LEARNing Landscapes

Journal

Education in a Pivotal Time: The Moment for Inspiration, Innovation, and Change

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Statement of Purpose

LEARNing Landscapes™ Journal is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the spring of each year, it attempts to make links between theory and practice and is built upon the principles of partnership, collaboration, inclusion, and attention to multiple perspectives and voices. The material in each publication attempts to share and showcase leading educational ideas, research, and practices in Quebec, and beyond. We welcome articles, interviews, visual representations, arts-informed work, and multimedia texts to inspire teachers, administrators, and other educators to reflect upon and develop innovative possibilities within their own practices.

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Editorial

When we were planning the call for the 2023 issue of *LEARNing Landscