be very happy to learn more about Indigenous life . . . And they could see their local areas as a reflection of life well before colonial times".

Exercising Curricular Agency: "I feel good that there is something new out there in the world."

Lily describes IC as, "outstanding. . . so well organized . . . everything leads to actionable items . . . you are actually accomplishing something". Amy continued her work beyond the scope of the course and contributed to three curricular artifacts, in addition to the overarching template and introduction, and co-taught a webinar for local educators about how to use the artifacts we had designed with the class. As she discussed her designs, created through what I interpret as her curricular agency as a teacher educator during the webinar, despite feeling nervous, she notes "it feels really good to have created something" and be "more comfortable in my knowledge of how to talk to students about history". We would meet after class and over Zoom, where she also acted as a critical friend to incur reflection upon my curricular agency and brainstorm curricular possibilities. Amy articulated in her interview "I like a challenge when it comes to a curriculum project" which echoed my interest in curricular agency, limitations, possibilities, and dissonance. Previously I attributed my interest in curriculum development to its creative possibilities, and less so for its inherent challenges and problems. The methodological structure of self-study, and reflexive thematic analysis, alerted me to my interest in curricular design, which is not purely creative, but overcoming the tensions, or sites of curricular dissonance in the process.

Discussion

Recognizing Community Members and Preservice Teachers As Teacher Educators and Critical Friends: "I can see why you as professional teachers do what you do. We totally get it."

Amy, Heather, John, and Lily acted as teacher educators to fellow members of IC, preservice teachers in the course, and me. San Pedro and Kinloch (2017) discuss the "urgency of advocating for humanizing and decolonizing approaches" which require centralizing relationships (p. 375S). As McCarty and Lee (2017) argue "CSRP attends directly to asymmetrical power relations . . . recognizes the need to reclaim and revitalize what has been disrupted by colonization . . . and recognizes the need for community-based accountability" (p. 62). Expanding who is considered a teacher educator, John notes his positionality in creating these relationships, "we are more like advisors, and life coaches". Dominguez (2017) argues that "Cultivating types of educators for whom CSRP is possible is going to involve new, decolonial approaches to teacher education" (p. 241). Similarly, King (2017) poses this new vision of balance, as "a brilliant opportunity to evaluate our efforts" (p. 130). Cipollone, Zygmunt, & Tancock (2018) write, "Community members are teacher educators" and suggest that "by broadening the definition of "teacher educator" beyond university faculty to include community members, our candidates are better able to make this shift and begin to feel *with* the community, and in turn, *with* their students" (p. 716). John and Heather describe the 'leeway' afforded through this expanded educational space, which through S-STEP methodology, supported interrogation of my teaching practices, and moved the focus away from my role, toward a broader recognition of who is a teacher educator (see Tuck & Gorlewski, 2019).

Conclusion

Curricular Dissonance Persists: "No one can do this work by themselves."

S-STEP affords this opportunity to pause, revise, and reimagine curricular decisions. Amy notes in her field experience log, "For a culture that passes on cultural history, skills, and language primarily through oral tradition and generational knowledge this has been devastating". This site of curricular dissonance necessitates relationships that are mutually beneficial as Lily notes "no one can do this work by themselves". It was essential that this curriculum collaboration provide mutual benefit for the Indigenous community members, and experience for preservice teachers and me with localizing, and indigenizing. Contributing to organizational initiatives became a way for participants to navigate these tensions, as Lily articulates, "I have to be able to do something to feel like I belong". I recognize these five themes, elements of the habitus of this space, which foster curricular agency, mutual learning and teaching, and a sense of belonging through affective support and opportunities to contribute.

As Amy emphasized, this required "a lot of work" however, was "going to be real". Heather and John acknowledge the persistent conflict, or dissonance between possibilities and limitations, "Dreams and reality are two different things". Similarly, about to embark on a full-year internship in second grade, Amy highlights the site of curricular dissonance, "the curriculum looks pretty rigid". You can hear the crashing of her creativity against the rigidity of preplanned curricular experiences. Lily explains "When things are suppressed there is a human cry against that suppression, and people come out even more determined to tell their story" but cautions "It could have a counter effect". This highlights yet another site of curricular dissonance, while providing opportunities to investigate local knowledge, an imminent backlash is always a risk. Recognizing these sites of curricular dissonance as an educational space, I was able to exercise my curricular agency with various teacher educators. My sense of belonging, although challenged through my lack of Indigenous knowledge, inherent curricular tensions, and observation of interpersonal discord continues to foster my compassion, interest, and participation in this humanizing community.

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Living Up to Expectations

Learning to be Critical Friends in Foreign Contexts

Edda Óskarsdóttir & Megumi Nishida

Critical Friendship | Collaborative Inquiry | Inclusive Practices | Cultural Mediator | Academic Hierarchy

This collaborative self-study discusses how we, two Iceland-based inclusive practitioners, position ourselves as critical friends to each other and to Team-Hokkaido in Japan, as we endeavored to support them in developing inclusive practices. The purpose of this study is to use collaborative inquiry to understand the nature of our critical friendship with Team-Hokkaido to better comprehend their expectations towards our roles. The goal is to enhance our future collaboration as critical friends to Team-Hokkaido to support their inclusive practices. Our research procedures were emergent and intentionally designed to be both structured and open-ended. Data collection took place in Japan in 2019. The data include participants' presentation materials, our research journals, and personal notes from the study camp. Our post-camp discussions were recorded to enhance our data analysis. Through our discussion we felt doubt in using the term 'critical friends' when collaborating with Team-Hokkaido. Although the reasons for our doubts varied, our analysis brought us a new understanding of ourselves as critical friends. Importantly, we learned that critical friendship should always be pursued from an equal foundation. In the future, we need to explore our roles with Team-Hokkaido while reminding them that learning from experience should be a mutual endeavor.

Introduction

Edda is an Icelandic inclusive education specialist. She has nearly 20 years of experience as a special educator and coordinator for support in a compulsory school in Iceland. For Edda, this was her first time collaborating with people from East Asia. Meg is an early childhood educator from Japan. She has been educated and trained in both Japan and Iceland. Her experience as an educator in Japan impacted her teaching in Iceland, as these two teaching cultures contrast with one another. Since 2015, Meg has been working with Team-Hokkaido (pseudonym) to support their understanding of inclusive education. When Meg was organizing Team-Hokkaido's visit to Iceland in 2015, she asked Edda for support given theoretical knowledge and deep understanding of the Icelandic education system.

Team-Hokkaido is a group of Japanese special educators from Hokkaido – the northernmost island of Japan – that aims to develop inclusive practice in their schools and workplaces. The part of Hokkaido in which they live has many similarities to Iceland, including geographic features (e.g., hot springs and volcanoes) and demographic conditions (e.g., sparsely populated and rural). Considering these similarities, the Japanese special educators became interested in learning from the development of inclusion in the Icelandic education system. Team-Hokkaido visited Iceland on

three occasions between 2013 and 2018. Meg has been their interpreter since their first visit and the organizer of the visits since 2015.

Edda and Meg received funding to visit Japan in early June 2019 for the purpose of learning about the Japanese education context and to support inclusive practices by Team-Hokkaido. We decided that our supportive role would be characterized as critical friendship to the Japanese special education practitioners. Our understanding of critical friendship aligns with Costa and Kallick's (1993) definition of providing alternative perspectives and support and offering constructive critical feedback. As we worked with Team-Hokkaido, we found that their understanding of critical friendship was different from ours. This led us to wonder if we needed to clarify the nature of our supportive role.

Conceptual Framework

In self-study, critical friendship is one method for influencing each other's practices and enhancing the trustworthiness of the data and analysis through collaborative inquiry (Samaras, 2011). Critical friendship is a versatile and potentially powerful approach to supporting people and groups in developing their practice and can be a rewarding learning experience. However, to be effective, critical friends need to understand the context in which they are working and how this context might impact the perceived roles of a critical friend (Swaffield, 2004).

International critical friendship with others can be inspiring and provides many learning opportunities, but it takes some time and effort to develop. Dialogue through face-to-face meetings can establish respect for different contexts and surpass a sense of hierarchy (Shuck & Russell, 2005). Critical dialogue between people from different cultural backgrounds can enhance professional learning (Fuentaebla et al., 2020). Across contexts, however, the variety of relationships critical friends have with each other can be a source of tension. This tension can be eased by explicitly recognizing the multiple roles of a critical friend and by openly discussing how best to balance any conflicting demands. This kind of critical dialogue that is required to promote critical friendship takes time and effort.

Some cultures hold academic hierarchy in high regard, which could make the development of critical friendship difficult to use in an intervention (Shuck & Russell, 2005). In a previous study, Meg (Nishida, 2020) argued that hierarchy in Japanese culture could be a hindrance to developing collaborative dialogue as Japanese people tend to respect hierarchy often in relation to age and status. In Iceland, however, the emphasis on hierarchy is less visible. Trust is built upon mutual respect as the Icelandic culture values egalitarianism in collaboration (Kristinsdóttir et al., 2020; Warner-Søderholm, 2012).

The emphasis on "knowledgeable academics" in Asian cultures can be exemplified in the hierarchical image of the Indian term *Guru-shishya* (teacher-student) (Ratnam, 2016). When collaborating in an Asian context, McNiff (2013) was concerned that she was talking as though she was speaking to others from her "privileged position as 'more knowledgeable' academic" (p. 508). She determined that she needed to carefully examine the complexity of cultural values to avoid cultural imperialism.

The theory of the cultural mediator is often used in the context of translating between language and culture (Katan, 1999). In his explanation of mediator, Katan cites Taft's (1981) definition of a cultural mediator as "a person who facilitates communication, understanding, and action between persons or groups who differ with respect to language and culture" (as cited in Katan, 1999, p. 12). In connection with the idea of Vygotsky's (1978) cultural mediation, communication is a sign that requires us to use the language as a tool to facilitate communication. Although the role of cultural mediator may be versatile, the key to successful cultural exchange is the language acquisition of the host country (Shaffer & Miller, 2008).

Our study reflects on our experiences as critical friends to our Japanese colleagues at a study camp that Team-Hokkaido hosted during our visit. The study camp program began with Edda giving a presentation on inclusive education in the Icelandic system. After her presentation, the study camp participants presented cases that they needed assistance with and Edda was asked to provide comments and consultations. Meg's main role was to interpret while also mediating Team-Hokkaido's and Edda's understanding across different educational and cultural contexts.

Aim - Objective

This collaborative self-study discusses how we, two Icelandic-based inclusive practitioners, endeavored to position ourselves in supporting Team-Hokkaido's development of inclusive practices. The purpose of this study is to enhance our future collaboration as critical friends supporting their inclusive practice. Through collaborative inquiry, we aim to understand the nature of our critical friendship with Team-Hokkaido and their expectations of our roles. The following research question guides our collaborative inquiry: "How can we develop our critical friendship to Team-Hokkaido to support their inclusive practice?"

Data Collection and Analysis

Collaborative self-study is our way of inquiry to explore our roles in working with Team-Hokkaido as critical friends (Bodone et al., 2004; Samaras, 2011). Our perspective is that research collaboration between diverse colleagues is a strength as it can provide multiple perspectives on critical incidents. Throughout the research process, we discussed our reflections and shared our views on how we understood our experiences. In our discussions, English was our language of collaboration, so neither of us were speaking our native language. This means that our meta-conversation is also a part of the analysis because a translation process adds an extra layer of analysis (Guðjónsdóttir & Jónsdóttir, 2021).

In this self-study, we were the central participants. Edda has a limited understanding of the historical/cultural and social context in which Team-Hokkaido is working, but Meg, as one knowledgeable of the Japanese context, supports Edda's new professional experience. The 10 study camp participants were secondary participants as they provided the cases for discussion in our self-study. All names are pseudonyms and we gained participants' permission for using the data from the study camp.

The data collection took place in 2019 during a study camp we participated in with Team-Hokkaido in Japan. Our research procedures were emergent and intentionally designed to be both structured and open-ended. The data collection includes:

- Presentation materials from the 10 participants of the study camp, PPT files, and handouts. All the participants presented their cases related to special needs education and came up with questions posed to Edda.
- Recorded meetings between us (Edda and Meg) after the study camp took place. These were both unstructured and structured discussions. These took place during our travels in Japan and in regular meetings either in person or online during COVID times.
- Our respective journal entries and personal notes regarding the presentations and discussions during the study camp. We wrote in our journals at the end of each day while in Japan, and after our discussions we wrote down our reflections to prompt our next discussion.

Since the camp was conducted in Japanese, verbal data and written artifacts in Japanese were transcribed, translated into English by Meg, and analyzed together by Edda and Meg. Our analysis was focused on understanding our roles in collaborating with Team-Hokkaido and we looked for concepts and theories that could help to reposition ourselves. Data analysis included identifying patterns emerging in our discourse. The purpose of the analysis was to identify our assumptions about participants' practices and learn from our experiences during the study camp (Fuentealba & Russel, 2016).

We employ the concept of critical friendship as an analytic lens to explore our data. An important factor in critical friendship is that "a critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of that work" (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 50). As we read each other's interpretations and analyses and began to generate major themes, we let LaBoskey's (2004) characteristics of self-study guide us: self-initiated and focused, improvement-aimed, interactive, using primarily qualitative methods, and offering examples for validation.

Our Individual and Collective Reflections on the Study Camp

> *Within a completely different cultural context and using a foreign language, she (Edda) finds the truth of the presenters' struggles and offers her constructive feedback. I was actually quite impressed (Meg's journal, June, 2019).*

When our visit to Japan was over, we discussed our experiences at the Team-Hokkaido study camp. Meg was surprised when Edda shared her feelings after our participation. As her journal quote above reveals, Meg was impressed with Edda's professional attitude to supporting Team-Hokkaido without knowing their language. However, Edda confessed that she felt overwhelmed by Team-Hokkaido's expectations. It was exactly what Meg felt when she first joined Team-Hokkaido's study camp in Japan in 2016. This led us to realize that differing languages may not be the only issue. We had some common feelings to overcome to improve our future collaboration with the team. In this section, we first examined our perspectives individually, then developed our collaborative discussion.

Edda's Perspective

Working with Team-Hokkaido was an empowering experience and at the same time an overwhelming one. I felt greatly honored that the Team should ask me to discuss and give them advice on their work and was excited to act as their critical friend. With Meg's assistance, I tried to acknowledge and respect the cultural and historical situatedness of participants in the study camp. However, after listening to the first two presentations I began to feel the pressure of giving advice to people who are doing hard work in quite complex situations that I did not understand fully.

> *Hina discussed that the teachers in her school think that disabilities are the students' problem. She said that the focus is on teaching students to follow the rules, not to understand how they learn. And she asked me "What is the way forward?" I suggested having a school wide discussion about what inclusion means... But I know working on this issue calls for a different view on what it means to be disabled, which is deeply embedded in the culture. Am I being helpful? I know my stuff about inclusive education, but their world is so different from mine – how can I be useful to them? (Edda's journal, June, 2019)*

I felt inadequate in providing guidance to the participants. The questions I asked and the critical insight I wanted to give them were based on my experiences and knowledge, but not a deep understanding of the context in which they work. The presence of Meg made the experience easier, as she did her best to explain their situation to me, such as elaborating on their working conditions or explaining what issues they may be facing.

> *In hindsight, as Meg explained to me, many of the problems that we discussed in the study camp were based on the issue that teachers and civil servants are moved around in their posts every 2-4 years. This poses problems with developing practice, as they cannot see their developments through – there is a lack of sustainability in practice (Edda's journal, June 2019).*

I felt I lacked understanding of the context that the different members of Team-Hokkaido were describing in their presentations. I felt unable to be critical or provide alternative viewpoints as my knowledge of the cultural, historical, and social context was limited and so totally different from my own reality and background.

I felt I was positioned as the 'knowledgeable academic' or 'guru' from whom Team-Hokkaido wanted to learn. They wanted guidance from me on how they could develop their practices and I felt overwhelmed by their expectations.

> *I think I'm transplanting ideas of inclusion without having the knowledge to consider the cultural/social/historical context they are speaking from. They listen intently, and Meg is doing her best to explain, but it will be difficult for them to use my ideas in practice (Edda's journal June, 2019).*

Meg was particularly important to me in her role as an interpreter and cultural mediator. At the study camp, I relied on her to explain the cultural and social context for me which clarified many issues. Without her I would have been like a fish out of water, unable to connect what they told me to my lived experiences. With her assistance, I tried to acknowledge and respect the cultural and historical situatedness of participants in the study camp, but the danger that I encountered, as I was analyzing my data, was that I was prone to 'Othering' [could use italics instead: *Othering*] in this

exchange. This is what happens when one is not familiar with the cultural context and employs one's own cultural glasses to judge the other and their situation.

Meg's Perspective

While Edda was feeling overwhelmed, I was looking at this experience differently. In my last visit to Japan, I had experienced some level of expectations from Team-Hokkaido. They treated me like a representative from Iceland and their enthusiasm for listening to my stories was a pressure. I was invited to speak about the Icelandic inclusive education system in many different places. But in my case, these invitations were in Japanese and I understood their context from my own experience. Their return visit to Iceland in 2018 also enabled us to foster a personal friendship between us rather than a critical friendship.

When Edda decided to join me on my trip, I was excited. She has been supporting Team- Hokkaido's visits in Iceland and they know each other through those visits. I also wanted Edda to see and experience the Japanese culture and Team-Hokkaido's expectations. I thought that she would enjoy the whole experience rather than feel pressured. She did enjoy it, but there were much stronger feelings in play.

The study camp was intensive, and I needed to focus on my role of interpreting. I believed that I knew both the Japanese and Icelandic contexts. Between my interpretation, I tried to offer some supporting descriptions of the contexts of respective cultures. Although it was difficult for me to keep my concentration on interpretation, Edda tried to pay attention to everything I was interpreting and kept notes. I believed that she was ready to respond to their expectations. My journal after the study camp expresses: "While listening to Edda's comments on each presentation, I noticed her professional attitude."

I thought that Edda had gained international experience when she was working for a European institution which made her more confident. It was a surprise to hear her feelings later, but at the same time, I felt some sort of relief. I was not the only one feeling overwhelmed by their expectations. Until Edda joined my collaboration with Team-Hokkaido, I was feeling a sense of uselessness because my experience with inclusive practice was limited to my work in a preschool and I thought it was not enough to support their learning. I realized that if Edda felt overwhelmed, I needed to redefine my role as a critical friend to them and between us.

Collaborative Dialogue

Since we took part in the study camp, we have met regularly to discuss our experience to understand the dynamics of our relationships both with Team-Hokkaido and between ourselves. In August 2021, we had the following reflective conversation on our experience.

> *Edda: What I'm thinking is that we are both looking at confidence as an issue. For me, I doubted that I was the correct person because maybe someone else could be better at this. But your aspect of confidence is about hierarchy and the culture that you come from, and you are stepping into a new role that you might not have been able to access a few years ago. So, we are both dealing with confidence issues and the issue of maybe trespassing or something? It's called imposter syndrome. It's like you are pretending to be someone and others are going to figure out that you are not really clever.*
>
> *Meg: Yeah, when I first met them in Japan, I felt a huge gap especially between the local professionals. Being Japanese coming from Iceland, made such a huge impact on them. Like someone super special was coming to tell them something special!*
>
> *Edda: Yeah. High hopes!*
>
> *Meg: I was not finished with my PhD. I had no idea what I was doing. But they were looking at me differently. So that was a real pressure. Degree is a huge matter to them. PhD is going to give me confidence and some kind of qualification for me to talk about inclusive education.*
>
> *Edda: Yeah, so you have like, not a power, but an authority.*

In this dialogue our lack of confidence is prominent. While both of us seem to be grappling with imposter syndrome, it is rooted in our different cultural backgrounds. Both of us have been brought up with a strong emphasis on being humble, especially as females. In Edda's upbringing, being humble was a core value and meant not being a 'show-off'. Meg has experienced being humble as being raised in a society that emphasizes hierarchy and having a set place in the social order.

> *Meg: It's interesting like we are opposite in a way. If we combine, then divide into two, it's just perfect. That's why we collaborate.*
>
> *Edda: I think we both have something to contribute to the collaboration as it happened in Japan and the one we have between us. And we both have our individual experiences that contribute to our collaboration.*
>
> *Meg: And also it doesn't happen overnight.*
>
> *Edda: No, it happens gradually.*

We found that we needed to keep discussing our reflections because they take time to understand. Having a physical distance (due to COVID-19) from our critical friendship with the Hokkaido group has allowed us to take a bird's eye view of our experience. We needed this time and distance to understand the strategy we could employ the next time we travel to meet Team-Hokkaido.

> *Meg: We have been talking about it for a couple of years since we came back from Japan. Each time we see something new. So it takes time to find more solutions or more results or ideas for next time.*
>
> *Edda: If we look towards the future we are at a threshold. Standing at the threshold, we look back and see how we did. Looking forward, we see what we are going to do. But, to be effective as critical friends, we need to look at how we can learn from this experience. So that we can avoid making the same mistakes or so we can be better next time.*

From our dialogue, we understand that our way forward is for us to be critical friends to each other. We have different resources. The combination of our different knowledge and our cultural backgrounds makes us stronger.

Discussion: What Have We Learned?

Through our collaborative self-study, our experiences, thoughts, and strategies have developed as we improve our practice and perspectives. The differences between the Icelandic and Japanese school systems and cultures are vast, but the main difference lies in the source of control of the system. The Icelandic school system is highly decentralized which means that responsibility and power is passed to local communities and schools, and decisions about many aspects of policy and practice are made at that level (Óskarsdóttir et al., 2019). The Japanese education system, however, is highly centralized, meaning that the control of finance, personnel, and resources is by a central body that also manages policy, curriculum, and assessment (OECD, 2018). This centralized context that Team-Hokkaido works within is the source of many of the dilemmas they face in their work that are unfamiliar to Edda.

Looking critically at our collaboration with Team-Hokkaido has helped us recognize that we are always part of the story we are telling and can never get out of it; we see the world through the lens of our historical and cultural experiences with self and others (McNiff, 2013). Edda found that developing her role as a critical friend depended on her capacity for critical self-reflection, an interrogation of her words and actions. She found she was not comfortable with being given the hierarchical status of a guru or a knowledgeable academic, as she felt her knowledge of the context was insufficient for assisting Team- Hokkaido. However, by looking at her experiences critically and with the help of Meg as her critical friend, the capacity to make the implicit explicit has developed, to reveal what is hidden underneath.

Meg learned that her understanding of critical friendship to the Japanese is getting more complex. When she was interacting with them by herself, she was feeling a sense of high expectations, but it was still simple enough that she could position herself as a Japanese critical friend in Iceland. When Edda joined in the collaboration, Meg realized that her own role needed to be more flexible and versatile to mediate between the cultures she stands for. Meg needed to be

aware of her cultural, professional, and linguistic resources. As Vygotsky (1978) explains, Meg was using her three languages (Japanese, English, and Icelandic), cultural knowledge, and professional experiences to support everyone's understanding as a cultural mediator (Taft, 1981, as cited in Katan, 1999). The role of the cultural mediator needs to be better explored in this context with Team-Hokkaido. She learned that critical friends' collaborative dialogue between her and Edda, and between her, Edda, and Team-Hokkaido, inspired her to find a way to support both sides.

Our idea of critical friendship was rather simple when we began our collaboration. However, through collaborating with Team-Hokkaido we realized that it is much more complex. Our respective roles need to be brought out of the binaries of 'guru' and 'disciple' (or knowledge giver and knowledge receiver) and into more equal partnerships where both parties can contribute to mutual learning where everyone has a voice. To continue our collaboration with Team-Hokkaido, we need to find ways to examine the hierarchical positioning and to make our respective cultural values visible to avoid instances of othering as we position ourselves as critical friends (McNiff, 2013; Shuck & Russell, 2005). Because we are talking about inclusive education, our collaboration needs to be inclusive as well.

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Learning About Self Through a Multi-Institution Inquiry Into New Teacher Preparedness Post-COVID

Valerie A. Allison, Laura C. Haniford, Pamela J. Powell, Christi U. Edge, Carol Moriarty, & Laurie A. Ramirez

Teacher Preparation | Pandemic | Multi-institution Collaboration | Co-critical Friendship

Six researchers from five different institutions in different regions of the United States came together through a chance meeting in a virtual conference in the summer of 2021. They found they shared a common concern: the impact on new teachers' preparedness and confidence who had had their preservice educations interrupted and altered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. For over 16 months, they have collaborated to develop and carry out large-scale, mixed methods, multi-institutional study that included collecting and analyzing survey data and focus group interviews from alumni of their five universities' teacher preparation programs. The self-study investigation described in this chapter explores how working collaboratively and interrogating the consequences of the pandemic for our former students led to insights into our own practices and identities as teacher educators. What we did not anticipate was how challenging it would be to design and carry out mixed methods, multi-institution research, nor did we anticipate how much we would enjoy the community-building process of working together across institutions. We share findings related to our three research questions: What did we learn about ourselves and our institutions through our work together designing a mixed methods large-scale research project? What unintended learning opportunities arose as a result of working together? What did we learn about the formation of new research groups?

Context

We are six teacher educators working in five US states who have come together to investigate the impact of the global Covid pandemic on our recent graduates' confidence and preparedness to assume teaching positions. As a component of this broad study, we collected and analyzed survey and focus group data from alumni from our five institutions who completed certification requirements for elementary or secondary education in 2020-2021. Additionally, at the initiation of our collaboration, we had hoped to develop and provide online professional development workshops on topics the participants identified as areas they wish to enhance in their teaching.

Three of us are at institutions in the American Southwest, one in the upper Midwest, one in the mid-Atlantic, and one in the Southeast. With the exception of Carol, who is a Ph.D. candidate, all of us are veteran teacher educators, each with more than 14 years of teaching and research experience at the collegiate level. For all of us, our efforts to work collaboratively to undertake a study that includes numerous institutions and research partners was a departure from our individually established research agendas. Further, none of us felt well versed in carrying out inquiries that compared to this one in scope. Finally, most of us had not previously worked together. We met when we attended a

virtual Invisible College session during the summer of 2021. Designing and starting a research project while getting to know one another was new for us as well.

Aims and Objectives

This self-study investigation explores how working collaboratively and interrogating the consequences of the pandemic for our former students led to insights into our own practices and identities as teacher educators. We anticipated that feedback from our participants on the strengths and weaknesses of their preparation, in general and during the pandemic, would expose us to individual vulnerabilities we would need to navigate as collaborative research partners. We also hoped to investigate our collaborative processes in designing and carrying out professional development opportunities for our participants. What we did not anticipate was how challenging it would be to design and carry out this research, nor did we anticipate how much we would enjoy the community-building process of working together across institutions.

When we initiated our collaborative inquiry, the question we had hoped to investigate was focused on what we might learn about our own teacher education institutions and our roles in them through developing and providing professional development to first-year teachers who had completed their teacher education during the pandemic. We had envisioned ourselves being able to fill through inter-institutional web-based professional development opportunities gaps our graduates had in their preservice preparation as a result of the pandemic. What we did not foresee, at the time, was how challenging recruiting first-year teacher participants would be. Because we had such low response rates on both the survey and the focus groups, we adopted the following new research questions for the self-study component of our research:

- What did we learn about ourselves and our institutions through our work together designing a mixed methods large-scale research project?
- What unintended learning opportunities arose as a result of working together?
- What did we learn about the formation of new research groups?

Literature Review

The COVID-19 global pandemic affected systems, institutions, and countless facets of the lives of individuals across the world. Salient to our study, educator preparation programs (EPPs) were significantly affected in areas of fieldwork and student teaching, the typical capstone for EPPs. Literature published to date chronicling the throes of the pandemic speaks to the challenges incurred in teaching in PK-12 systems and EPPs (Eady et al, 2021; Sayman & Cornell, 2021; Schrieber, 2022; VanLone et al., 2022; Zenkov et al., 2021).

According to the research, teachers in the field experienced a sense of loss and grieved the impact of the pandemic on their relationships with students and their work conditions (Sayman & Cornell, 2021). Teacher educators also experienced challenges in providing authentic learning opportunities for teacher candidates without being physically present in schools and classrooms (Eady et al., 2021).

As a result of the pandemic, the workload for students in EPPs was also affected. Zenkov et al. (2021) asserted, “While this is an unhealthy scenario, it’s also a consciousness raising affair” (p. 122). Schrieber (2022) concurred, “The unanticipated challenges that have emerged during this time have required instructors and students to adapt, the transition to remote instruction presents opportunities to implement new practices that enhance student education…” (p. 110). Central to our inquiry, as VanLone et al. (2022) suggested, “student teachers who had incomplete student teaching experiences may need additional support during their novice teaching years” (p. 8). This concern that alumni from our five programs, who began teaching in 2021, would not be fully prepared for all their roles and responsibilities as novice teachers led us to initiate this collaborative investigation.

Foundation

This study is built on tenets of self-study research: collaboration, critical friendship, and dialogue. Lighthall (2004) posited collaboration is “the single most prominent feature of the self-study enterprise” (p. 231). The self-study community has long advocated critical friendship in researchers’ methodology (Lighthall, 2004; Loughran & Northfield,

1998; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Tidwell & Fitzgerald, 2004). Reminiscent of Fletcher et al. (2016), Olan and Edge (2019), and Stolle et al. (2019), we have sought, in this instance, to establish co-critical friendship relationships with one another across dissimilar institutions and without each of us knowing all the other researchers through past friendships and collaborations. We agree with Stolle et al. (2019) that the "three characteristics central to an effective critical friendship [are] vulnerability, reflection, and skepticism" (p. 23).

The open and respectful dialogue was paramount to establishing and maintaining our collaboration and critical friendship. As Placier et al. (2008) asserted, the fundamental power of dialogue is to build one's knowledge: "Dialogue provides valuable ways of knowing. I come to know what I know as I say it" (p. 61). In the case of this inquiry, our dialogical exchanges occurred synchronously through Zoom meetings and asynchronously through dialogical journaling.

Self-study afforded our group the opportunity to explore and examine the tensions we lived and navigated in our individual EPP settings, and created an in-between space in which we could reframe and move beyond our individual settings. Fletcher (2020) calls attention to the in-between nature of self-study methodology and asserts the hyphen in S-STEP represents the hybrid nature of S-STEP research. Hybridity, argues Fletcher, is a central feature in S-STEP methodology. The idea of something made by combining different elements resonated with our goals to study our own and students' experiences, our own and one another's EPP structures, as well as our approach of using qualitative self-study methodology with quantitative survey data. Fletcher (2020) also suggests "S-STEP researchers often occupy a similar space as a hyphen does, residing in a middle ground" (p. 270). The "betweenness" (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001) and hybridity (Fletcher, 2020) of S-STEP characterize how we sought to better understand the public issue of teacher candidates transitioning into teaching post-pandemic and the private experience of learning from our alumni how we might work alongside them to provide additional support due to potentially inadequate field experiences during the pandemic (VanLone et al., 2022).

Forming the research team itself could be considered an element of our methodology. The team of six of us congealed informally at a one-day conference. Some of us were friends who had collaborated previously, others were acquaintances within the self-study community, and a few of us had never met before. Not knowing if the team would be disparate or if alliances would form, in the late summer of 2021, we began to meet weekly to plan the study. Our research team, accidentally but fortuitously formed, did not follow a prescribed trajectory but rather unfolded in a graceful glide as trust was built and plans emerged. Furthermore, we did not follow a formation of predetermined "principal investigators" planning and leading the research; it emerged as a shared leadership model with all sharing the lead on various parts of the study.

Methods

Data collected for this study included our individual journals where we recorded our perspectives and insights from working collaboratively with one another, from gathering and analyzing survey responses from participants about their preparation for teaching, and from planning and conducting a focus group with a subgroup of participants. Additionally, we compiled and analyzed recordings and transcripts from our regularly scheduled planning and de-briefing meetings conducted via Zoom. Finally, we read and responded to one anothers' reflective journal posts on a shared Google document. In this space, we posed questions to one another (e.g., "What are you bringing to this collaborative study of new teachers?") that encouraged our coming to know one another and our perspectives and interpretations of events related to our collaboration.

We systematically immersed ourselves in our individual and collective datasets in an iterative process, doing multiple readings to identify codes, emergent patterns, and questions for consideration as they relate to our research foci. (Merriam, 1998; Samaras, 2011). In Zoom conferences, we discussed the aggregate data, exchanged ideas, and identified together the broader patterns and divergent themes (Samaras & Freese, 2006). We prepared summaries of our individual and shared analyses and used these summaries as interim texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to promote further reflection. In preparing the report for this inquiry, we selected data excerpts that were representative of our datasets and illustrate the themes we collectively identify. We assert the trustworthiness of our collaboration was enhanced through the preparation and interrogation of our individual and shared summaries and analyses as we

worked to “member check” with one another our understanding of the experiences and perspectives in the group (Willis & Siltanen, 2009).

Outcomes

Navigating the Steep Learning Curve

To say this large-scale, mixed methods study has been a learning experience for all of us would be an understatement. We have learned about the different approaches to human subjects research approval at each institution, how to construct survey instruments, and how hard it is to recruit participants through email, particularly first-year teachers who are navigating returning to in-person instruction.

Out of the six participants in this project, all of us identify as qualitative researchers and four of us conduct most of our research within the self-study paradigm. This is not surprising, given that this collaboration grew out of the online Invisible College held in July 2021. In practical terms, this meant that none of us had put together a study of this scope and focus before. In our reflective journals, each of us commented on how much longer it took to get this study off the ground than we initially planned. For example, in their reflective journals, Laura and Valerie wrote:

> *One of the things I’m noticing in most of my early notes was just how time consuming it was to get the IRBs done. Most of my notes are checking on people’s CITI training and IRB. I had multiple consultations with the IRB about the project. (Laura)*

> *The learning curve was much steeper than I had anticipated for organizing and carrying out a multi-institution largely quantitative study. Likewise, the investment of time and energy was much higher than I had assumed it would be. I’m thinking specifically about my experience completing all the required CITI modules. It took me two full days to work through them all. I recognized that my investment of time was relatively small in comparison to Laura, Christi, Laurie, and Pam who had to navigate the IRB process at their respective institutions. I had the benefit of working at a small teaching college, and my IRB was happy to defer to Laura’s for ensuring the collaborative study adhered to human subject requirements. (Valerie)*

While the practical lessons we learned through our efforts to design and carry out a multi-institutional quantitative study were important, for this chapter we are focused on the findings regarding what we learned through forming our research group. Similar to when we travel to a new place, through visiting large-scale, mixed-methods research, we learned more about our home (qualitative, self-study research) by reflecting on what was different.

Through sharing with one another how our institutions and local communities responded (or did not respond) to the pandemic, we discovered that no matter what the response, the impact on us as faculty was the same. Throughout the pandemic we each felt overwhelmed, burnt out, and very worried. We worried about our students and what they were learning. We worried about whether or not our students would be safe. And we worried about how we could support our students through the experience. Sharing the worries we experienced during the pandemic was therapeutic, allowing us to put into perspective the disruption the pandemic had on our professional and personal lives, individually and collectively. Giving voice to long-pent-up angst encouraged us to heal and reclaim purpose and direction as teacher educators and scholars. Sharing the similarities and differences in our experiences allowed us to navigate the challenges of a multi-site project. Additionally, it was through reflecting on our differences that the type of skepticism discussed by Stolle et al. (2019) surfaced.

Growing Through Vulnerability and Reflection

Despite the fact that five out of the six of us are mid-career scholars, the process of forming a new research group of this size and scope was a new experience. Looking back at our online meetings and written reflections, what became clear to us was that we focused quite a bit on building community and relationships with one another. Gradually, we shared stories with one another. We began by sharing what the pandemic had been like for us in our particular institutions. Through their journals Valerie, Christi, Pam, and Laura each related their experiences and emotions in being teacher educators during the pandemic.

In the spring of 2021, four of the 14 student teachers I supervised completed all but the last five weeks of their student teaching remotely. That is, they were teaching from their dorms via Zoom, Google Classroom, or Teams to students who were mostly sitting in the classrooms in the schools with their cooperating teachers. The other eleven student teachers were mostly in-person with their students and co-ops, with the exception of cases of quarantining or schools being shut down as cases increased in particular schools. It all was very chaotic! (Valerie)

For my practicum course, I really struggled. It was heartbreaking, even felt morally wrong to not be able to place students into schools and classrooms--that was the purpose of the course! My students didn't know what they were missing, but I did, and they suspected. We made the most of it, but with deep regret I just had to swallow down. (Christi)

Having been in the field of education for over forty years, nineteen of which have been at an institute of higher education (IHE), I bring history. I bring history of working with over 2000 children and adults in classrooms. I bring living history from the 1950's until today. I bring knowledge of growth, accessibility, and the ongoing fight for justice and equity in education. I bring memories of dark days in our history. But experience and longevity in the field did not prepare me for the COVID-19 Pandemic. (Pam)

I found teaching online really jarring last fall. I hadn't thought about the fact that due to politeness norms, students would be muted and so when I said things, there was no audible reaction. I was so grateful to students who reacted to things physically--laughing in a way I could see, thumbs up, nodding vigorously, etc. Otherwise, it felt like I was just talking into nothingness. Most of my students did keep their cameras on, I had two who never once turned them on. (Laura)

As we became more familiar with one another, we gradually began to share more personal stories of our lives in and beyond our institutions. In their journal, Valerie, Christi, and Pam noted,

I look forward to the Zoom meetings as opportunities to socialize with a group of professional women I see as friends. Personally, I don't have many social outlets working at a small college in a small town. I appreciate even when our chats are about grips because it helps me put into perspective my own frustrations with situations at my institution. (Valerie)

The pre-meeting conversations and numerous personal connections formed during our Zoom meetings provided an outlet for processing and talking through institutional and personal challenges alike…. Frustration from working for months without a contract, the fear of going on strike were weighty and distracting, yet the group was a place where I could be a part of something important and meaningful – something beyond my immediate institutional setting and even the significant personal challenges from an unexpected death in the family, a parent diagnosed with cancer, and COVID. Because we were a group united in our study, and because we shared a commitment to the research, one another, and teacher education, the group became a place of welcome, even escape…Each of our identities and experiences were embraced. (Christi)

One of the upsides of our work together was the laughter. Sharing concerns and frustrations provided an unanticipated intersection with one another. For me, this was a value added to our work and helped me navigate a pandemic time that none of us had ever experienced. Another joyful benefit was the opportunity to meet in person for the first time at AERA. Even though we had never been face-to-face, I felt that I was in the company of old friends. (Pam)

Over the last 16 months, we have developed real friendships, willing to share with and comfort one another through trials and traumas, large and small. In a recent phone conversation, Pam remarked to Laura how unusual our team is in her experience as a researcher. Because we are each focused on the success of the group and our research goals together, being vulnerable with one another has come relatively easily. One of the threads that tied us together and kept us together is what we bring from the self-study community. We are comfortable in discomfort and willing to be

vulnerable about our experiences during a time of great tumult. As Christi articulated in one of her final reflections, an image symbolic of our work together:

> *Out of the motion, isolation, displacement, chaos, fatigue, and unexpected respite of coming together on the heels of teaching through a pandemic, our group was like a roadside park along a flowing river—there, in the shade, we found connection and conversation that sparked into something more. Laughter and reality checks alike were afforded by sharing our worlds, through screens with one another and wandering out into the broader teaching world we share.*

The time spent building community could be seen as "off topic" in that we were not directly speaking about our research project. In reviewing the videos from our meetings, we discovered there is always a certain amount of time spent on what we have come to call "community building." As Carol described in her journal:

> *While coding the video recording of one of the group meetings a theme emerged. Approximately 25% of the time of the meeting could be coded as "off topic" or not devoted exclusively to the research topic. However, it seems in these consequential off topic moments a community was created, burdens were shared, encouragement was abundant. In this model, professional life blended seamlessly with humanity and the outcome was the creation of a collaborative multi-institution scholarly group of colleagues and friends. This type of working collaborative relationship has the potential to imbue research with head and heart looking inward and simultaneously outward creating a unique robust perspective on research.*

Based on our experiences as qualitative researchers, many of us self-study researchers – we instinctively foregrounded issues of community building. While hypothetically we could have worked to be more "on task," we could not simply remove our qualitative lenses because we were working with survey data.

Christi also addressed this community building in her journal, describing the relationships we have built as "power-with" (Edge et al., 2022). She defined power-with as:

> *A kind of strength that emerges from collaboration and empowering relationships forged through the research process and especially through the sharing of oneself and one's teaching practices. This kind of power is ecological and creates an environment where things can happen, people can be vulnerable and grow, can venture into the unknown and emerge stronger, more knowledgeable, even transformed (p. 172).*

Returning to the framework put forward by Stolle et al. (2019), we see strong evidence of vulnerability and reflection in our growing together as a research collaborative. As individuals in this newly formed group, we did not question our willingness to be vulnerable with one another. Reflection was built into the work through sharing stories of our experiences at different institutions, in different states, over the course of the pandemic. These shared stories cast our individual experiences in a new light, leading us each to reconsider decisions and ways of doing things in our home institutions.

Significance

Since the inception of self-study as a methodology, there have been discussions regarding how it is and is not like traditional research (e.g., LaBoskey, 2004; Russell, 2004). We have been privy to many conversations regarding the importance of expanding the discourse communities in which we share our work in order to broaden the impact and acceptance of self-study work. The conversations we shared as a research group across the timeline of our project have caused us to consider the importance of bringing our whole selves to whatever type of research with which we engage. As described above, we could not turn off our interpretive, self-study lenses, even when analyzing quantitative data. We consider this a strength of our work. Not only have we been able to see the people in the data more fully and clearly, but we have also seen ourselves.

Each of us has had her collegial and social circle enlarged through our engagement in the collaboration. This is noteworthy in light of the widely-recognized isolative effect of the pandemic on the lived experiences of individuals in all

walks of life. We were able to abate our sense of isolation in ways that were personally and professionally generative. Through conversations in which we described our programs (pre, during, and post-Covid) our institutions, and our states, we have developed a wealth of knowledge about the variations and commonalities in teacher education across the U.S. This in turn has opened our thinking to adaptations and refinements in our practice that we might not have previously considered. By listening carefully to one another, we came to reflect in a more skeptical manner on our own institutions and experiences. Our skepticism was not directed at one another but at the larger questions and contexts.

Though some of the initial goals for our collaboration have yet to be realized or have been amended, we have each grown and been transformed through our collaborative process. We each have a broadened understanding of the variation in teacher education programs across our institutions. We have each developed a deeper appreciation of the affordances and constraints associated with conducting mixed-methods, multi-institutional research and have developed new skill sets that will positively influence individual and collaborative future projects. We have been lifted up and renewed through the opportunity to get to know and support one another across a myriad of personal and professional life events, not the least of which is the Covid-19 pandemic. It is not hyperbole to assert that what began as a modest and tentative unplanned conversation in a virtual space has ultimately transformed us as both individuals and as a community of teacher educators.

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Experience As a Clinical Faculty Associate Shifting Teacher and Teacher Educator Identity

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Teacher | Teacher Educator | Identities | Roles | Shifts | University-public School Partnerships | Teacher Preparation Program

This is a study of the identity development of Clinical Faculty Associates (CFAs) through the sharing and analyzing of our stories of our experiences moving from our roles as teachers to our roles as teacher educators. Through analysis of shared stories of experience, we identified four themes. We provide a narrative as an exemplar of each theme and then provide an analysis of the narrative provided to expand on and anchor the theme. Our findings indicate the importance of using CFAs as a mechanism for renewing schools and teacher education programs.

Orientation to the Study

The teacher education reform movement began in the mid-1980s. Two groups influenced this movement (Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group, 1990). Both recommending tighter links between university and public schools. Many university lab schools had closed, so these groups recommended universities develop partnerships or professional development schools to strengthen preservice and in-service teachers. In some cases, university faculty moved to public schools providing coursework for pre-service teachers and professional development for teachers. In other cases, public school teachers took up responsibilities as teacher educators with mentoring provided by university faculty. The teachers who came from schools worked as Clinical Faculty Associates (CFAs) (or held similar titles) where they enacted roles as university supervisors. Reformers believed that through this enterprise, schools, and universities would be renewed where the practical knowledge of teachers would strengthen university programs and the theoretical knowledge of university experience would strengthen the practice of teachers, and both institutional partners and programs would be improved, and renewed (see Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018; Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group, 1990; Levine, 1992).

Though the CFA model was adopted by many institutions, little research was done to determine its effectiveness as a renewal effort. We became interested in if and how CFAs shifted their identity across time from teachers to teacher educators in the ways suggested by Goodlad (1994) and Levine (1992) which lead to renewal of both institutions.

Context of the Study

For over 30 years, Brigham Young University (BYU) and five local school districts have participated in a university/public school partnership (see Bullough, & Rosenberg, 2018) committed to the renewal of schools linking the schools, the university, and the college of education together so that both parties are renewed (see Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group,

1990; Levine, 1992). One mechanism to meet the commitment has been the use of Clinical Faculty Associates (CFAs), public school teachers who come to work in teacher educator roles for a period of two to three years and then return to the public schools. An underlying assumption is that this is a strategy for renewing schools and teacher education: CFAs bring new perspectives to universities and when they return to schools they have new understandings of teaching thus renewing schools. Also, their identities shift and change.

This was not a unique strategy for BYU. Beginning in 1980, many colleges of education engaged teachers in this way. However, unlike BYU, most colleges of education no longer do so. Our colleagues in England, Canada, and at multiple schools across the United States (personal communication, April 2021) report that while they had previously used CFAs they had since stopped the programs. They suggested the cost was one of the main reasons it was abandoned (Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018).

Our work was informed by two strands of research on teacher education research. The first strand focuses on the research conversation that led universities to partner with public schools to renew schools of education and public schools. The second strand focuses on findings from research that charted the identity shifts that occurred for new teacher educators who came to the university after gaining Ph.D.s. We discussed the first strand in the framing of the paper.

Williams, Ritter, and Bulloch (2012) review research that reports what we know about the second strand and documents the identity development of teacher educators who became teacher educators after acquiring Ph.D.s. They report three learnings that former teachers now teacher educators identified in their shift to the role of teacher educator: the impact of making meaning within a context of having multiple memberships, the impact of developing as teacher educators within a community of practice, and the development of a pedagogy of teacher education.

As teacher educators, building relationships and making meaning of new educational experiences is central to developing a teacher education identity (Williams et al., 2012). One of the studies discussed in Williams et. al.'s review (2012) reported the difficult transition new teacher educators undergo as they move from being considered experts in the classroom to being novices in higher education (Murray & Male, 2005) which is similar to the transition CFA's experience. In this study, our focus was on the CFAs who would work at the university as teacher educators but then return to roles in public schools.

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this project was to explore whether and how experience as teacher educators shifted the identity formation of teachers who acted as CFAs. We sought to explore the learning from experiences revealed by CFAs as they took up teacher educator roles at the university and then as they prepared to return to schools. Indeed, our purpose in the project was to explore CFAs' narratives of experience to uncover how their identities as teachers broadened to include an understanding of teaching and teacher development beyond their own classrooms. In addition, this project allowed us to uncover whether the mechanism of renewal of schools and colleges of education occurred and in what ways teachers' identities and understandings of teaching and teacher education were impacted by acting as CFAs and then returning to educator roles in public schools.

Method

Because of our desire to understand the identity shifts CFAs experience, our research method of choice was Narrative S-STEP (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014). We chose to use narratives to capture our experiences because as Clandinin and Connelley (2004) argue, stories teachers tell reveal their teacher identity. Our study included three CFAs (Mina, Shelby, and Miriam) and three university faculty members, and one independent scholar who acted as critical friends. Mina taught kindergarten and first grade for thirty-eight years in a local school district and was a CFA for the Early Childhood program. Shelby was also a CFA for the ECE program. She had been a teacher in second and third grades for five years in a partnership school district. Miriam taught first-, fourth-, and fifth grades for ten years and was a CFA in the Elementary Education Program. Miriam and Shelby held master's degrees in Educational Leadership.

The faculty members were all teacher educators who work closely with the CFAs in their university assignments. Kathie was the ECE program coordinator. Cecilia is an ELED field placement coordinator, and Stefinee oversaw the Teaching English as a Second Language minor and engages in S-STEP research methodology. Eliza, the independent scholar, is the director of a childcare center.

Our data collection and analysis processes occurred simultaneously as we shared stories and inquired about them during the research process (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, 2015). We used dialogue as our process of coming to know. Data collection and data analysis were entwined as we told stories, examined them for the understandings communicated, and shared additional stories which we analyzed in relation to previous stories. As we analyzed stories, we identified themes that we revisited interrogating the stories more closely, adding detail, refining our understanding, and connecting them with insights that arose.

We met initially and we agreed to keep a shared online journal over the next two years as a repository of our data documenting meaningful events that captured shifts in identity and our understanding. The repository also contained our notes of meetings. During the first year, there were notes from the meetings and during the second year, we added transcripts of recorded meetings. We met regularly in person to study the S-STEP methodology sharing and examining the stories captured in our journal entries.

During the meetings, we engaged in meaning-making by articulating wonders, interpreting stories, and plumbing them for further details. Participants shared stories and added at the moment relevant additional experiences. In our dialogue, we connected and interrogated narratives seeking themes and uncovering the identity development revealed. We sometimes worked all together and sometimes worked in pairs or trios. Our meeting notes (both constructed as minutes and later as transcripts of recordings) allowed us to revisit ideas and stories across our experiences. Our process of identifying themes and connecting stories as evidence of them continued through the duration of the study and we added new journal entries related to the emerging themes discussing new insights and adding stories. Near the conclusion of the second year of study, we met to review themes we had identified and determine whether we felt these represented all of the themes in our data. We then created definitions of each theme and sorted the stories in the theme categories developed using a matrix, sorting the stories (events) according to which theme they most clearly represented. In this process, we sought to make certain there was sufficient evidence for each theme and that the stories fit the definitions of the category. As we moved to write our report on the study, we created more complete narratives (Saldaña, 2014). We selected the narratives that best captured each theme. In this process, we reached a consensus on the themes and the narratives that best captured them. The trustworthiness of our results and our interpretation was based on this process.

Findings

We identified the following themes: a) fitting in, b) the role of experience and learning in seeing, c) knowing mentoring, and d) understanding the complexity of schools, teachers, and teaching. The next sections first define each theme and then provide evidential narratives.

Fitting in As a Teacher Educator

Developing a sense of belonging while understanding our identity in a different educational setting was challenging. We labeled this theme as “fitting in” and the stories were about seeking security and support. During the second year, we identified potential future experiences where we would seek to fit in as we returned to public schools. Our identity as teacher and teacher educator has shifted. As changed individuals, even if we return to the same classroom or school we will again be engaging in the challenge of fitting in.

Our findings show a complex relationship between identity and “fitting in.” Many of our stories recounted uncomfortable experiences as we began our CFA experiences. As CFAs, we assigned and supervised teachers in multiple schools. While we were familiar with the school context and working in our classrooms with preservice teachers, we lacked a sense of the solid connections that teachers usually feel working in their own school. The assertion that “fitting in" is a central theme for both incoming and outgoing CFAs is captured in Miriam’s story about her first district contract day during her first year as a CFA.

> *Every three years, just before the students return to class, our district has a celebration at a nearby university. They introduce a theme, bus each school's faculty and staff to the event, and try to get everyone excited for the new school year. This is the first year that I haven't been working at just one school. Because of the CFA assignment, I work with four different schools and I don't know anyone at those schools. I felt left out and decided to drive to the event by myself. I wanted to be part of the celebration but wasn't included. I entered the event center and saw all the school employees sitting in their assigned area with their matching t-shirts. As I quickly looked around, even the district employees had matching shirts. I saw the only group that I seemed to fit with this year and quickly took a seat with the bus drivers.*

Because teaching is fundamentally relational, Miriam longed to fit it and felt an intense need to belong and stay connected with her previous colleagues as she attended a familiar beginning-of-the-year celebration. But now she did not fit in her role as teacher in a particular school and chose to sit with the bus drivers. Just changing her role from teacher to teacher educator impacted her. Miriam's experience demonstrates Williams et al., (2012) report that taking on a teacher educator role requires negotiation of identities across contexts. Other participants shared stories of feeling accepted and respected by the university faculty. When faculty reached out and helped develop relationships, it eased our sense of fitting in and smoothed the transition into our new educator roles.

It is evident from our stories that as we took up these new roles we were not sure if we would still fit in our earlier roles. The stories told indicate that we, as CFAs, continued to tell stories of seeking to "fit in" across their CFA experience. Another challenging identity shift will occur as we prepare to return to our districts after being CFAs. These stories we shared demonstrated that there were phases of "fitting in" on both sides of the experience.

Though the experience of moving to higher education is complex, CFAs experience even greater complexities as their move to teacher educator is temporary. They need to fit in for a season, learning the explicit and implicit cultural rules of the institution but also need to remember the explicit and implicit rules of the public school system so they can "fit in" upon their return.

The Role of Experience in Learning and Seeing

As respected teachers, we came with a wealth of teaching experience. At the university, we participated in professional development activities including attending courses, participating in study groups, presenting at conferences, and oftentimes enrolling in graduate programs. As we meshed our practical experience with our new learning, we came to see the "whys" behind our practice and our vision expanded and our understanding of the relationship between theory and practice gained clarity.

Two of us participated in a year-long university-public school partnership seminar exploring the purposes and responsibilities of public education. Shelby the following story of her experience:

> *Over the past two days, I had been engaged in dialogue with colleagues about the difficulties surrounding equitable access. Thoughts about barriers students face pressed upon my mind. I wondered: When I was teaching, did I teach children or lessons? Was I giving equitable opportunities to all students? Did I even understand their lived experiences that impact their learning? Did I teach things relevant to my students? Was I aware of my own biases? Was I connecting with my students in ways that helped them love learning? So many thoughts. I realized that as a teacher I had a greater responsibility than I'd ever imagined.*

Shelby began to reflect on and question some of her former practices as a teacher. Her insight and response potentially renewed the thinking of the others in the associate's group grounding their more philosophical discussion of everyday teaching and teaching practices at the university connecting them to the practical experiences of the classroom.

Early in our experience as CFAs, as Shelby's experience indicates, we looked back on our own teaching practices in relation to our new learning causing shifts in our previous teacher identity. However, later in our experience, we moved to thinking about our new learning in terms of supporting teacher candidates-- this shift to concern with the development of teachers and their students pushes us to act differently in our relationships with our colleagues and

within our schools. Our stories revealed that as we learned new things when we returned to schools, teaching would not be the way it had been because we were now positioned differently. We saw through our experiences and interactions with mentor teachers and preservice teachers across multiple contexts that our identity as teachers had shifted and we were not different educators than before.

Williams et al. (2012) found that those who became permanent teacher educators developed a personal pedagogy of teacher education. For us as CFAs, it is different. Our new learning impacts not only how we enact our current role as teacher educators but will influence our pedagogy when we return to our districts and impact the teacher educators and preservice teachers we work with in the future. While both permanent teacher educators' and CFAs' university knowledge and experiences cause them to "question their previous assumptions," we as CFAs not only "frame a distinct pedagogy of teacher education" but also a pedagogy of teaching that is richer and more developed than before.

Knowing Mentoring

This theme identifies several shifts in the ways we positioned ourselves as mentors across our experience. Initially, while watching preservice teachers, we recognized our strengths as teachers and our beliefs about teaching. These observations made our practice and understanding of it more available in our interactions with preservice teachers and teacher educators.

In addition, we shifted from seeing our purpose as coaching preservice teachers to becoming replicas of ourselves to supporting them as they discovered who they were as teachers. This shift deepened as we recognized that our role was not only as an assessor but as a developmental coach. Evaluation in mentoring became focused on personal learning rather than just assessment. Shelby's story is relevant to this theme captured in her story, "She is Not Me," illustrating this shift:

After watching Annie teach a successful lesson, we sat in a quiet office discussing her experience.

> *"I don't feel like I'm doing a good job," Annie began. "I am trying my hardest. I am planning and I still cannot seem to reach all of my students."*
>
> *I glanced at my laptop, noticing all the strengths of her lesson I'd noticed, and wondered why she was so concerned. Suddenly, I realized that I had been approaching my work with Annie from the wrong perspective. I'd wanted her to be like me and to do everything that I did to be successful. At this moment, I realized that Annie and I were different people. What worked for me would not work for her. Annie was meticulous in her planning, lived by a consistent daily schedule, and her classroom was more organized than mine. I knew setting a different type of goal would be more challenging for both of us.*
>
> *"What is the hardest part about teaching?" I asked her. We talked about all the things that were challenging for her. She mentioned things I hadn't anticipated. They centered around her wanting to be the perfect teacher, a struggle I had not experienced. I saw that her strengths made her the ideal teacher for her students, and I wanted her to come to the same realization. Instead of focusing on being the perfect teacher, we set goals focused on her emotional well-being. By allowing Annie to break away from the finality of a perfect evaluation score, we accomplished something more substantial.*

Being able to navigate the change from assessing pre-service teachers according to the way we enacted teaching to coaching based on the role as a teacher educator is crucial in the CFA's learning process. Similarly, William et al (2012) asserted that new teacher educators attempt to make meaning within the nexus of multi-membership. One of the ironies is that while we as teacher educators will leave the communities of practice that were vital to our learning, but in our CFA role, we will interact with multiple communities of practice and will become border crossers because we now have knowledge of teaching that crosses district and school boundaries and have a differing perspective of what it means to be and become a teacher. Like those becoming permanent, we experienced the tension of trying to hold onto our teacher identity. For us, it was even more imperative since we will return to our roles as public school teachers.

Complexity in Their Understanding of Schools, Teachers, and Teaching

We came to the university with our personal practical knowledge of teaching (Clandinin, 1985; Clandinin & Connelley, 1995) which is a fundamental part of our teacher identity, but it expands and shifts as our experiences as CFAs includes our role in preparing teachers becomes. Both the expanded teacher identity and newly-developed teacher educator identity remain with us as we move back into public schools. We leave the university with a deeper, layered, and more sophisticated knowledge of teaching and teacher education.

Our developed knowledge of the complexity of the neverending learning-to-teach process (Carter, 1990) is now a part of our identity. The complexities of our personal practical knowledge of teaching and the seeds of an emerging teacher educator identity are found in Mina's story:

> *The school open house was set to begin in less than an hour and I got a text from the school administrator saying, "Help! Your intern is not ready!" The room was not ready, books were not set out on tables for students and parents to see. Nothing was labeled. There were no special preparations like a parent information packet or a welcome gift for the children. I wondered if the intern had an emergency or was caught in traffic. But I soon realized that she was suffering from severe anxiety and depression causing her to be emotionally paralyzed. As I struggled to help her get ready, I sighed wondering if this was a sign of the kind of year this intern, her grade-level team, school and district administrators, the university program coordinator, parents, children, and me as her university supervisor had ahead of us.*
>
> *As the year unfolded, many meetings, observations, demonstrations, encouragement, and tears ensued. We were all on board to support her becoming a certified teacher. However, the tricky part was respecting the role of each individual. We had different responsibilities and we could not assume roles that were not ours. As a first-year university supervisor, I was overwhelmed. This intern was suffering from severe anxiety and depression. Due to legal restrictions, we were setting goals that we could address and skirting around serious issues that we could not address. Somehow she was able to finish the year with lots of help. Sadly, she failed her internship because she was unable to successfully pass the evaluation instruments.*

In this narrative, Mina immediately identifies all the things that are not "ready" in the intern's classroom. Her responses indicate her own personal practical knowledge of what was needed for back-to-school night. As a brand new CFA working with her very first intern, Mina went quickly to work but was left wondering what she and the administrator should have done. As a result of this experience, Mina questioned the actual balance between rescuing pre-service teachers and allowing them to learn from experience. Mina's narrative captures the layers of her experience. She was concerned with the university and school relationship, the policies, practices, and traditions of the school, her personal interactions with the administrator and the intern, the issues of talents, skills, and difficulties an intern brings to the classroom, the parents' desires and responsibilities for their children, and the need for children to have high-quality teachers. Mina stood in the middle as she saw the need to be a place of calm. As Mina stood in the center, her eyes were on her two main objectives, supporting this developing intern and supporting the intern's young students and their families. Other stories like this one revealed the complexity of the contexts and relationships we negotiate and the knowledge we hold.

Conclusion

In this study, we explored how our teacher identities shifted as we moved from classroom teachers to becoming CFAs and then returned to our districts. We identified the following themes related to teacher identity: a) fitting in, b) the role of experience and learning in seeing c) knowing mentoring, and d) understanding the complexity of schools, teachers, and teaching. Understanding these elements of our shifting teacher identities impacts how we will enact our future roles in our school districts. As we leave the university, we know how to look at teaching through the eyes of the individual practitioner and work to build on their strengths and allow them to set goals they feel are most valuable in their classrooms. Finally, we have seen first-hand the complexities of schools, teachers, and teaching. We have contributed to the renewal of teaching and teacher education through this experience (Goodlad, 1994; Holmes Group, 1990).

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Exploring the Role of Mentorship, Resistance, and Affirmation

A Self-Study of Developing Leaders

Lavina Sequeira, Charity Dacey, & Kevin Cataldo

Leadership | Mentorship | 5-component Leadership Model

In 2021, our professional paths crossed, reuniting us virtually as we began to share our leadership and mentorship experiences in relation to our current leadership roles. It led us to engage in self-study research to evaluate the reasons behind the lack of formal training when taking on leadership and mentorship roles. Adapting through times of uncertainty and ambiguity, we aim to spotlight how educators in leadership roles can support and be each other's "critical friend." Through a self-study approach, our research highlighted the main challenges we faced and overcame as leaders and mentors during the 2021-2022 academic year. We emphasize the need for a support system to help navigate leadership challenges as being extremely beneficial in becoming effective and ethical leaders.

Context of Study

Learning to be a leader in higher education and K-12 public education is no easy feat (Delaney et al., 2020; Mitchell, 2019; Radd et al., 2021; Wheeler, 2012). In the current educational environment, many in leadership roles feel pressured to make decisions and solve problems from budgetary constraints to retaining the most qualified educators without sufficient time or resources. Our recent experiences in higher education and K-12 education, made us realize that leaders and mentors are often not formally trained to be adaptive to navigate the challenges of the educational environment. We acknowledge the many challenges that leaders face. Discussing these challenges is outside the scope of this paper. Instead, we focus on supporting each other to become better leaders.

Lavina, a recently appointed associate dean, struggled to find her leadership 'voice' needing additional support (mentorship) to balance administrative and professorship responsibilities. Charity, an associate professor and associate dean, debated whether to make a move to a large university with more growth opportunities. As a novice urban educator and second-year doctoral student, Kevin struggled to see himself as a leader and a mentor. We shared the common belief that we could become better leaders through support, self-reflexivity, and studying our own practices. We utilized the self-study approach to examine our leadership practices and evaluated how mentoring helped us support each other as emerging leaders.

In this study, we collectively present the main leadership challenges and vulnerabilities we faced during the 2021-22 academic year. The research question that guided this study was: How can we support and influence each other as

developing leaders and mentors in our current roles? The findings revealed five emergent themes, " Unlearning and Learning," "Self-Awareness," "Power Dynamics," "Affirmation and Resistance," and "Influence of the Perceptions of Others."

Objectives

Taking on new leadership and mentoring roles has been a rewarding and challenging experience. This study explored how we might tap into our leadership capabilities to bring about empowered environments, wherein personal relationships and connections enable us to understand and improve our leadership practice. As leaders, we embraced taking the reins of "learning on the job." Through the challenges, we strived to ensure that our biases and assumptions did not affect how we interacted with our mentors, mentees, and peers- in that we were respectful, fair, and accountable.

We want to stress that the objective of this research was not the capturing of a comprehensive description of leadership, but rather the evaluation of its relational aspects, specifically how one becomes an effective and ethical mentor within situated environments. We asked, 1) How can we support and influence each other as developing leaders and mentors in our current roles? 2) How can we improve our leadership practice 3) How do we make sense of our challenges as emerging leaders?

Theoretical Framework

Leadership Model

Leadership has been defined by scholars in nuanced ways. Burns (1978) argued that transformational leadership is one in which both parties-the leader and the follower challenge each other to "higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Other researchers assert that leadership is a dynamic (Rost, 1993), a psychological process (Parry, 1997), and a social influence process (Hunt, 1991) wherein leaders and followers interact with each other to achieve a common purpose. McManus, Ward, and Perry (2018) expanded this argument to include the 5-component leadership model. Their conceptual framework recognized that leaders, followers, goals, context, cultural values, and norms make up the leadership process. The authors defined leadership as a "... process by which leaders and followers develop a relationship and work together toward a goal (or goals) within an environmental context shaped by cultural values and norms" (p. 6). They asserted that a re-conceived perspective is necessary to emphasize the contextual, situational, and process nature of leadership, maintaining that leaders provide the energy and vision to guide followers' actions. The necessity to situate leadership research within specific institutional and situational contexts has support in recent literature (Bryman et al, 1996; Biggart and Hamilton, 1987; Alvesson, 1996). Additionally, leadership is bound by circumstance; it cannot exist without exerting some measure of influence. While leaders exert influence in setting an agenda and providing a vision for the future, the successful implementation ultimately depends on the followers to validate the vision and further the goals, provided, it is mutually beneficial to both. These views reflect the intentional nature of influence. Since the influence exerted is purposeful, "Leadership then refers to people who bend the motivations and actions of others to achieving certain goals; it implies taking initiatives and risks" (Cuban, 1988, p. 193).

We utilized McManus et al. (2018) leadership framework as the basis for our study. We begin with the basic premise that all leadership is situational and contextual. Genovese (2016), researcher and author of the "Leadership Toolkit", emphasized:

> *For successful leadership, skill is important, but skill is never enough. Even the most skilled individuals face formidable roadblocks. Skill helps determine the extent to which a leader takes advantage of, or is bound by circumstances, but circumstances or the environment set the parameters of what is possible regarding leadership. (p. 22)*

We evaluated leadership through situated experiences in our respective academic departments. We argue that mentorship enhances one's leadership skills, supports the development of leadership in another, and provides the space for self-reflection and awareness.

Mentoring

Service is an important skill that helps develop leadership. This is exemplified through behaviors such as mentoring, building teams, and empowering (Kanungo & Mendonca, 1996). Formally and informally, mentoring has been recognized as a valuable tool for leadership development in academia and is key in developing current and future leaders (Crisp & Alvarado-Young, 2018; Dziczkowski, 2013). According to Crow (2012), mentoring is a collaborative professional activity based on reciprocity. It is a “reciprocal, supportive, and creative partnership of equals” (Mott, 2002). That is, both a mentor and mentee engage in the practice of exchanging knowledge and experiences for mutual benefit. Recent literature supports the positive effects experienced by both the mentor and the mentee during mentoring (Ganser, 1997; Gordon & Maxey, 2000; Huling & Resta, 2001). The practice forces mentors to be more reflective about their beliefs, increases their self-esteem, prompts collegial interactions, and builds their leadership capacity (Huling & Resta, 2001). Because of this, mentoring is linked to career advancement (Burke & McKeen, 1997; Higgins, 2001), increased self-confidence, and personal growth (Ehrich et al., 2004).

Furthermore, mentoring has implications for how one views themselves- reflectively and dialogically (Riley & Burke, 1995). Indeed, a core aspect of mentoring is the sharing of subjective experiences experiences with mentees. While mentoring provides benefits and helps against the challenges experienced by mentees, the changing educational landscape makes it relatively problematic for less experienced individuals to find mentors willing to support their professional development long-term. Informal mentoring relationships, however, may be of great value in providing psychosocial support. Using a self-study approach, we evaluated how mentoring made us develop more effective leadership skills.

Methods

Our study draws from LaBoskey’s (2004) framework of self-study methodology that characterizes the work as (1) self-initiated and focused, (2) improvement aimed, (3) collaborative/ interactive, (4) reflective data collection, (5) and exemplar-based validation. Our leadership and mentoring skills continually emerged through daily interactions with others in educational settings and dialogical exchanges with one another (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Vygotsky, 1978). These experiences served as a basis for evaluating what leadership and mentorship look like in situated contexts.

As stated prior, self-study is a situated inquiry that is both personal and interpersonal. It requires working with a ‘critical friend’ to collaborate and extend one’s understanding of their practice. We were able to do this by being each other's critical friends as: "...trusted colleagues who seek support and validation of their research" (Samaras, 2011, p. 5). According to McNiff and Whitehead (2006), Critical friend is “a term coined by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) to denote a person who will listen to a researcher’s account of practice and critique the thinking behind the account” (p. 256). We used ‘critical friendship’ to understand our leadership and mentorship experiences. As each other's critical friend, we strived to “nurture a community of intellectual and emotional caring” (Pine, 2009, p. 236). We offered feedback, mediated, provoked, and supported new understandings as we evaluated our leadership practices.

In reflecting on our actions through the 5-component leadership model, we served as one another's critical friends (Russell & Schuck, 2004; Samaras, 2011). We delved into our 1) leadership and mentorship experiences, 2) identities, and 3) situated contexts to become better leaders and mentors to bring about positive change (Vaughan & Delong, 2019). As critical friends, three aspects of the framework repeatedly emerged: 1) the improvement aim, 2) the collaborative/interactive nature of this work, and 3) the reflective data collection. At various points, self-reflection provided us with deeper insights into ourselves and an understanding of our personal strengths, vulnerabilities, and limitations and helped clarify and identify sources and means for solving existing and future professional activity problems. This resonates with one of the defining features of self-study research and practice that focus on collaboration with close trusted colleagues (Lighthall, 2004).

As critical friends, we sought to critique and challenge our interpretations of what it means to be an effective leader and mentor. Our data consisted of unstructured written reflections collected between June 2021 and April 2022. It consisted of 1) six reflective journal entries in which we documented our experiences with leadership and mentorship in our current roles and 2) six recorded and transcribed Zoom meetings. We focused on writing primarily as it is inherently

related to reflection. It provided the space to explore questions and thoughts about critical incidents that merged in our work contexts. We analyzed our reflective journals and Zoom transcriptions individually and collectively in search of themes. We brought these reflections to our Zoom meetings to reexamine events through new lenses acquired from sharing different perspectives. We coded our data thematically, revealing five emerging themes: 1) Unlearning and Learning, 2) Self-Awareness, 3) Power Dynamics, 4) Affirmation and Resistance, and 5) Influence of the Perceptions of Others.

Findings

In this study, the main concern that emerged was the situational constraints experienced in collaborative interactions with other leaders. These interactions negatively impacted our abilities and potential for developing leadership skills. It led us to turn inward to one another as critical friends. Together we could unpack and problematize our respective challenges, find support, and talk through approaches and solutions. We began to take on more responsibilities. Ultimately, we became more self-assured and comfortable in our roles.

Five themes emerged from this self-study, all of which suggested that as leaders, we constantly negotiated aspects of our identity during the mentorship process. Our identities were formed and informed through significant interactions with our mentors, other leaders, and each other. These identities were fluid, situated contextually and spatially, as a response to circumstances.

Theme 1: Unlearning and Learning

A major finding of this study was the idea of being open to unlearning mainstream perceptions of leadership. Public perception hinges on leaders understanding their follower's needs and working toward a common goal. However, this is not always the case. Consider Lavina's question:

> *I believe that mentorship looks different in relationships. It is different in a teacher-student relationship as opposed to a peer-peer relationship. I see myself being very comfortable in a teacher-student mentorship model, I cannot say the same about peer mentoring or mentoring of junior faculty. It will take some getting used to. I may become a better leader by learning through my experiences and allowing myself the space to negotiate failure (Lavina, Journal 1).*

The assertion highlights that those in leadership roles must be reflective and learn through their successes and failures. As evidenced from the above quote, mentoring from Lavina's perspective is relational in nature and changes significantly based on the person being mentored. One aspect of this reflection would be to question the basic framework and assumptions of leadership as Charity did:

> *I'm at a place where I must question my boundaries and limits. What is the point at which I'm not willing to compromise my values? There are certain decisions that ethically I cannot stand behind (Charity, Recording 3).*

Charity understands that "questioning" is key to evaluating her limitations to compromise, being ethical and self-aware is more valuable than societal notions of leadership.

Theme 2: Self-Awareness

Another important finding drew attention to the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors provide mentees with various ways of obtaining leadership skills with suggestions and tools for becoming better leaders. Sometimes, however, the relationship between the mentor-mentee may lack adequate direction. Here Kevin stressed, "As a novice teacher and first-year doctoral student, I find myself in constant need of "someone" to remind me to be kind to myself (Kevin, Journal 1). In expecting direction, Kevin is aware of the flaws in the mentor/mentee relationship. He is "kind" to himself, acknowledging that developing and "becoming" a leader takes time and introspection.

Similarly, Lavina maintained that self-awareness is extremely important to develop good leadership skills and the ability to mentor. She clarified:

> *I think it is very important for a leader to mentor and be mentored to be self-aware. While this is a more inwardly focused skill, self-awareness is paramount for leadership. The better I understand myself, the more effective I can become. How can I help others if I cannot find my own voice?" (Lavina, Journal 3).*

The above quotes suggest that the desire to mentor is emergent and fluid, a product of a long-pursued positional strategy. In being self-aware, mentors can experience a whole range of personality traits that highlight their identity and finesse their leadership skills.

Theme 3: Power Dynamics

Another important finding was the power dynamics, the existence of hierarchical structures within which we were situated. Consider Charity's appreciation for humility in leaders; she often dismissed others' compliments of her work and felt it is important to avoid self-promotion. Yet this began to change. She explained:

> *I have learned how important it is to pay attention to politics: abstaining from 'playing the game' can equate with surrendering one's truth and power. It can lead to others dictating a false narrative, purposefully manipulating events, or misrepresenting people. Instead, speaking up, ensuring accuracy, and standing in support of others or oneself are important as a leader and necessary at times (Charity, Recording 1).*

Charity's quote is illuminating and shines a spotlight on politics in academia. While on the one hand, it seems like a necessity to "show" one's capabilities, on the other hand, taking up leadership roles may create a binary to which an ethical leader may be opposed. Faced with uncomfortable or difficult choices, some leaders are hesitant to make binary choices that do not honor the complexity of contexts in which they emerge. As a critical friend, Lavina helped Charity look more deeply at why others' compliments made her uncomfortable. Charity began to see that navigating "politics" includes accepting recognition for her efforts.

At a leadership conference with other colleagues, Lavina questioned the influence of power dynamics, her subconscious positioning evidenced by her choice of seating. When a senior colleague asked what she was doing in the corner, Lavina responded:

> *I like to take the back seat and let others be front and center. She looked at me and said, "start thinking otherwise". That shook me to the core. I was having a true paradigm shift. At that moment I realized that I had something to offer something of value, I cannot name it… but I sensed it. At that moment I felt empowered and strong and capable. It is amazing how three little words made such a difference (Lavina, Journal 2).*

Authority and power dynamics are evident in institutions of higher education as well as K-12 schools. It becomes necessary sometimes to confront hierarchical structures. For instance, Kevin approached his principal to express a desire to ensure that all literacy teachers at his school felt comfortable and empowered to implement a culturally responsive curriculum. He reflected on this incident:

> *As a school, we do not do a good job in talking about race nor unpacking our culturally responsive curriculum. I provided him with a few examples. He looked a bit surprised. Based on my interpretation of his facial expression, I could imagine him thinking the following: 'Why is a novice teacher telling me this? How did I not know about this?' (Kevin, Journal 4).*

Kevin caught his principal off guard. Taking a stance as a novice teacher was a risk, but in Kevin's case, it paid off. The principal asked him to present at a faculty meeting about a culturally responsive literacy framework and how it can be used as a way to unpack the curriculum with students.

Theme 4: Affirmation and Resistance

Mentoring practices are often interwoven into academia and can influence one's identity. In some situations, mentors can facilitate and inspire growth, development, and change. Kevin emphasized, "I am so glad that I am being mentored

by you both. Your experiences help me understand and make sense of this situation. I know I will be a better leader because of this experience" (Kevin, Meeting 4). Kevin draws a direct connection between mentorship and leadership. Being mentored validated his identity as a leader. Kevin alluding to a previous circumstance:

> *I stepped outside of my comfort zone and fought (resisted) my fear of not being heard or taken seriously by my school principal. I did not only advocate for myself but for colleagues who currently find themselves feeling silenced and voiceless (Kevin, Journal 4).*

Kevin overcame his fear and gave voice to those who felt silenced in a similar situation at his school. For Lavina, leadership is also a mindset. It took her a long time to think of herself as a leader. She asserted:

> *I thought of myself as a silent invisible person stealthily working in the background. Great things are rarely accomplished by a single person. Another part of sharing the power is that platform, to let other people be heard. Encourage those who wouldn't usually speak up to share. I know there have been many times when I haven't been confident enough to share, without encouragement. And I didn't always get that encouragement, now I try to give to myself and others (Lavina, Journal 5).*

The quote above sheds light on the power and influence that leaders can yield to ensure multiple perspectives are heard, especially those who are silenced, marginalized, or overlooked. Affirming those who are marginalized is an important aspect of mentoring. It validates one's leadership identity.

Theme 5: Influence of the perceptions of others

As a leader/mentor, one must communicate one's capabilities, intentions, and goals accurately in any given context. Lack of clarity can cause misunderstandings and conflicts due to others' perceptions and negative emotions about one's abilities. Lavina described this conflict:

> *I notice that when I invest myself in a task, that task is now "me." The failure or success of the task reflects on me and my capabilities. When the task fails, I look at it in two ways. One, I am a terrible leader/mentor, and two, what will others think? Maybe I am not good enough for this role. What will my mentor say? Why do others' perceptions matter? And why should it make so much of a difference? (Lavina, Journal 1).*

While perceptions of oneself serve as a mirror that reflects beliefs, actions, and context, they can also signal a disconnect. In Lavina's case, not being able to complete a task resulted in negative perceptions of self that needed some affirmation or validation from the mentor.

However, in a role reversal, when the leader is a follower in a situated context, they too can become conflicted about others' perceptions. Charity's quote spotlights this conflict:

> *Outside I tried so hard to keep it together. Yet I could feel my colleague's eye on me and I knew she sensed my shock and disappointment at the events that were unfolding in front of us. Inside, as the shock wore off, I began to feel the full weight of what was happening. We were being pitted against one another. Our eyes locked. I knew that rather than react, we needed to remain focused. My colleague didn't skip a beat: she winked at me and followed my lead. Later we both congratulated each other for refusing to engage in such attempts to divide us as we worked to ensure the quality of our accreditation report remained our top priority (Charity, Journal 1).*

Charity underwent a "shock" witnessing power being used to divide people; yet trust, respect, and communication between colleagues ultimately created the context in which we were able to overlook these challenges; acknowledging them together was enough. In turn, it reaffirmed our shared commitment to work collaboratively despite such counter-productive encounters.

Discussion

McManus et al., (2018) leadership model emphasized the impact of relationships between the leader/follower working towards a common goal in a situated context. To combat the host of leadership challenges, peer mentoring emerged as

a viable strategy. We began with the premise that mentoring helps develop better leadership skills- a relationship based on honesty, trust, and emotional support, providing a space for affirmation, understanding, and inquiry.

Our self-study found mentoring relationships to be complex and nuanced as they influenced both the mentor/mentee. Through mentoring each other we learned how to identify/unpack hidden expectations explicitly. We problematized juggling competing demands recognizing the lack of formalized guidance. We (Lavina and Charity) were both in similar career stages. Charity had been an associate dean for four years. In her role, she developed skills and expertise and shared these experiences with her colleagues, and Lavina when needed. We served as each other's critical friend - a purposeful activity that provided both of us the space for self-directed collaborative learning to gain new perspectives and insights and to make sense of the context in which we work. Two decades younger, Kevin, a doctoral student, and novice teacher found meaningful engagement with Lavina and Charity as he navigated his identity as a teacher, learner, and emerging leader. Fostering mentoring relationships was successful despite our varying disciplines, ages, and backgrounds. The interchangeability and fluidity of mentoring relationships validated our identities as emerging leaders. The influence we had on one another emerged in our interactions with each other. We realized the "influence" and continued to puzzle about our ethical responsibilities in these roles. We were cognizant of the hierarchical nature of the mentor-mentee relationship in traditional academia and chose to serve as critical friends instead, believing "...you need another person to continually change your focus, pushing you to look through multiple lenses to find that just right fit for you..." (Costa & Kallick, 1993, p. 49), thus providing an appropriate balance between support and challenge.

In acquiring leadership skills emphasis must be placed on time to nurture oneself through critical friendships. This includes evaluating one's capacity and skills and how best to use them in collaborative/interpersonal relationships, being self-aware, navigating autonomy over priorities and time, and making sense of others' perceptions. Feelings of insecurity or regret are opportunities for introspection. Continually evaluating leadership development through supportive mentoring practices can benefit and validate one's identity.

Conclusion

The experiences of critical friendships, represented by mentoring, became an integral part of our identity as emerging leaders and mentors. This self-study helped us make sense of our challenges and experiences as emerging leaders and mentors. It provided the space to reflect on our experiences through journaling and dialogue as we examined our contexts, their meanings, and the "living contradictions" that emerged between our values and work (Whitehead, 2000). Our leadership skills were further refined and exposed through situated interactions, circumstances, and temporal spaces we occupied. We were aware of the role that influence played in our relationships and the ethical implications it had on our interactions with each other. Working collectively as critical friends we validated and affirmed each other's identity and challenged each other's thinking, responses, and development as emergent leaders.

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Enacting Theory-Practice Pedagogies

Thresholds of Transition From People and Partners to Program and Partnerships

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We, as teacher educators, here focus on threshold opportunities that exist within the matrix of relationships, practices, and theories–what we are calling the hybrid space of school and university communities. Our self-study research investigates thresholds of transition from people and partners to program and partnerships as we enact theory-practice pedagogies. Drawing on our professional learning over the past decade, we began implementing a Professional Development School PDS model in 2020. The context of the model is an integrated, school-based, professionally-oriented practicum in the final semester of a four-year teacher education program. We identified programmatic theory-practice pedagogies of in-school seminars, an extended and integrated clinical practicum, and faculty supervision of practicum as threshold opportunities.

Context

Integrating Theory and Practice

For the past decade, we have been engaged in longitudinal self-study research related to theory-practice pedagogies in teacher education. Teacher education programs tend to be ineffective (Segall, 2002). A recent survey of the design of Canadian teacher education programs (Russell & Dillon, 2015, p. 215) revealed that the design of most programs could be described as "theory-into-practice." Unfortunately, a great deal of research reveals the general ineffectiveness of such an approach, since candidates rarely use that procedural knowledge in the development of their practice (Dillon & O'Connor, 2010; Rosean & Florio-Ruane, 2008). The evidence is longstanding (Cole, 1997; Tigchelaar & Korthagen, 2004; Zeichner & Tabatchnick, 1981) and widespread (Clift & Brady, 2005; Perry & Power, 2004; Wideen et al., 1998).

The theory-practice dilemma is a perennial problem of teacher education (Flores et al., 2014; Korthagen, 2010; Nuthall, 2004; Van Nuland, 2011). Darling-Hammond (2014) identifies the ability of teachers to integrate theory and practice as necessary for teachers to become experts in meeting the various learning needs of children. She suggests that certain programmatic structures linking theory and practice offer the best preparation for teacher candidates. In a study of seven teacher education programs that have extraordinarily well-prepared candidates (Darling-Hammond, 2006), she presents common features that focus on robust theory-practice links that include extended clinical experiences that support ideas presented in closely interwoven coursework, the application of learning to real problems of practice, and

strong school-university relationships. She claims that programmatic approaches producing novice teachers whose practice is similar to many successful veteran teachers have three critically important pedagogical foundations: 1) tight coherence and integration among courses and between courses and clinical work; 2) explicit links between theory and practice; and 3) new relationships with schools (Darling-Hammond, 2014). She calls for research that investigates how to accomplish the goal of improving teacher education through the implementation of those three features. This self-study investigates ways to accomplish the goal of improving teacher education by implementing the three features through theory-practice pedagogies.

The theory-practice gap contributes, in part, to the high levels of teacher attrition in beginning and early careers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Clandinin et al., 2015; Craig, 2017; Kosnik et al., 2009; Schaefer et al., 2012). The gap between theory and practice and high levels of teacher attrition in Canada have resulted in calls for strengthening clinical practice in teacher education and for designing teacher education programs that provide a high degree of congruence between the content of coursework and the models provided by mentor teachers in their practice (Beck & Kosnik, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2006). We are interested in enhancing such theory-practice congruence through the creation and implementation of a PDS model. We believe that undergraduate teacher education programs can reduce teacher attrition as teacher candidates make a transition to beginning teachers and early career teachers.

Emerging research suggests that Professional Development Schools might enhance school practice as well as individual practice of new teacher candidates as teaching and learning for all members of the school and university communities are transformed (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2018; Bullough & Rosenberg, 2018; Polly, 2016; Zeichner, 2018). However, there is little research that investigates the design of a clinical curriculum and the impact of such a curriculum on teacher candidate learning, most specifically in a Canadian context (Buzza et al., 2010). Indeed, Darling-Hammond (2014) refers to strengthening clinical preparation as the Holy Grail of teacher education. Our research addresses this gap.

Building Relationships Through Professional Development Schools

Almost 30 years ago, many educators advocated for school-university partnerships called “Professional Development Schools” as a strong vehicle for educational change and as a new model for teacher education and professional development for all educators (Goodlad, 1988; Holmes, 1986; Levine, 1992). As unique and strategic school-university collaborations, PDSs were designed to accomplish a four-fold agenda: preparing future educators, providing current educators with ongoing professional development, encouraging joint school-university faculty investigation of education-related issues, and promoting the learning of K-12 students.

Darling-Hammond (1994) described PDSs as spaces where prospective teacher and mentor teacher learning becomes: 1) experimental, 2) grounded in teacher questions, 3) collaborative, 4) connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students, and 5) sustained, intensive, and connected to other aspects of school change. In the ensuing two decades the PDS movement has flourished, predominantly in the United States, with more than 1000 school-university partnerships referred to as PDS sites (Badiali & Lynch, 2018). However, there has been a significant gap in research findings that speak to the impact of the PDS model on teachers and teacher candidates and there exists only one teacher education PDS program in Canada (Buzza et al., 2010). We are studying the impact of implementing a professional development school model in Alberta.

Research on Professional Development Schools suggests that teacher candidates who have experienced PDS-based approaches utilize more varied pedagogical methods and practices; are more reflective; feel more confident in their knowledge and skill; and have lower attrition rates during the first few years of teaching (Abdal-Haqq, 1998). However, there is also widespread recognition of the challenges and difficulties in establishing and maintaining school-university partnerships, starting with the Holmes Group (1986, 1990). Verbeke and Richards (2001) list a daunting array of issues that face partnerships—shared goals, institutional differences, assessment and accountability, individual differences, communication, time, resources, roles, and responsibilities, and evaluation. Breault (2013) makes four recommendations for large-scale implementation of school-university partnerships based on extensive research on the challenges experienced by teacher educators: PDS partnerships should sustain strong trajectories of research regarding their work; stakeholders in PDS partnerships need to ensure that faculty and staff have adequate support to

thrive; PDS partnerships need to be based upon enabling bureaucratic structures; and PDS partners need to create opportunities to engage with each other in positive, normative spaces. It is these challenges that our research seeks to investigate.

Strengthening PDS partnerships has the potential to impact pre-service education. Moreover, such relationships can also influence in-service teachers as articulated by Sarason (1971, 1990). Decades ago, he wrote about the characteristics of beginning teachers and their inculturation in the educational matrix that includes a myriad of defining characteristics of praxis. Our research seeks to investigate the relationships, practices, and theories that exist within the matrix, or what we are calling the hybrid space of school and university communities.

Figure 1

Our Theoretical Model of Hybrid Space

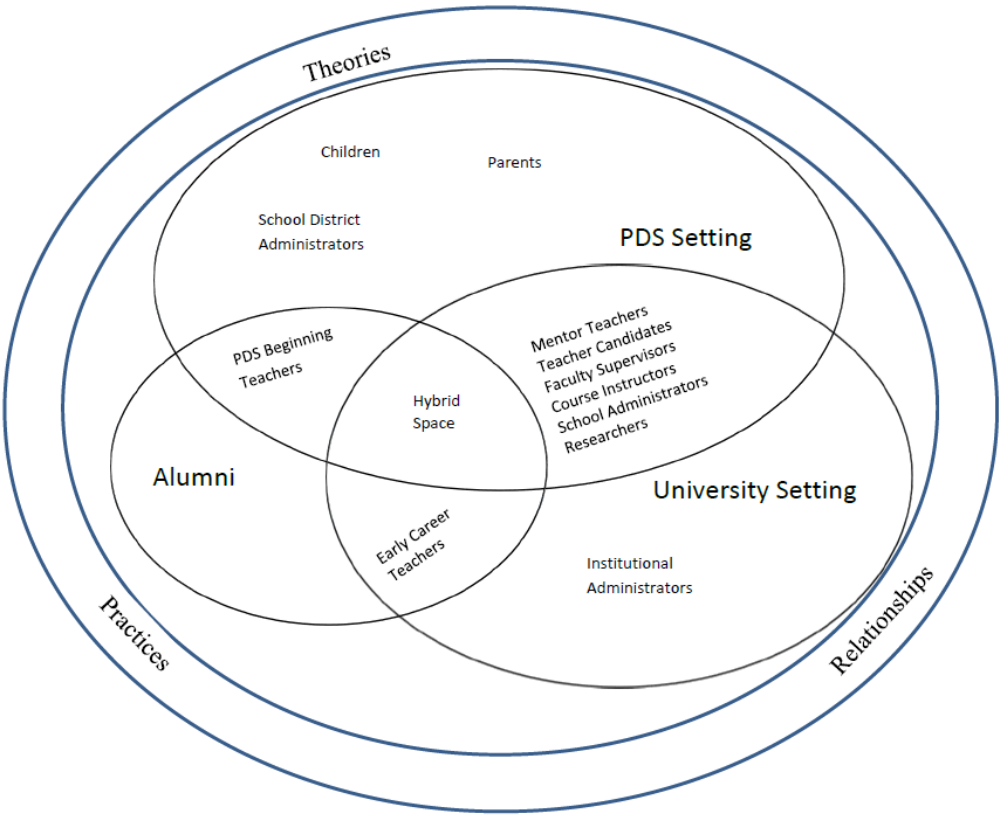

Figure 1. Our Theoretical Model of Hybrid Space

Theoretical Approach

Zeichner (2010) suggests that hybrid spaces help link academic and practitioner knowledge. He presents examples of different types of hybrid spaces that result in "a shift where academic knowledge is seen as *the* authoritative source of knowledge about teaching to one where different aspects of expertise that exist in schools and communities are brought into teacher education and coexist on a more equal plane with academic knowledge" (p. 95). He calls for a new epistemology for teacher education that embraces non-hierarchical, democratic, and inclusive ways of knowing and presents the concept of hybridity and third space as a way of addressing the perennial problem of the disconnection between campus courses and field experiences. Our methodology supports the study of a hybrid space within a PDS model.

Since 2012, we, as two previous K-12 teachers and now university-based tenured teacher educators, have focused on improving our own teacher education practices by implementing in-school seminars and courses (O'Connor et al., 2016, 2018; Sterenberg et al., 2015a) and individual school partnerships (O'Connor, 2020; Sterenberg et al., 2015b, 2017) as

part of our practicum supervision approach and are interested in studying the transition from our individual professional learning to the programmatic implementation of theory-practice pedagogies. We are influenced by Sarason (1971) as we consider our own experiences as teacher educators:

> *The first two years of teaching are a baptism of fire in which many things can be consumed, including some of the ingredients that make for a good and even an outstanding teacher. The important point is that what happens in these years, for good or for bad, cannot be understood by narrowly focusing on the teacher, but by seeing the teacher as part of a matrix of existing relationships, practices and ideas. (p. 171)*

In response to the call to consider how our own professional knowledge can contribute to different communities external to the self-study (Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, 2020), we are interested in threshold opportunities that exist within the matrix of relationships, practices, and theories, or what we are calling the hybrid space of school and university communities.

Methodology

Our self-study research investigates thresholds of transition from people and partners to program and partnerships as we enact theory-practice pedagogies. Drawing on our professional learning throughout the past decade, we implemented a Professional Development School model in 2020. The context of the model is in an integrated, school-based, professionally oriented final semester within a four-year teacher education program. The current semester structure for all fourth-year teacher candidates in our program includes a capstone research project, an inclusive education course, and a 14-week integrated practicum. We designed a PDS model for a subset of our teacher candidates (30 of approximately 100) to address our research question: "Through self-stud, what are the threshold opportunities that exist within the matrix of relationships, practices, and theories—the hybrid space of school and university communities?"

We used self-study methods (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Hamilton, 1998; Kitchen & Russell, 2012; Kosnick et al., 2006; Loughran, 2004; Loughran & Russell, 2002; Tidwell et al., 2009) to examine our professional practice setting and investigate the improvement of our practice while enacting programmatic theory-practice pedagogies. Drawing on principles of self-study design (Dinkelman, 2003), our research was self-initiated, focused on inquiry into our practice, collaborative, aimed at improvement of our practice, and used multiple and primarily qualitative means of inquiry. LaBoskey (2004) and Fletcher, Ní Chróinín, and O'Sullivan (2016) argue that multiple perspectives from colleagues, students, or texts provide more comprehensive answers to S-STEP research questions related to the enactment of pedagogical practices.

We are three teacher educators, two (O'Connor and Sterenberg) who are the primary researchers involved directly in the facilitation of this project. Our critical friend (Russell) is a collaborator in the research and has provided mentorship to both O'Connor and Sterenberg since the implementation of the teacher education program (2012). We are currently in the third year of a five-year federally funded study in which this research is grounded. University and school community members from three PDS sites were invited to participate. One site is a large public school division consisting of 24 teacher candidates, 24 mentor teachers, 6 school administrators, 2 district administrators, 2 course instructors, and 2 faculty supervisors. The second site is a publicly funded Charter school that consists of 6 teacher candidates, 6 mentor teachers, 1 school administrator, 1 district administrator, 2 course instructors, and 1 faculty supervisor. The third site is a private inclusive education/special needs school that consists of 6 teacher candidates, 6 mentor teachers, 2 school administrators, 1 course instructor, and 1 faculty supervisor. We engaged in a pilot study with school district administrators from the three school districts that investigated the creation of a PDS model in the winter semester of 2020. Participants in the pilot study included teacher candidates and beginning career teachers. We had an informal, long-term commitment from the school districts and school administrators to engage in this research. One outcome of the pilot study was to develop a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines the implementation activities of the PDS model within the three school districts over the next three years.

Evidence of consenting teacher candidates' experiences was gathered from class assignments that include reflective journal entries, responses to discussion prompts, midterm and final practicum evaluations, a portfolio, and individual interviews after the practicum. These assignments ask teacher candidates to consider their pedagogy as they link theory and practice through examples from their practicum placements; interviews focus on teacher candidates' experiences of practices, theories, and relationships. Data are also gathered through transcripts of partnership meetings with school and division administrators, focus group meetings with mentor teachers, and focus group meetings with faculty supervisors. The experiences of the research team are documented through research notes and transcripts of research meetings.

Data sources for this report include transcripts of 13 individual interviews with teacher candidates, transcripts of two focus groups with 13 mentor teachers, transcripts of two researcher interviews, transcripts of one focus group with five school administrators, meeting notes of our bi-monthly collaborative research conversations, emails exchanged during this time, and individual reflections about our experiences. Multiple data sources provided trustworthiness. Data were first coded individually across sites according to emerging themes related to our research question (Strauss, 1987). O'Connor and Sterenberg then reviewed the analysis, collaboratively adjusted the codes, and wrote findings together.

Results

Theory-Practice Pedagogies

First, a consistent theme from teacher candidates and mentor teachers was the need for flexibility in course assignments and course outlines to address realistic experiences in integrating theory and practice. In reference to the first assignment in one of the in-school courses, one teacher candidate commented, "I didn't take a risk writing that assignment because I wanted the grade. It wasn't something I would have taught, and I didn't even end up using the lesson." As we adjusted the assignments, teacher candidates and mentor teachers seemed to appreciate coursework that allowed the candidates to take their assignments into the classrooms. Many teacher candidates seemed to enjoy having the courses embedded in their practice, allowing them to make immediate connections between theoretical aspects and daily practice.

> *As teacher educators committed to 'theory & practice' opportunities, it can be difficult to act 'outside the box' when creating course outlines, assignments, and semester schedules. Sometimes you need to pivot and respond to emerging opportunities. This can sometimes be seen as 'being unorganized' or 'unprofessional' yet I feel it is important in enacting our ideals supporting ways for more theory and practice and we are starting to see the benefits as it is being acknowledged by our students and partners as a valuable pedagogical process. (O'Connor interview, 2020)*

A second theme that emerged was the importance of presenting course readings that responded to emerging practicum experiences and fostered the ability to make immediate links between theoretical conversations and classroom experiences. This was particularly evident in references to the in-school seminars. Teacher candidates commented on the benefit of bouncing ideas off each other and providing a sense of 'a community of practice' (Wenger, 1998). One stated that she would have felt very isolated without this opportunity. Integral to this benefit was the relevance of the readings. A teacher candidate described her reflection on one of the discussions as "causing a shift in philosophy." Another described how the seminar topic and discussion made her realize she was not teaching in the way she wanted to and gave her the confidence to approach her mentor teacher to suggest more engaging ways of teaching. In conversation with their critical friend, Sterenberg reflected on why this seminar design is a foundational part of the program:

> *It taught me that our students really had the depths of knowledge and through conversations could grow tremendously when they were with one another. I was actually able to know what they were experiencing and add to that from a theoretical point of view, as well as practical point of view, to help them see that what they were learning on campus was actually translating and living in the experiences that they were having. (Sterenberg interview, 2021)*

Partnerships and Relationships

A third theme that emerged was the value of the partnership through shared responsibility for learning among course instructors, mentor teachers, and teacher candidates. One administrator stated:

> *I think one thing about the program that I personally have respected and felt was wonderful was your openness to actually listen to things that may in fact be a challenge, that maybe the student teachers may have spoken about to their mentor teacher or to you, or to their other instructors and be open to say, 'Okay, what can work? How can we tweak it?' So right in the middle of the process you are open to change it to the betterment of everybody, so I think that is great. (School Administrator 3 focus group, 2021)*

In our research conversations and through the data analysis process, it became clear that a strength of our program is the co-design implementation:

> *[The program] is based on our partner's input and learning. I have heard comments made by people at the university and outside of, "You are always changing so much, it makes you weak when you change." I disagree 100%. I think that our strength is that we are responsive, we are open... I am from the perspective that we are always learning, we are open to what we don't know, and we are open to learning from our experiences; even if we are successful, there is always room to grow. This project is intended to allow our partners to give us input on how to be better. (O'Connor interview, 2020)*

For Sterenberg, the relationship between the school and university presented challenges as roles and knowledge were negotiated:

> *The professional school setting] has been part of who I am and what I have done, and that is why this research is really close to my heart, and it is really personal and professional for me... So it is not just practice, it is not just theory, but it is somewhere in-between that you are creating new knowledge based on all the perspectives that you have. (Sterenberg interview, 2020)*

Both O'Connor and Sterenberg ran into multiple administrative barriers (e.g., scheduling, course design, clarifying administration roles and responsibilities, university faculty/administrator buy-in) that have required considerable (re)negotiation and flexibility. This has been a difficult process that has tested their commitment to the PDS model and caused tensions within their relationships with other faculty and university administrators.

Professional Practice

Because of the shared responsibility, mentor teachers became very interested in the theory being presented to teacher candidates and requested in-service opportunities to engage in professional learning with the course instructors. The importance of relationships between all members of the PDS setting was reiterated throughout the research meetings and interviews with the authors. It is our hope that this shared understanding will continue to inform our collective professional practices:

> *We have tried to do this in small ways when we do our co-assessments in years three and four, when we work in seminars, but the PDS model, the thing that we are looking at right now and that we were trying to attempt before COVID-19 started, was to look at how we can bring everyone together and work to the common good for the children that are in our communities for their learning, rather than taking different parts. I think all of us have strengths in the work that we do, but I am really interested in how that comes together. (Sterenberg interview, 2021)*

These shared collective professional practices have now resulted in significant interest from other school partners and Mount Royal University's Department of Education is now looking at how to respond to these increasing numbers of partners and associated demands.

Through analyzing the data from the interviews with teacher candidates and the focus groups with mentor teachers and school administrators, both O'Connor and Sterenberg realized that this initial practice had been compromised in recent

years:

> *When we have had [contract instructors] running the first-year courses, we have noticed that some of our intentions around theory and practice are lost because they just didn't understand why we are doing certain things, like in-school seminars, the importance of the cyclical approach with the seminars and the [online] postings and the responses, and the journaling, these are all very intentional. If the [contract instructor] doesn't understand that, then we don't see the impact on those students. (O'Connor interview, 2021)*

Another shift in established programmatic practices occurred through the scheduling of school sites for seminars and courses. In previous years, the weekly seminar/course combined teacher candidates from three school cohorts and rotated through the three schools. O'Connor realized the new approach disrupted the initial intentions to blend theory and practice:

> *This year, for different reasons, I was in one room, a very disconnected room from the school, for the whole semester and I was disappointed with that. I noticed the lack of connection I had with the school and the other schools, and the other mentor teachers and the principals because we didn't set up or schedule it in a way where I was able to check in with the admin of one school one week, and another school the next week. The same applies to the students, they all came to this one school. (O'Connor interview, 2021)*

Mentor teachers commented on their lack of participation in the seminars and school administrators challenged the current approach. By describing the intent of the seminars to their research assistant, O'Connor and Sterenberg were prompted to return to the programmatic vision and re-evaluate what were assumed to be programmatic practices. The importance of mentoring new colleagues emerged. In their respective roles as Department 'Chair' and 'Practicum Director', O'Connor and Sterenberg organized a series of information/consultation/planning sessions and workshops to help develop a shared understanding within the Department. The intention was to have other faculty/staff find their voices within the PDS model and ultimately bring new innovations and opportunities to the process.

Scholarly Significance

Hamilton et al. (2020) suggest that threshold opportunities can enrich personal understanding of practice by raising new possibilities, perspectives, and discourses. We identified programmatic theory-practice pedagogies of in-school seminars, an extended and integrated clinical practicum in the final semester of the program, and faculty supervision of practicum as threshold opportunities. Our most recent data reveal that we experienced significant institutional challenges with creating formal school partnerships, addressing concerns around academic freedom and faculty supervision, and responding to school agendas involving secondments and struggling students. Mentoring new faculty in order to facilitate a shared understanding of the programmatic implications of our longitudinal self-study research also emerged as important in raising new possibilities for teacher education. This led to significant gains in Department support for the PDS model, with many faculty (new and long-standing) now referring to the model as 'ours.'

The impact of our theory-practice pedagogies on teacher candidates was profound. Research assistants became critical friends and partners, university and school members were able to model professional learning, and teacher candidates participated in the mentoring of new faculty through the in-school seminars. A new area of study focuses on the programmatic impact of theory-practice pedagogies when shifts in work patterns and leadership occur through sabbatical leaves and retirements. Sterenberg has now retired and O'Connor is nearing the end of his appointment as Chair, and therefore a concerted effort has been made to dispel a previous Department perception that the PDS model was 'Sterenberg and O'Connor' driven. Faculty and staff are now promoting the PDS approach as a defining characteristic of the program, 'renowned' both nationally and internationally. This is a positive outcome that must be continually monitored and nurtured, as partners and faculty change and evolve.

As teacher educators, this self-study helped us become more attuned to the importance of relationships between schools and universities as we confronted the complexities of theory-and-practice integration. Working collaboratively

with our students and school partners (mentor teachers and school administrators), having their continual feedback and voice in the implementation of theory-practice pedagogies, was instrumental in recognizing the potential threshold opportunities available to us, as teacher educators. The results will enhance the learning experiences of our teacher candidates and, through self-study, a better understanding of our own practice as we design and implement more integrative practicum experiences in the context of school-university partnerships. This research links our developing professional knowledge to ways teacher educators can support the formation of robust partnerships within teacher education.

In the next year of teaching, through self-study methods, we intend to begin the semester in celebration, learning closely with our three PDS partners and preparing for the increasing demand for new school partnerships, as we respond to our shared understanding of the thresholds of transition from people and partners to program and partnerships. We wonder how we can be nourished by the hybrid space and how we can nourish it. We anticipate that we will engage in stories that exist within the matrix of relationships, practices, and theories and that our design of theory-practice pedagogies will invite participants to dwell in that matrix and to experience all dimensions of the hybrid space, as we look to shifts in identity needed to authentically experience those threshold opportunities.

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"It helps us remember our why"

Instructional Coach Learning in a Self-Study Community of Practice

Brandon M. Butler, Rose Caraballo, Danielle Christian, Kerstin Devlin, Angela Fair, & Simone Stallings

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Teacher leadership is increasingly present in schools. However, there are concerns that teacher often do not receive training or support as they transition into teacher leadership. To counter this conception, the authors – consisting of a teacher educator and five new teacher leaders – created and participated in a self-study community of practice. The five teacher leaders were transitioning into formal roles as instructional coaches and desired a supportive learning space in which we could develop as teacher leaders. Using self-study research methods, we investigated our enactment of the learning community as a leadership development program. In researching the learning community, we identified internal and external factors that influenced our developmental readiness. We also recognized developmental processes enacted in the learning community that facilitated our professional development as instructional coaches. And, we recognized the impact of the community on constructing new meanings of instructional coaching and taking action in our school settings. We conclude by highlighting the necessity of supportive developmental programs like our community of practice if novice teacher leaders are to effectively enact their roles and responsibilities, and point to the need for participatory research conducted by teacher leaders to generate new insights into teacher leadership and its associated roles.

Introduction

The transition from teacher-to-teacher leader can be viewed in much the same way as the transition from teacher-to-teacher education, in that it is often an individualized, accidental enterprise. Although teacher leadership is increasingly accepted in the United States, not all states have adopted professional standards or offered training programs for teacher leadership. In our state, Virginia, teacher leadership is under-supported, with attention paid to disciplinary forms of leadership and coaching (i.e., mathematics coaching, literacy coaching). For many teacher leaders in Virginia, "learning to lead occurs on the job through experience" (Carver, 2016, p. 159). This is particularly concerning given that many teachers are placed in teacher leadership roles without support or clear understanding of their responsibilities (Gerstenschlager & Barlow, 2019; Margolis & Huggins, 2012). In this self-study, we sought to counter these long-standing conceptions of how teachers transition into teacher leadership in our educational contexts by enacting and participating in a self-study community of practice (SSCoP). Brandon is a university professor who has provided formal learning experiences for emerging teacher educators as they develop their professional identities and practices. As he studied teacher educator professional learning, Brandon became invested in supporting teachers in their transition into teacher leadership through professional development and formal programs of study. We, the remaining authors –

Angela, Danielle, Kerstin, Rose, and Simone – were participants in a mentor training program co-facilitated by Brandon in 2020 and 2021. In July 2021, we were transitioning into formal teacher leadership as instructional coaches, which we saw as crossing a "threshold" that "represents both enduring and new challenges" (Berry, 2020, p. 4).

We felt that collaboratively inquiring into a specific practice of teacher leadership, and instructional coaching, as we transitioned into new roles would help us successfully develop as teacher leaders. Brandon recommended we participate in a developmental inquiry space framed as a self-study community of practice (Kitchen, 2022; Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009), so we could simultaneously support one another as we developed as instructional coaches while sharing our learning outcomes with the self-study community (Berry, 2020). In this piece, we investigate our collective experiences as members in the SSCoP, with specific attention paid to how we navigated the construction and enactment of the learning community. The research question framing this study is: How do educators develop as instructional coaches in a self-study community of practice?

Literature Review

As a concept, teacher leadership has existed in some form since the 1980s (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). In that time, definitions and the associated actions of teacher leadership have shifted. For instance, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) defined teacher leaders as those who "lead within and beyond the classroom; identify with and contribute to a community of teacher leaders and leaders; influence others toward improved educational practice; and accept responsibility for achieving the outcomes of their leadership" (p. 6). More recently, Wenner and Campbell (2017) defined teacher leaders as "teachers who maintain K-12 classroom-based teaching responsibilities, while also taking on leadership responsibilities outside the classroom" (p. 140). Although there exists no agreed-upon definition of teacher leadership, there is general agreement on the types of roles and responsibilities often associated with teacher leadership (Bond, 2015; Harrison & Killion, 2007; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

One role often associated with teacher leadership is instructional coaching. Teachers who serve as instructional coaches provide training that helps teachers "create a plan for realizing their professional goals" (Knight, 2007, p. 13). Chval et al. (2010) note that "Coaches take on many different roles and responsibilities, such as planning or providing interventions, working with teachers individually or in groups to provide PD, organizing resources and materials, demonstrating instruction inside and outside the classroom, conducting observations, and working with data" (p. 194). Instructional coaches may work explicitly with a specific discipline (i.e., mathematics coach, literacy coach), an instructional orientation (i.e., instructional technology coach), or school demographic (Title 1 coach). Instructional coaching may also be a stance one holds toward teacher support (Hunzicker, 2017), such as viewing the mentoring of novice teachers and teacher candidates through a coaching lens.

Although instructional coaching, and teacher leadership more broadly, are increasingly present in schools, there is limited research on the learning experiences that help teachers develop their professional identities and practices associated with teacher leadership (Berg et al., 2014; Carver, 2016). Research on teacher leadership has largely investigated the behaviors and actions of practicing teacher leaders and instructional coaches (e.g., Neumerski, 2012; Nguyen et al., 2019). The transition from teacher-to-teacher leader has been studied, if not extensively (e.g., Borko et al., 2021; Chval et al., 2010). For instance, Chval et al. (2010) found that when instructional coaches transition from classroom teaching, they often rely on their prior identities and practices as classroom teachers to guide their coaching actions and decisions, especially when lacking a formal induction experience. They noted that if coaches are to find success, "A support structure… must exist that includes opportunities to share challenges as well as strategies for addressing such challenges" (p. 212).

Similarly, teacher leadership development programs have been viewed as influential in supporting the transition from teacher-to-teacher leader (Carver, 2016; Huggins et al., 2017). Carver (2016), who studied a two-year teacher leadership academy, found that teachers enrolled in the program developed complex understandings of teacher leadership roles and dispositions while simultaneously transforming their identities as teachers and teacher leaders. In their study of a year-long professional learning community for teacher leaders, Huggins et al. (2017) found that collaborative learning with fellow teacher leaders at a similar development stage resulted in improved understandings of their identities as teacher leaders.

Theoretical Perspective

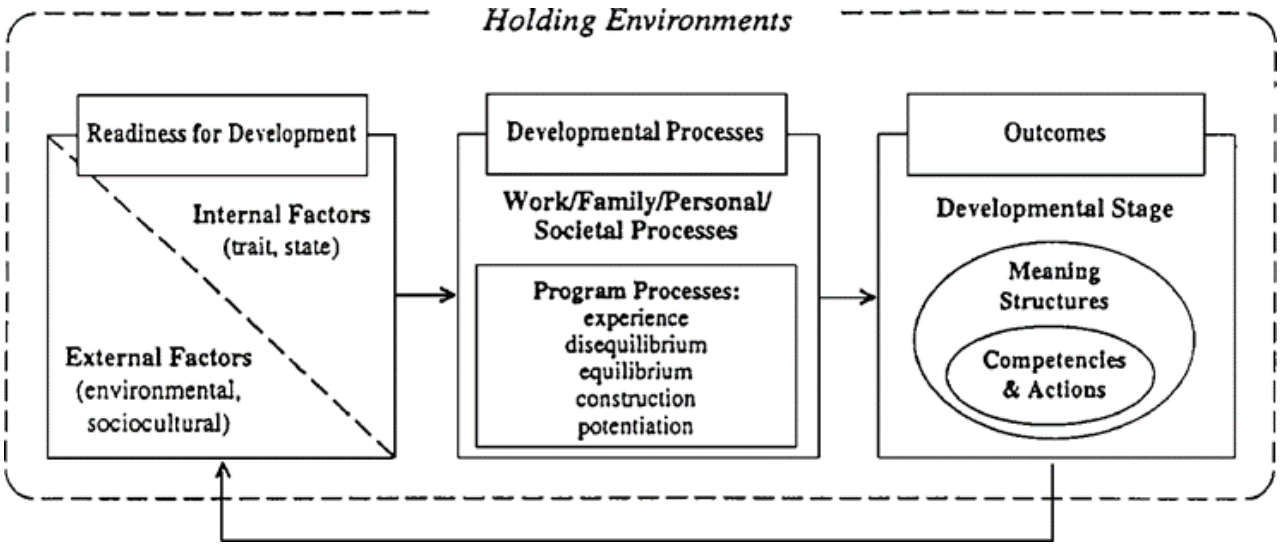
Learning about teacher leadership (and instructional coaching) in a community of practice has a positive impact on teacher leaders' professional learning and practice (e.g., Borko et al., 2021; Carver, 2016; Huggins et al., 2017). If (teacher) leadership is viewed as "meaning-making in a community of practice (Palus & Drath, 1995, p. 1), it is helpful to consider teacher leader development through a community of practice lens (e.g., Campbell et al., 2022; Wilson, 2016). Wenger et al. (2002) defined communities of practice as "groups of people share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (p. 4). The concept of self-study communities of practice builds on this definition and associated concepts of professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

According to Kitchen and Ciuffetelli Parker (2009), "The term self-study communities of practice is intended to convey both the teaching and inquiry dimensions of such communities. Each community must also be adapted to the institutional culture in which it operates to sustain its members and overcome barriers to teacher education as a form of scholarship" (p. 108). Kitchen (2022) recently revisited the idea of SSCoPs, further highlighting the various characteristics that define the structure and enactment of SSCoPs. The eight characteristics of SSCoPs are that self-study community: (1) involvement is voluntary; (2) happens on common ground; (3) requires safety, trust, and care; (4) members share struggles through conversation; (5) members explore their teaching through collective dialogue; (6) critically examine their group processes and dynamics; (7) explore teacher education reform; and (8) move toward the future. We used these characteristics to set the stage for community development, to define the actions and outcomes of the learning community, and as a theoretical lens through which we investigated our collective development as teacher educator/leaders.

To further understand our work together, we turned to the Leadership Development Program Model (Figure 1). In this model, Palus and Drath (1995) perceive leadership development as a three-stage cyclic process of readiness for development, developmental processes, and outcomes. 'Readiness for development' refers to four factors – traits, state, environmental, and sociocultural – that determine the developmental readiness for those entering leadership development programs. 'Developmental processes' refers to those actions associated with one's development. These include five processes: (1) providing meaningful learning experiences; (2) creating a state of disequilibrium for participants; (3) providing timely support and balance (equilibrium); (4) constructing new knowledge, skills, and dispositions; and (5) seeing "the increased possibility of future sustained change in meaning structures" (potentiation). The final stage of 'Outcomes' requires the identification of expected competencies and actions learned, desired meaning structures, and providing support through one's developmental stages.

Figure 1

Palus and Drath Model of Leadership Development



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The Leadership Development Program Model has been used by some to gain insight into how teacher leaders learn in communities of practice (e.g., Gerstenschlager & Barlow, 2019; Howe & Stubbs, 2003). In their study on preparing Common Core Math teacher leaders, Gerstenschlager and Barlow (2019) found that unlike formal teacher leader training programs (ex., graduate programs), leadership development programs must be structured in a manner that is reflective of participants' developmental needs. Such an approach would help teacher leaders "build their abilities to foster and effectively participate in the processes of leadership in their communities" (Palus & Drath, 1995, p. 25). Howe and Stubbs (2003) likewise saw benefits in teacher leader learning in their study of a science teacher leader community of practice, noting that "the emphasis on working in small groups, the informality of their interaction with [other professionals], and the need to work together in order to get the tasks done fostered the development of community" (p. 295).

Methods

Loughran (2006) argued that "*Developing* implies a sense of 'coming to be'… growing in understanding, moving forward, purposefully building on that which is already present" (p. 3, emphasis in original). As a group largely consisting of teachers transitioning into formal instructional coaching roles, this mindset helped us frame our collective development as teacher educator/leaders and the value self-study research would provide us in improving our teacher education practices (LaBoskey, 2004; Samaras, 2011). We organized our teaching-inquiry collaboration as a self-study community of practice (Kitchen, 2022; Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009), which consists of four or more members "committed to working together to study their teacher education practices" (p. 108). Brandon specifically recommended SSCoP as the lens for our collaboration because he felt it could "keep [the group] connected and on track … creating spaces to talk, collecting, and analyzing data … to document our pedagogical changes … so that others might learn from our process" (Appleget et al., 2022, p. 240).

Context

Our work together grew out of a professional development program that trains mentors of teacher candidates and novice teachers in instructional coaching (Knight, 2007). Brandon is an education professor at Old Dominion University and has co-facilitated the mentor teacher program since January 2020. Further funding allowed the program to offer additional, advanced training beyond the initial training provided to mentors during the student teaching semester. These advanced training sessions began in the summer of 2021.

We (Angela, Danielle, Kerstin, Rose, and Simone) served as mentor teachers for the university's teacher candidates and participated in the initial training program at various points between January 2020 and May 2021. We were in the first group of participants in the advanced training facilitated by Brandon. In that training in July 2021, we built connections with one another based on our shared transition from classroom teachers to instructional coaches. Although representing varied disciplines, grade levels, and years of teaching experience, we were united in our desire to further our development as instructional coaches. Angela, a secondary mathematics teacher, and Danielle, an elementary health/physical education teacher, remained in their positions as classroom teachers but were tasked by their schools to serve as lead mentors. In this role, they supported first-year teacher learning and supervised and coached first-year teachers' mentors. Kerstin, Rose, and Simone were leaving classroom teaching positions to become school-level instructional coaches. Kerstin and Rose were hired as discipline-focused instructional coaches, Kerstin for literacy, and Rose for mathematics. Kerstin's position was at the high school level while Rose was split between two elementary schools. Simone shifted from elementary teacher to instructional coach who provided direct support and coaching for one grade at an elementary school. An overview of our professional roles, years of teaching, and disciplines can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Teacher Leadership Self-Study Community of Practice Members

	Professional Role	Years Teaching	Discipline
Brandon	Professor	18 years	Social Studies/Teacher Ed
Angela	Teacher/Lead Mentor	25 years	Secondary Mathematics
Danielle	Teacher/Lead Mentor	24 years	Health/PE
Kerstin	Literacy Coach	26 years	Secondary English
Rose	Mathematics Coach	21 years	Elementary/Mathematics
Simone	Instructional Coach	5 years	Elementary/Reading

Although ODU is at the heart of our metropolitan area, there is great distance that separates us as a group. For most, travel to a central meeting location would take a minimum of one hour one-way. As such, we agreed to hold all meetings virtually via Zoom. Meetings took place bi-weekly throughout the 2021-2022 school year, beginning in September and concluding in May, with some breaks for holidays. Meetings lasted approximately an hour-and-a-half. Prior to our first meeting, we shared educational autobiographies (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001), and periodically shared written journals and professional documents related to coaching practices in school divisions. Rather than perceive the community of practice as a training space, we viewed it as a developmental space where the group could individually and collaboratively improve understanding of, and practice related to, instructional coaching. Meetings were open-ended in nature, though we would return to the texts Brandon provided in the trainings to re-orient our learning (Knight, 2007, 2018). We often shared tensions and problems we experienced in our work and sought input from those in the group. In January 2022, we felt a need to re-center our development and agreed to frame remaining meetings through a book study of Gross Cheliotes and Reilly's (2018), "Coaching Conversations".

Data Collection and Analysis

Once we agreed to participate in the SSCoP, we defined the parameters of the community space and data collected related to our work together. Prior to the first meeting, we committed to sharing educational autobiographies (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001). Although we interacted across several instructional coaching trainings, we were still unfamiliar with one another. Sharing our personal experiences as educators and critical incidents that led to our transition into teacher education/leadership jumpstarted SSCoP development (Branyon et al., 2022). We also periodically shared journal entries related to tensions we experienced as instructional coaches, which provided an additional space separate from our bi-weekly meetings to reflect and learn from one another. Finally, we recorded and transcribed our bi-weekly meetings between September 2021 and May 2022.

We first coded data deductively using provisional coding (Saldaña, 2021), framed through the Leadership Development Program Model (Palus & Drath, 1995). This was followed by theoretical coding that generated the study's findings, where we identified our learning in the SSCoP as expressed through the Leadership Development Program Model. To ensure trustworthiness, we fully articulated the context of our study, identified our data sources, and detailed the analytic process (Hamilton et al., 2020). Additionally, we use "previously defined categories validated from research" to provide exemplars from our learning in a self-study community of practice (Mena & Russell, 2017, p. 115).

Outcomes

In this section, we highlight our experiences in developing as instructional coaches in a self-study community of practice. These findings are framed through the three stages of the Leadership Development Program Model (Palus &

Drath, 1995). We begin by considering our readiness to learn and develop together in a SSCoP. We then turn to a consideration of processes that assisted in our development as instructional coaches and conclude by exploring how participation in the SSCoP helped us develop new meanings, actions, and competencies related to instructional coaching.

Forming a Community of Educators: Expressing Readiness for Development

The first stage in the leadership development model is having a readiness for development. Each of us had careers in which we had taken on leadership responsibilities, including presenting at conferences, hosting student teachers, serving on leadership teams, and sponsoring student organizations. But what drew us together at this specific moment in time was our individual transitions into a formal teacher leadership role as instructional coaches. We were driven by a mixture of internal and external factors to participate in the SSCoP.

Early in our time together, Brandon asked us, "What sparked your interest in taking part in this [SSCoP]?" Kerstin replied, "For me, it's an interest in wanting to be a better educator, but then once I get into the group, I feel like, 'Oh, this is a supportive group'… then I feel safe to share." Rose agreed, adding, "I wanted to learn how to be a leader, a better leader and a mentor, and then in this group, [they are] people who are in the same space that I am, transitioning from the classroom." Danielle's readiness to develop as an instructional coach was informed by her recent experiences hosting a student teacher and the impact the mentoring program had on her practice and her student's growth. She noted how she applied that learning and "the difference it made in him alone. So, then I realized, why can't this happen to our teachers as a whole?" She identified that experience as the impetus for accepting her new role as a lead mentor, but acknowledged a need to continue learning how to coach teachers, hence her participation in the SSCoP. Angela shared the sentiment, noting she was "thirsty" for knowledge related to instructional coaching.

Although several internal factors influenced our decision to participate in the SSCoP, we also highlighted external factors that reinforced the need for a supportive learning space. Few of us identified any learning supports provided by our schools as we transitioned into our new roles. As such, we craved opportunities to engage with and learn from others in similar circumstances. When support was mentioned, it often ran counter to what we were enacting in our practice. For instance, Danielle highlighted a brief training provided by a local university that focused on evaluative and directive coaching, which ran counter to what she had learned from Brandon and successfully enacted with her mentees. Hence, the SSCoP provided her – and the group as a whole – with opportunities to problematize practice through a shared interpretation of coaching practices.

Learning in Community: Processes That Assisted in Our Development

In establishing a readiness to participate in a developmental inquiry space, we also had to make effective use of that space if we were to fully develop as instructional coaches. This would require learning experiences that actively engaged us as learners, challenged our routines, provided us with support, allowed us to develop new ideas, and helped us sustain change rather than reverting to prior conceptions of instructional coaching. Angela highlighted the "attentiveness and organic-ness of our group" as assistive in her professional learning. We noted that the SSCoP structure allowed us to shift focus to meet individual and collective needs so that we could share and learn from different perspectives and troubling experiences (what we called "roadblocks"). Simone mentioned the ability to have a "moment of reflection… because even though we are instructional coaches, sometimes our building administrators make us drift off in other places, and we start losing that [coaching identity]."

We challenged ourselves to think differently about our practices, especially when faced with "roadblocks" that prevented us from fully enacting our work as instructional coaches. These "roadblocks" included external issues such as guidance received from district administrators regarding coaching policies and trainings provided by outside consultants that ran contrary to what we were learning and practicing regarding coaching. But they also included instances where we were unsure about how or when to provide teacher support in a meaningful manner. For instance, Danielle was "struggling… about when to move on to the next [coaching] phase," while Kerstin was challenged by the regularity in which she was to enact a coaching cycle with teachers.

Although we faced challenges, we also experienced successes and celebrated these moments. In one meeting, Simone shared a positive coaching experience with the group, and after sharing she received this feedback:

> *Danielle: That sounds amazing.*
>
> *Rose: You're actually coaching Simone!*
>
> *Simone: It's amazing! I felt so busy like I was doing office work, but then to be in her room and it felt good.*
>
> *Brandon: How is [the teacher] responding?*
>
> *Simone: She is loving [coaching]. She put in … our little newsletter and she shouted me out for investing my time in her, and she texted me and told me how she likes my approach.*

Such moments reinforced for us that what we were learning was important and sustained in us the importance of being effective coaches for the teachers with whom we worked.

The Impact of Our Community: Identifying Outcomes and Taking Action

The SSCoP provided us with space to create new meanings and interpretations for our work as instructional coaches. Additionally, we were encouraged to take action and develop competencies that would continue our professional growth. Brandon noted how the SSCoP was helping "us center and recenter ourselves continuously so that we are grounded in the work that we're trying to do." Angela echoed this sentiment, stating,

> *I think it helps us to remember our "why." Why we're doing what we're doing and why we're taking the steps that we're taking because there is a method to the madness and if we're ever reminded of what the method is, we can understand what the outcome should be and we'll know if actually hit the target.*

Rather than serve as a space where we simply reflected on our coaching experiences, we drew on our collective experiences to affect change in our individual practices. Personal actions became collective outcomes. For instance, Rose and Simone shared a specific strategy they used to provide teachers with formative feedback, to which Danielle responded, "I'm gonna take that and run with it because I think that's a great idea." Such moments repeated throughout our year together as we sought to develop conceptual clarity and pedagogical capacity as instructional coaches.

Discussion and Conclusions

Barth (2001) argued, "Teachers who succeed in influencing the school are tireless and undeterred by the obstacles that seem to leap from behind every bush. Commitment to their causes is stronger than the hurdles they encounter" (p. 447). We joined together in our self-study community of practice because we were concerned about the obstacles we would inevitably experience as we shifted into our new roles as instructional coaches. We believed that the SSCoP would provide us with a supportive environment that would reinforce our commitment to the instructional coaching model we had come to embrace while mentoring teacher candidates but were uncertain how to enact with practicing teachers (Knight, 2007, 2018). Through participation in the SSCoP, we found our developing understandings of, and pedagogical practices associated with, instructional coaching strengthened.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (1996) suggested that "the key to reducing the flow of teachers to other professions is to develop new roles for excellent teachers that extend beyond the classroom" (p. 93). However, like others (Carver, 2016; Huggins et al., 2017), we argue that teachers who transition into new roles require training and support if they are to effectively make this transition. One option available to educators as they transition from teacher-to-teacher leader is participation in a community of practice (Borko et al., 2021; Wilson, 2016). Drath (1996) noted that "leadership comes from the relationships people form when they are doing something together" (p. 3). We argue that the characteristics of communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002), and self-study communities of practice more specifically (Kitchen, 2022; Kitchen & Ciuffetelli Parker, 2009), provide the necessary structures for teacher leaders (and instructional coaches) to develop relationships and learn together as they transition into new leadership roles.

The SSCoP helped us reposition, reframe, and reimagine our roles and responsibilities as instructional coaches. Our work together provided us with powerful insights into the tensions, problems of practice, and personal experiences that instructional coaches encounter when crossing the "threshold" from teacher-to-teacher leader. Additionally, our work highlights the need to give voice to instructional coaches and teacher leaders who are often absent in educational research. Although much of the scholarship on instructional coaching and teacher leadership is qualitative in nature, it does not take the form of participatory research (e.g., self-study, teacher research, action research). Such research is needed so that additional contexts and insights are provided about how to best prepare and support those transitioning into teacher leadership.

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Looking Into the Rear-View Mirror While Moving Forward

Drawing on Past Collaborative Experiences to Inform Present Practice

Michaelann Kelley, Gayle A. Curtis, Cheryl J. Craig, Peter T. Martindell, & M. Michael Perez

Self-Study | Narrative Inquiry | Optimal Experience | Knowledge Communities | Rear-view Mirror

Employing the "rear-view mirror" metaphor and taking a "reflective turn" back (Schön, 1991), this self-study employed narrative methods to reflectively examine (Schön, 1983) the ways in which past reciprocal interactions of the Portfolio Group (a collaborative teacher/teacher educator/research group) shape/influence/inform our current practice. Highlighted emergent themes include: 1) ways in which the group's interactions advance the understanding of knowledge communities (Craig, 2007); 2) how optimal experiences of collaboration promote the desire for other collaborations; 3) the shaping influence of collaboration on practice in informative/reformative/transformative ways; and 4) the challenges of collaboration. This work makes an especially important contribution not only because of the number of members and the varying positions and subject matters they represent, but also because of the length of time the group has sustained itself. Our past experiences and knowledge inform/reform/transform our daily practice pushing us to continually seek those optimal experiences with colleagues in our new professional landscapes. The priceless value of a rear-view mirror while driving holds the same limitless value to ourselves and our peers and most importantly to the professional scholarly landscape. This is what this self-study into teaching and teacher education practices has yielded.

Context of the Study

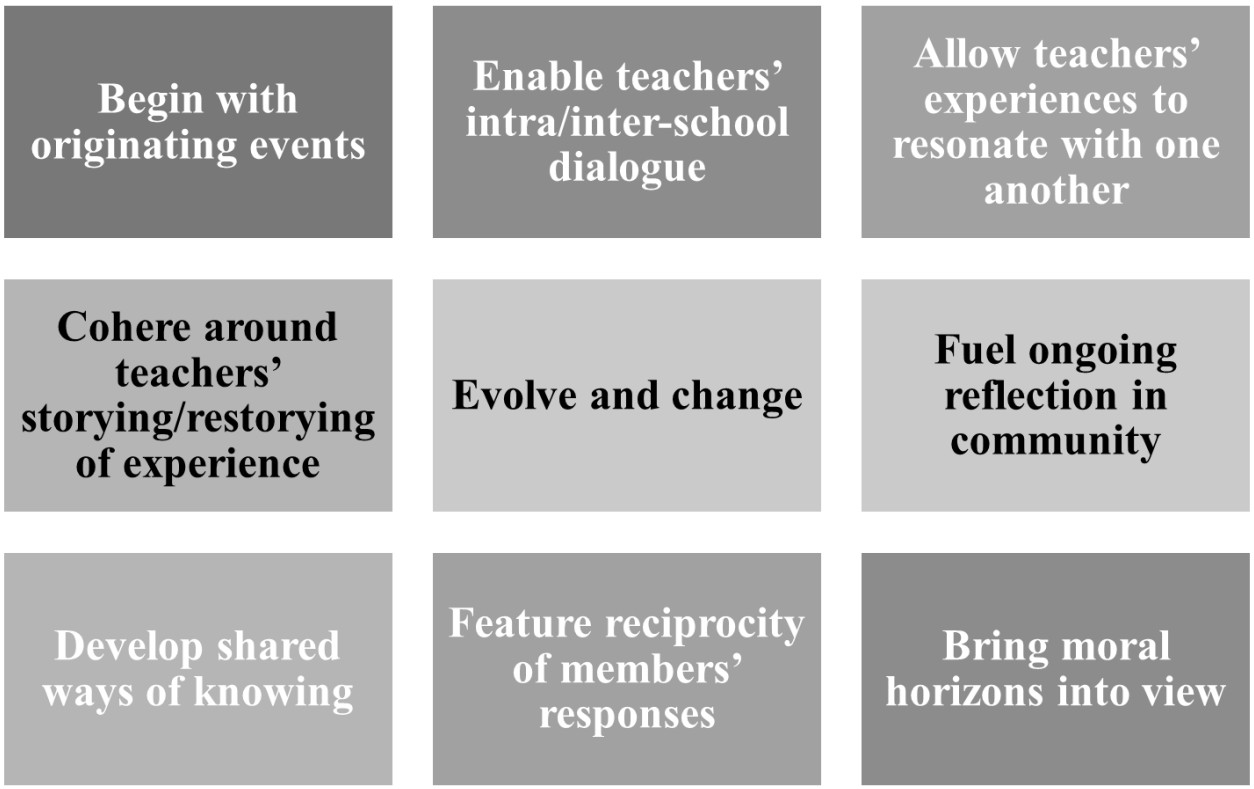
As a longstanding cross-school/institution collaborative knowledge community (Craig, 2007) of U.S. teachers/teacher educators/researchers, we (researchers from the Portfolio Group) noted how the optimal experiences (Dewey, 1934) we have shared via Portfolio Group interactions have shaped our individual practice, fueling other collaborations (Craig et al., 2020a). Optimal experience is based on the concept of flow, "a state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else [matters as much]; the experience is so enjoyable that people will continue to do it...for the sheer joy of doing it" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4). For us, professional growth/development and generative space are deeply connected to the satisfaction found in collaborative group work. Our ongoing professional dialogue on current practice consistently reverberates with aspects that were enhanced through our group collaboration, providing a look in the rearview mirror if you will. The optimal experience shared via the Portfolio Group has not only shaped our work with colleagues but also prompted the formation of other collaborative groups.

Situated in a diverse metropolitan area of the southwestern United States, our group came together in 1998 around school portfolios (Lyons, 1998a, 1998b, 2010) as a way to evidence our school reform efforts. Guided and mentored by our schools' Formative Evaluation Researcher, Cheryl Craig, we explored literature on how to evidence our work (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Eisner, 1997), shared our teacher/school stories, provided feedback, and developed relationships characterized by reciprocity and support. Alongside our group's collaborative learning and interactions, we have participated together in numerous professional development opportunities. Looking back, these were often optimal experiences (Dewey, 1934) that informed, reformed, or transformed (Tidwell et al., 2012; see also Curtis et al., 2013) our individual and group/collaborative practice.

Working together over time, we came to see ourselves as a knowledge community (Craig, 2007) (see Figure 1) and our interactions as "safe, storytelling places where educators narrate the rawness of their experiences, negotiate meaning, and authorize their own and others" (Olson & Craig, 2001, p. 670) interpretations of experiences/situations. For example, the Portfolio Group began with an originating event, the group enables teachers' cross-school dialogue, and the group has organically evolved/changed. Additionally, we cohere around our storying/restorying/reframing of experience (Craig, 2007) and provide time for experiences to resonate with one another alongside the reciprocity of member feedback. These commonplaces of experience promote ongoing reflection and community, yet also bring into view the moral horizons of the education landscape. These characteristics differentiate knowledge communities from other communities of learning/practice. For example, the primary aim of professional learning communities (Dufour & Eaker, 1998), Critical Friends Groups© (CFGs), and others is instructional improvement and school reform for accountability purposes at one school/institution (Curry, 2008). Unlike knowledge communities that "take shape around commonplaces of experience" (Craig & Olson, 2002, p. 116), these groups are formed around "bureaucratic and hierarchical relations that declare who knows, what should be known, and what constitutes "good teaching" and "good schools."

Figure 1

Characteristics of Knowledge Communities (Craig, 2007, p. 622-623)



In 2011, we initiated a longitudinal self-study into the workings of collaborative educator groups such as ours with the purpose of understanding the ways in which sustained collaboration contributes to the professional growth and development of group members and their continued improved group/individual practice (Curtis et al., 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018). The process of revisiting individual/collective experiences through reflection and critical professional discourse brought to light new aspects of previously known stories and, in some cases, uncovered stories never before shared (Craig et al., 2020a). These accounts ignited others' reflections, too, as past members came forward to share their perspectives. Returning member, Annette, summed up her reaction to the group's accounts of our collective history (Craig et al., 2020a) as "This is exactly the way it was."

As we gathered at a local Mexican food restaurant, our group's conversation shifted to the knowledge, skills, and practices acquired through our collaboration during the school reform era of the late 1990s (1998-2002) that are enacted in our current practice. We noted how the optimal experiences (Dewey, 1934) shared via Portfolio Group interactions have fueled other collaborations (Craig et al., 2020a) and shaped our individual practice. Reflecting on these ideas became the provocation of this self-study into the ways in which sustained interactions within teacher collaborative groups shape one's practice and collaborative endeavors with other groups.

Aim/Objectives

Employing the "rear-view mirror" metaphor and taking a "reflective turn" back (Schön, 1991, p. 5), this self-study reflectively examined (Schön, 1983) the ways in which past reciprocal interactions of collaborative teacher/teacher educator/researcher groups shape/influence/inform our current practice. To advance our understanding of knowledge communities in improving our work with others, we wondered: What knowledge/skills/experiences have been gained as a result of our collaborative past interactions that are carried forward into our individual current practice and new educational landscapes?

Methods

This self-study employed narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) methods to explore the shaping effects of sustained collaborative group interaction on individual ongoing practice. Field texts spanning 25 years (stored at members' homes) included meeting notes, past research texts, electronic communications, and individual reflective writings (Schön, 1983). Researchers' personal journals and past group research texts (Curtis et al., 2012, 2013, 2016, 2018) provided a road map of sorts as we independently, then jointly, looked back at our collaborative journey to identify significant experiences. We then engaged in individual journaling around the identified experiences and continuous critical dialogue (Guilfoyle et al., 2004) through scheduled meetings and online collaborative writing, sharing stories/perspectives. Data were independently and collaboratively analyzed by group member researchers/authors and member checked by other non-author group members, intersecting narratives identified, and emergent themes determined. As self-study researchers, we hold firm to our "deep ethical obligation to reveal about others only those things they would want to make public" (Pinnegar & Murphy, 2019, p. 123). We drew on the authority of experience (Munby & Russell, 1994) and a mindful selection of professional exemplars that showed "how a practice works" (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 6) to express transparency and promote trustworthiness.

Outcomes

Analysis of intersecting narratives identified four emergent themes: advancing the understanding of knowledge communities, optimal experience of collaboration, collaboration shaping future practice, and challenges of collaboration.

Advancing the Understanding of Knowledge Communities

The knowledge communities qualities (Craig, 2007) previously discussed (see Figure 1) anchor our discussion of how collaborative group interactions advance our understanding of knowledge communities, which has become a crucial part of our work with students and colleagues outside of the Portfolio Group. Annette's reflection highlights how she applies Portfolio Group discussions around equity in education to other areas of her work.

> *As a person of color–for the first time in my educational career—the Portfolio Group afforded me the opportunity to sit in a group of diverse teachers who felt free to discuss ideas and that it was important to discuss culturally responsive teaching. I had a great deal of appreciation for the discussion of the fact that culture and the home environment play a role in how students of diverse backgrounds learn.*

She continued, explaining,

> *Working with the Portfolio Group gave me the opportunity to see the work of other community liaisons while simultaneously doing my work in my school and community. The community liaison was a new position at that time within the school reform initiatives for our school district and other districts. I welcomed the opportunity to collaborate with others as we developed and shaped the work of a community liaison.*

Gayle's thoughts touch upon the shared ways of knowing found in knowledge communities.

> *We have learned by doing, reflecting, discussing, and co-constructing knowledge together. For some, our work contexts have not always provided spaces in which to share and discuss practice. The Portfolio Group has provided that space…resulting in constant learning and growth.*

For Tim, the reciprocity found within our knowledge community strengthened his confidence.

> *The idea that I possess certain knowledge about teaching based upon my practice was particularly helpful during a period of uncertainty. The critical friendship of my Portfolio Group colleagues afforded me the safe place in which to present dilemmas centered within my new role.*

Reflecting upon our group interactions showed the moral horizons that are evidenced in our collaboration. As Annette put it

> *I realized that my work had to encompass initiatives that would include the family and school working together for the common goal of successful student and parent learning.*

Gayle added,

> *The trusting space of the group is a place to share our experiences and particular expertise, promoting a sense of narrative authority and empowerment among members.*

Considering the ways in which ethics and moral horizons are reflected in the group's shared experiences, Cheryl concluded,

> *Differences have never preempted our striving to be good people doing good work together. Portfolio Group members have always coalesced around this shared principle.*

In her view,

> *There is an ongoing commitment to be "students of teaching" (Dewey, 1904, p. 215) in the Portfolio Group. If we accept the reality that teaching situations are not fixed, then that means there are limitless possibilities of what one can learn from students, but also from our milieu and changing landscapes.*

Optimal Experience of Collaboration

Having experienced a fruitful collaboration like ours, we strive to work collaboratively with others. Department Chair, Michaelann, asked herself, "How am I modeling my long-standing values as a Portfolio Group member?" when working together with her 'new' team. Her first memo expressed the value she placed on collaboration and her understanding that we are stronger when we engage and work together.

> *COLLABORATION—Let's make this the word of the month—We need to work together and reflect that to the [university] community.*

Cheryl shared,

> *Having seen growth within knowledge communities, I initiated regular team meetings with my doctoral students, loosely calling them a Research Team. Each year the team collaborates on a mutually agreed-upon project. Ju (pseudonym), a graduated doctoral student, described below what happened in the first two years.*

Ju explained,

> *We did a performance narrative inquiry, which our Research Team of 10 graduate students presented. Seeing that every team member had unique contributions, Dr. Craig created a book chapter writing opportunity and each of us contributed to an edited volume. Now, each of us has a publication, as well as great relationships with each other.*

Reflecting upon her return to the group, Annette wrote,

> *When I was first joined the Portfolio Group and now, the aspect of the Group's knowledge community that promotes learning and professional growth for me is having the ability to gather with other professionals to collaborate, share our stories, and learn in a relaxed and trusting setting…This was influential in my decision to return to the group after 20 years.*

On the optimal experience of our collaboration, Tim shared,

> *The very nature and longevity of the Portfolio Group and its research work have become self-sustaining. In other words, the more we work and research together, the more we wish to continue our collaboration.*

In our final exemplar of the optimal experience of collaboration, we turn to a conversation between Gayle and Michaelann about their continued participation in the Portfolio Group.

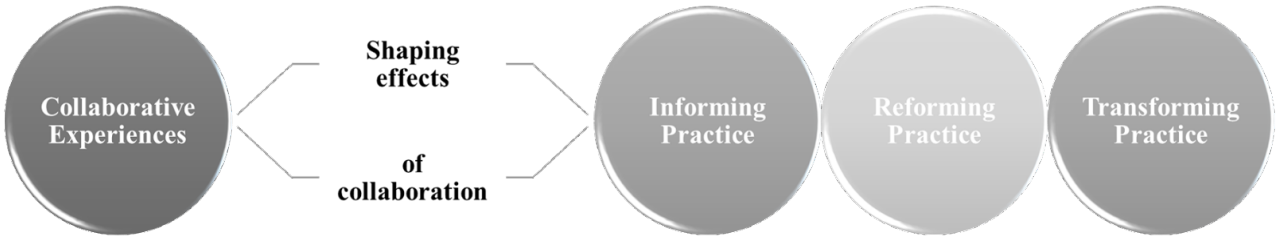
> *Gayle: We each bring our particular expertise to the table…but it does not stop there. The knowledge and expertise shared contributes to the learning of the group and sometimes the "unlearning" (Vinz, 1997) of what we previously thought we knew…important for continued growth.*
>
> *Michaelann: The Portfolio Group and my work with critical friendship has helped me to slow down in building relationships with new colleagues in order to ultimately go fast when working collaboratively.*

Collaboration Shaping Our Future Practice

Coming together as experienced teachers, we each held a unique body of knowledge that contributed to the richness and depth of our conversations. Importantly, that knowledge did not remain stagnant but rather expanded and deepened as a result of collaboration. In examining the ways in which our Portfolio Group collaborative experiences shaped future practice, several sub-themes emerged, suggesting that collaboration sometimes informed our practice, and other times reformed it, and even transformed it (Tidwell et al., 2012; see also Curtis et al., 2013).

Figure 2

Framework for Shaping Effects of Collaboration Based on Tidwell et al., 2012



Building on Prior Knowledge

Our reflective writings highlighted ways in which the collaboration built on prior knowledge to inform practice. Annette shared,

> *For my yearly job performance review as a sales manager, I had to do a self-evaluation. I would write long, thorough narratives of my daily tasks to prove that I was doing an excellent job. I thought I knew exactly what I needed to do to document my work. As an educator working with the Portfolio Group and keeping a portfolio of data and artifacts of my school's work, I really learned to do a better job of highlighting and illustrating change. The artifacts I gathered were tangible evidence of shifts taking place, which may have been imperceptible to others.*

Similarly, Gayle wrote,

> *As a bilingual teacher, my knowledge and understanding of working with students from diverse backgrounds was deepened in the mid-1990s when the Portfolio Group participated in a university lecture series on working with diverse student populations. We all went away with something new to employ in the classroom. Discussing Ladson-Billings' (1995) work on culturally relevant pedagogy together and later reading Gay's (2000) book on culturally responsive teaching, was a validation that we were on the right track in our continued professional development and gave us further insights into working with diverse student populations.*

On the evolution of the Faculty Academy (Curtis & Craig, 2020), Cheryl reflected,

> *The cross-school collaboration of the Portfolio Group became the prototype of the cross-institutional group called the Faculty Academy, with representatives from five regional and three affiliate universities.*

Informing Future Practice Through Collaboration

Numerous exemplars selected from our reflective writings show the ways in which our collaboration has informed our practice. For instance, the knowledge and skills Mike carried forward facilitated his move to a new school. As he explained,

> *Although what I learned through implementing critical friendship at one campus was unappreciated, this same knowledge proved invaluable in my current school.*

Similarly, knowledge gained through collaborative interactions has informed Tim's practice. He explained,

> *A key piece of my own learning that I carry forward into my work with middle school colleagues and university teacher education students goes back to the concept of teachers' narrative authority from Margaret Olson (1995) and the lessons learned from reading about the half-life and full-life of curriculum as Ted Aoki (1990) understands them.*

Through her participation in the group, Cheryl gained new insights into the use of protocols. She shared,

> *I was often told as a formative researcher/evaluator how effectively the approach worked for teachers. It was not until I witnessed first-hand Art teachers assisting the Physical Education teachers at Eagle High School on how to use their storage space more optimally—through the use of a Critical Friends Group©*

> *Tuning Protocol—did the value of protocols become known to me in a deep, powerful way. This eventually prompted me to invite both a short version and a long version of a critical friendship course as part of the Collaborative for Innovation for Teacher Education at Texas A&M University with all Portfolio Group members teaching the synchronous or asynchronous courses when available.*

For Annette, practices acquired during our early work together carried forward to new positions.

> *As the new District Lead Parent Trainer serving parents of students with disabilities, I draw heavily on my earlier experiences as a Community/Parent Liaison in developing processes and procedures for working with my new colleagues and parent groups. This includes using meeting protocols to promote the sharing ideas, analysis of curriculum/instruction outcomes, and reflection. I even carried forward the Portfolio Group's practice of documenting our work through pictures, data, and artifacts.*

She continued, explaining,

> *Fast forward, years later, my school district moved to an evaluation system that was mostly self-evaluation, with heavy emphasis on using artifacts to show how I accomplished my yearly goals. Because of my participation with the group, I came to know how to mindfully document my work still using some narratives, along with well documented data and artifacts.*

Reforming Future Practice Through Collaboration

Reflecting on current practice, the capacity of collaboration to reform or change practice is illuminated. This is evidenced in Cheryl's shifting perspective on the use of protocols.

> *At first, I thought the protocols for critical friendship used in the schools and in the portfolio creation process bounded teachers' knowing too tightly, making things more about the instrumental use of the protocol than on what understanding teachers developed through the portfolio construction process. Then, I discovered that it all had to do with facilitation and whether the facilitator used the protocols as a guide or a harness. I witnessed Portfolio Group members engaged in very deft facilitation. The lightness of their touch won me over.*

She continued,

> *This fine-tuned lesson I learned about facilitation has drifted over to my own teaching. Like other Portfolio Group members, I try to be light of touch in my instruction. The challenge I currently face is that I teach with guidance and facilitation in mind, while some younger students—with more recent experiences of the state accountability system and the constraints of pandemic asynchronous teaching—automatically expect to be harnessed. For them, being harnessed is the norm. Anything else does not equate to teaching as they know it. We are currently negotiating the in-between space. This goes to show that how one teaches—and how one facilitates—can never be predetermined. It is always in negotiation/in response to learners and the milieu in which teaching and learning fuse.*

For Michaelann, the collaboration shifted her mindful presence while working with others.

> *The Portfolio Group was the place where I learned how to listen to authentic feedback, how to present the 'work/data' of a school beyond the test scores, how to represent learning from multiple points of view, and most of all how to be part of a group with distributive leadership. These skills are being used and refined in my current practice as the new department chair.*

She continued, explaining,

> *I spent my first interactions with each faculty member listening to their background, their experiences with teaching and learning, and views of the department. Like Margaret Olson (1995) says, it is important for us*

> *to make spaces in our classrooms to tell and hear stories of experience in education…The same applies to our work and interactions with colleagues.*

Transforming Future Practice Through Collaboration

Through analysis of our reflective writings, many examples showed how practice was reconstructed as a result of group collaboration. For Mike, this was evidenced in his shift in reflective practice.

> *As a middle school science teacher in an urban setting, at first I found the research perspectives of narrative inquiry and self-study contrary to the quantitative research I experienced in my undergraduate and graduate research. However, over time I began to appreciate this new perspective and its foundation in reflective practice.*

Annette explained,

> *Working with students of different abilities I have come to know that we have to meet our students where they are. I like to look at their abilities instead of disabilities. I know that I have to take what they have and scaffold and differentiate what I am teaching in order to bring out the best of what they have to help them be successful.*

Annette added,

> *As a result of working with the Portfolio Group, in a twenty-year span I can say that I am still working on the important goal of breaking down barriers to positive relationships between families and schools.*

Reflecting on these ideas, Gayle shared,

> *Whereas previously I would have been reluctant to join a faculty group in higher education for fear of an environment filled with complaints and egos jockeying for position, my experiences with the Portfolio Group made me eager to participate in the Faculty Academy when I moved into higher education and to mentor Las Chicas Críticas (Cooper et al., 2020) in self-study research.*

Challenges of Collaboration

Our joint experiences have shown us that people working together provide no guarantee that individuals are actually collaborating or co-constructing knowledge and that individual engagement occasionally “waxes-and-wanes” within groups. Nor is there an assurance that members' interactions will constitute an optimal experience. People enter professional groups with varying degrees of engagement and assign different values for reflection and their role in the improvement of practice. Intertwined in each of these considerations is personal choice and responsibility. This suggests to us that a requisite for achieving individual optimal experience within groups is individual responsibility for contributing to the community’s shared vision, expressing one’s own agentic voice, and advancing the group's agenda. These are challenging considerations we carry into our work with other groups. For example, Michaelann takes these ideas into consideration in working in her new context.

> *An area that I am still struggling with in my new venue is distributive leadership. I am struggling because this is not something that you can impose or command. Reflecting back on the journey of the Portfolio Group, it took years for the group to move from a singular leader to a non-hierarchical leadership model. This is knowledge that comforts me, yet like most of us, I want the process to happen faster. I want the other professors to grab ideas and run with them. I want them to work the way I work…but that is not the norm for most. I need to realize this and adjust my perceptions, not try to adjust others.*

To this, Cheryl added,

> *The members of the Portfolio Group have an unspoken understanding that practical knowledge is provisional in nature (always changing in and of itself) and highly dependent on context. They are able to*

live in a space of inconclusivity, as Stefinee Pinnegar and Marylynn Hamilton (2012) term it. Many people would not feel comfortable with this lack of certainty.

Discussion

The stories shared illustrate how looking into the rear-view mirror to study our optimal past collaborative experiences gives insight into the ways such experiences shape current and ongoing individual practice. They show through exemplars the various characteristics of knowledge communities (Craig, 2007) that differentiate knowledge communities from other forms of communities of learning. They also highlight the ways in which the "safe, storytelling places" (Olson & Craig, 2001, p. 670) of knowledge communities encourage the exchange of ideas and reflection on individual practices, leading to reciprocal learning and teacher professional growth.

An implication/consideration to be taken away from this study is that looking in the rear-view mirror at previous experiences helps us to better understand the many theoretical, practical, and experiential factors that have shaped our teaching, our learning, and our stance as teachers/teacher educators/researchers. The professional growth and generative spaces of teacher collaborative groups are deeply connected to the satisfaction found within those groups and the collaborative work they engage in. On the whole, we have discovered that the more people involved in the groups in question, as well as the differing contexts in which they were formed, make for even more complex and nuanced self-studies.

This work makes an especially important contribution, not only because of the varying positions and subject matters the researchers represent but also because of the length of time the group has sustained itself. Also, the different iterations of knowledge communities we have shared (i.e., faculty department, Research Team, Faculty Academy, parent groups, Las Chicas Críticas) show how the characteristics of knowledge communities have expanded specifically to other named groups and into the lifeblood of the field more generally.

Our past experiences and knowledge inform/reform/transform our daily practice pushing us to continually seek those optimal experiences with colleagues in our new professional landscapes. The priceless value of a rear-view mirror while moving forward holds the same limitless value to ourselves and our peers and most importantly to the professional scholarly landscape.

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What Advice Would We Give Ourselves on the Threshold of a VUCA Environment?

An International Collaborative Memory-Work Project

Dawn Garbett, Rena Heap, Linda Fitzgerald, Ronnie Davey, & Lynn Thomas

Self-Study | Memory-work

The memory-work we have done over the past 2 years is synthesised as advice we would have given ourselves at the start of our careers and what we profess to know now that we are transitioning away from our institutions. The data is drawn from writing memories evoked by 6 prompts; 8 recorded Zoom discussions and re-interpretation of the data through dialogic inquiry. Our purpose is to offer our insights as we look back on our careers. We have focused this chapter on two prompts to discuss our collective memories of what research, teaching, and service have meant for us as academics and teacher educators. We also consider the advice we would give our younger selves now, in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment.

Context of the Study

At the time of this study, we were five senior or recently retired teacher educators in three different countries, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. We have worked collaboratively and independently on self-study research projects connected to teacher education over our careers (see for example, Garbett et al., 2020; Davey et al., 2011; Tolosa et al., 2016). We have used collaborative memory-work, which we have explored in more detail in the companion chapter in this publication, as a self-study method to systematically and rigorously process collective insights. Ham and Kane (2004) wrote that self-study is a means to "see one's participant self through alternative lenses... It derives not from a passive romantic remembering in tranquility of a single experience but from the iterative and consciously self-analytical reflection on, repetition of, and gathering [of] data" (p. 129).

The memory-work we have done over the past three years has aimed to "unmask the rules of the game that lurk beneath the surface rationality of academic meritocracy" (Morley, 2013, p. 116). This chapter synthesises the advice we would like to have given ourselves at the start of our careers and what we profess to know now as we stand at the end of our institutional careers, in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). It draws together common threads that have resonated with us all as we have shared during our memory work, despite differences in the standing of teacher education in Universities in our respective countries. Our purpose is to communicate our new understandings and offer our insights as we look back on our lifetimes of being… teachers, students, academics, and humans.

Method(s)

We have used memory-work (Haug, 1987, 2008) to focus our attention on what we can learn collectively through reflecting on our scholarly careers as teacher educators. Using their guidelines, our memory-work followed an iterative process as described below.

1. Independently write, for no more than 30 minutes and in the third person, an individual memory account of an experience, event or scene related to the given prompt (collaboratively decided).
2. Share and interrogate these accounts within the collective (for us, on Zoom).
3. Analyse the accounts within the collective to seek out meaning and understanding (Crawford et al., 1992; Vasudevan, 2011).

Our data includes our individual writing, transcripts of recorded monthly 2-hour Zoom meetings (eight to date), and frequent email interchanges. We decided on and responded to six prompts that we formulated as the project progressed, each time writing for no more than 30 minutes:

1. a memory of being mentored.
2. a memory of being a mentor.
3. a memory of receiving an unanticipated kindness in academia.
4. [framed into a 3rd person prompt] If she could only carry a small bag, she wondered what self-care strategies she would pack.
5. a note to your former self with three key pieces of information that we wish we had known.
6. what advice do we give ourselves as teacher(educator)s in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous (VUCA) environment.

Because we have found memory-work as method to be so valuable in raising awareness of issues, concerns, and successes in our professional lives, we have written a companion chapter (Garbett, Fitzgerald, et al., 2023) that focuses specifically on the method. In that chapter, we discuss in more detail the process we used, illustrating each of the steps to give life to the method. This chapter offers us the opportunity to detail some of the outcomes we felt to be important and to draw together the salient themes. The data is drawn from writing, discussion and re-interpretation of the data so as to advance our understanding. Where we have used one another's words to capture the consensus, we have not identified or separated individual contributions. Rather we have merged our contributions to make the text flow more naturally, and have italicised all data for clarity. It has been a deliberate choice not to identify individual contributions to this collaborative project.

Discussion

Each of the six prompts yielded valuable insights and understanding. Due to word constraints, this chapter focuses on just two of the prompts, Prompt 5 and Prompt 6. However, given the iterative nature of memory-work, responses to other prompts are indeed revisited in these two. In particular, our responses to the prompts about kindness (Prompt 3) and being mentored and mentoring (Prompts 1 and 2) re-emerged when we wrote and talked about being teacher educators in a VUCA environment (Prompt 6).

The adaptation of Brookfield's (1995) survival memo technique (Prompt 5) to synthesise understandings from our memory-work was particularly generative in consolidating the insights we had garnered to that point. Here we wrote the three most important pieces of advice we wished our former 'naive selves' might have known as academics. This introduction from one memory creatively captures the process we each went through, imagining what we might have said.

> *When Frannie stepped out of the telephone box, she found herself again in the mid-1990s, and there was her younger junior faculty self, walking across the campus toward her time-traveling self. After a moment of extreme confusion, while Older Frannie was explaining 21st century time travel to Younger Frannie, they sat down in Adirondack chairs under a leafy tree and had a chat.*

From our data for this prompt, we highlight here aspects that resonated most from our collective memories for each of the triumvirate of research, teaching, and service. In relation to research, we agreed that we would advise our former selves to research areas that were personally meaningful and related to their practice, not necessarily those that ticked the institutional boxes. *Write for the audiences you want to reach, sharing the research you have done on your practice.*

We agreed with the truism that *not all research in the academy is considered of equal importance*, and that to be able to pursue research and contribute to the greater good through the development and dissemination of knowledge was an aspirational goal. We recognised the inevitable tension between research considered personally worthwhile, and research that the institution deems worthy. Researching our own teacher-educator practices was deemed crucial to enhancing our educational influence on the learning of teachers. For us, self-study research has spanned both personal and institutional imperatives. As Garbett (2013) has written, "self-study provides a means to examine our lives, to challenge and question the assumptions that underpin our actions, to gain new perspectives and to inform our own and others' practice" (p.117).

Regarding teaching, our common advice was to continue to hold teaching in the highest regard despite the ever-increasing stressors, detractors, and constraints. We all recognised the privilege and joy of teaching. *You have been given the opportunity to influence and inspire countless teachers who will go into the profession as thinking, caring, reflective practitioners*. Even though we each bemoaned the reduction in face-to-face contact time with our student teachers, we all agreed that we should *pack as much fun and interactive experiences and laughter as you can into your teaching. The students will remember who you are and what they experienced in your class—not what content you cherry-picked to tell them!*

Service wore each of us down and we each gave words of grave caution to our younger selves. *Academia has all kinds of hidden agendas, invisible work, damaging mind-sets which you must learn to identify and not obligingly tolerate. So, key information? It really is important to learn to say no! Do not accept a heavy administrative load at the beginning of your career, no matter how threatening the administration and professors' union become. No one will tell you this at the beginning of your career. Don't allow yourself to drown in minutiae of administrivia and meetings that waste your time and your will to live.*

We recognised that within this triumvirate, ideally, each would inform the other. Self-study research enabled this in the latter part of our careers. We urged our younger selves to be mindful that *your research will have informed your practice and made you even more accomplished as teachers. Make your service count for you by investing in what you consider to be important committees within the institution and wider community; make your service to students of worth, through pastoral care and career advice; serve your colleagues in the form of mentoring and caring. It may not be exactly what the institution values or measures but—carry on!*

Interrogating our advice, we saw that since it was the institution that determined the performance indicators in each of teaching, research, and service, our overarching advice to our former selves could be distilled to: recognising your own self-worth; identifying your values; and maintaining a healthy balance. *The measures of success in academia are defined by academia—but you will have to decide what success is in your life.* While we might each define success for ourselves differently, we agreed it was important not to *sacrifice your self-esteem for the number-crunchers, selection panels, review boards… This is only work and it should be measured in terms of being just that – not a measure of you as a person.*

While the institution might determine performance indicators, we ourselves must determine how we wanted to be as academics. We came to see that whatever work we did in the academy must be underpinned and driven by the values we held dear. We wanted to urge our younger selves to *find your core values, and here in academia, remain true to these core values. Let them be your true north, your touchstone. Know yourself. Really. What are these core values, the principles that guide your decisions and motivate you to action? Take some time to understand who you are, who you are becoming, or who you want to be. Interrogate yourself about the qualities, actions, roles and events that motivate and that guide your decision making. What do you care about? What gives you heart and purpose? Ask the hard questions often. Whose interests are actually being served? Do you have any choice around decisions to be made or*

actions to be taken or are you merely following institutional norms and role expectations? The conscious thinking is what is important so you are not mindlessly sucked in or blindsided.

Interrogating our values led in turn to thinking that nurturing a life outside of work was vital for our well-being. *Work and life are not dichotomous. Work will be a huge and fascinating part OF your life, but don't let it dominate to the exclusion of all the other things you love. At the end of the day, all those courses, stacks of marking, articles, conference presentations, etc., really don't matter. You have a life to live outside of work hours. Don't let work consume all your thoughts and energy and time. The important things in life are really the important things, and that's what you should focus on. No work, even wonderful work, should consume all your energy, focus, and time or displace time with family, friends, being with others, and being with yourself.*

As we neared the end of this phase of our project we wanted to position ourselves in the current VUCA environment, cognisant of myriad new and recurring issues. This led to Prompt 6 to consider the advice we would give ourselves as teacher educators in a volatile, uncertain, and ambiguous environment with all its attendant complexity. We thought it important to acknowledge what we knew we had lost and missed about teaching in today's climate. Several themes kept (re-) emerging in our writing and discussion, viz: mentoring, lifelong learners, self-efficacy, values, and relationships.

Mentoring

Our promptss on mentoring and being mentored had caused us to consider the different trajectories we had taken from being teachers to teacher educators in the academy. For those of us in New Zealand, we had been teacher educators in recognised, standalone Colleges of Education. When these were subsumed by Universities at the Government's directive, we went from being respected professionals to 'being among the least welcome guests at the educational lawn party of the establishment of higher education' (Ducharme, 1993). In Canada and the United States teacher education had been part of Universities' programmes for much longer. And yet, we came to remarkably similar conclusions. How we were enculturated or mentored into the academy impacted on us—particularly at the beginning of our academic careers, when we were impressionable.

Some of us had been lucky enough to find a kindred spirit when we first entered the academy. These informal mentors quickly became confidantes, *providing endless support, encouragement, and enviable opportunities to teach and research together, opportunities to work collaboratively -- and deep valued friendship. At the end of the warm late summer afternoon, she had gotten to know and trust her mentor, and had a good start on an annotated cognitive map of her new work world.* Another *worked harder to create a relationship with a new and important colleague over the first semester–sharing ideas led to the best conversations about learning and pedagogy she'd ever engaged in.* Another recognised a colleague at the end of her career had been a mentor: *Paths crisscross but her mentor seems to know the way and leads with confidence.*

However, there was also a strong feeling that formal and/or assigned mentors were most often placeholders for the position. *She'd been partnered with a 'self-appointed guru' figure who had no desire to work with her at all, so she worked alone. She realised that even at a university that prided itself as having an inclusive, humane working environment, it was impossible to find mentorship that was truly supportive of the one seeking it. There hadn't been many mentors in her professional career at her own institution.* We recognised that most of our Universities did not have formalised or effective mentoring systems, and most of the effective mentoring that took place arose informally.

Life-long Learners

Despite, or perhaps because, *change is the only constant in life, we wanted to remain open to learning, making the most of opportunities, and keeping ourselves vulnerable. We talked about staying curious and open-minded, being able to make mistakes and to learn from them. This felt much easier to do when we were connected* with our students or colleagues. The reduction in actual hours of teaching and of face-to-face time meant that our practices had to change. Sometimes we *compensated by giving them more resources, when we should have realised it was more important to model what it was to be a good human being in the moment.*

Rather than feeling threatened by change, we wondered how refreshing it could be to consider the potential that change had brought about. It was exciting to add new pedagogical possibilities to our repertoire, such as making our online sessions interactive, using doodly animations to make video presentations, collaborating on Miro Boards. They stimulated our creativity and restored our optimism as we increasingly realised that we were all riding the same stormy seas. Despite its specific cultural context, the Māori whakataukī or proverb– "*He waka heke noa*" (we are all in this canoe together)-- rang increasingly true for us as we navigated turbulent times.

Self-study research helped us to make sense of ourselves as academics and to understand better what was required of us and our students. *As teacher educators we are working with pre- and in-service teachers in an educational environment constantly changing with emerging social challenges, changing government priorities, rapidly advancing digital technologies, a global pandemic, the list won't stop. Our advice to our student teachers is for them to expect change, and to be adaptive and resilient in this constant change.* We needed our students to appreciate that they in turn needed to stay open to *making connections and to being teachable, to embrace the reality that others have a lot to teach them and us.* In other words, we wanted them to know how important their (and our) chosen career was.

Self-efficacy

In this VUCA environment, we recognised that it was still of utmost importance that student teachers and teacher educators develop the self-belief that they were making a valued difference in the lives of their students. *You aren't teaching a subject, you are a teacher. Fullstop! A teacher of young people, of teenagers, of adolescents. You will make a difference in their lives if you can show them that you care about them. If you don't believe in their potential, you're in the wrong profession.* Even in these uncertain times we still needed to give our students the *ability to fly, the confidence to make their own mistakes, to problem solve, to make 'good' teacherly decisions. The belief that one can achieve and complete a task supersedes all kinds of knowledge-building, of content and educational theories.* This wasn't just about confidence or just self-belief. *Self-efficacy is a different cornerstone. Developing this in new teachers is underpinned by relationship building, the development of trust and confidence and openness to new learning so one could face and overcome areas of weakness, avoidance of topics and skills.*

But we recognised that our students didn't necessarily want to hear that. *They want to know what to say, what to do, what is the magic recipe for teaching and how do I hold my hands? If we don't tell them, they think that we are keeping this recipe from them out of spite or something, and are forcing them to guess the magic. But I would say to my student teachers who complain about not feeling well-prepared: "Keep up the great work, you can do this, remember to focus on the pupils, keep asking yourself, 'What is this activity like from their point of view? What are they learning? What is engaging them? What isn't?'"*

As teacher educators, we strove to be caring, kind and supportive cheerleaders, focused on building resilience, self-awareness, and confidence. We needed to encourage our students to look after themselves (and we needed to take our own advice!).

Values

Arguably, successful teacher educators—those who do make a direct difference to individuals —are 'other' focused. We have seen that being successful as an academic (often/usually) means prioritising the individual self. *Staying other-focused in an unpredictable world requires stamina, resilience, a strong moral purpose, a touch of the Pollyanna positivity and a Monty Pythonesque ability to laugh at absurdity.* It required a commitment to maintain a steadfast altruistic gaze on what was of merit to us: championing and supporting our colleagues, our students and important issues.

Revisiting our previous thoughts on values, we took kindness in its many guises to be fundamental for us all within our academic institutions. We recognised that the concept of kindness was usually absent in institutional values, mission statements, goals, strategic plans, appraisal documentation, and student evaluation/satisfaction templates. Instead, our institutions appeared to rate a performance culture over kindness. *What would the experience of being an academic be like if our institutions esteemed kindness and human relationships above accomplishments and research outputs?* If we had the courage and license to practice new ways of being kind in academia—what would that look like? We came

up with many ways that we had intentionally practiced kindness, for example, through emails of appreciation for an article or book we had enjoyed or for thoughtful gestures; gifts of time, kind words; civility and constructive critique in peer reviews; going out on a limb for a colleague; refusing to perpetuate the norm; and refraining from punching down and negativity. As has been oft quoted, “We are all smart – distinguish yourself by being kind.”

Relationships

In addressing what we had lost and missed about teaching in today's VUCA environment, we were unanimous about those things easily lost and most sorely missed: relationships, both with students and with colleagues and time to build them.

When we looked back, it was clear that the *most important thing that had helped us thrive, especially during times of uncertainty and challenge, was our relationships with like-minded close colleagues that made the difference and made it easy to push through.* Mentors, key individuals, and communities were what made the difference to growing and thriving or languishing and feeling isolated in the academy. Our advice to ourselves in a VUCA environment was to *find our people within our colleagues—those who we aspire to learn from and be with. If we can’t find them within the colleagues at our institution, seeking these relationships elsewhere is crucial.* In this global world, we didn’t need to limit ourselves to the office corridors. National and international committees, interest groups, panels, organisations, and research communities online or face-to-face became the place to find *like-minded colleagues to stimulate, encourage and collaborate with. This is the support we can seek and create for ourselves, professionally. Strategic networking can help us decide what’s worth our energy or focus and help us prioritise what matters in the time-poor context in which we spend our professional life.*

We do not know how our lives will play out. No matter how much we plan and organise and set it all out in our Excel files, we have no control. When we look back at the positive aspects of our professional experience, we think about the relationships we built with some of our colleagues and the odd moments in the hallway or the staff room or in a meeting when we were really communicating about something that mattered. Seek out allies, build community, surround ourselves with positive, caring people in our profession.

Relationships with students were also easily lost. We all agreed that for *our students, it’s the moments of connection that they will remember most and want to emulate with their own students.* Teaching and learning, whether face-to-face or online, thrive on connection. The most powerful teaching tools (in either a face-to-face or digital environment) centered on human interaction and relationships. We needed to cultivate that connection whenever and however we could. As one of us stated, with others nodding knowingly in agreement, *"I think about those moments in the classroom when my students were absolutely with me as we discussed some important aspect of building good learning relationships with pupils. I also think about the times when they were busy and noisy and laughing while doing an activity that I had created, and those times when they were able to demonstrate during micro-teaching or on practicum that they had really understood what I was trying to communicate."*

We wanted to remind our students often that, *when it comes right down to it, the content, the management, the test papers don’t really matter. What matters is that there are 30 human beings in a room together, and there is a whole wonderful world out there to learn about, together.* Whether with colleagues or students, we recognised that it was essential to *focus on those moments when we are really connecting with someone, an individual, a colleague, a small group, a class, and revel in the humanity of it.*

Conclusion

If our original intent was to distill any wisdom collectively from our memory-work, we were affirmed when one of us was called upon to give advice to a new faculty hire, shortly after we had spent two hours discussing the prompt about advice to a younger self. The longer she spent giving advice, the more she recognised that she was drawing on our collective work.

A sobering thought has been questioning whether we would have listened to our own advice. We asked ourselves how we could have made our message understood by our younger, keener, less jaded former selves. We have enjoyed

working long hours, we have found satisfaction in small acts of kindness, we have celebrated the achievements of our students, and we have had our research affirmed by readers' responses to it.

The stakes are incredibly high in the volatile context of a modern institution to ensure that new academics are supported. We see the responsibility of all academics is to relay hard-learned lessons to younger scholars, gently but insistently. *Most of all, be kind to yourself, trust yourself and put aside time for self-care. Only you know what you need. Others only think they do. You listen to others all day yet in the midst of all the noise, the most important voice to listen to when things are volatile, uncertain, and complex is your own. Ignore it at your peril.*

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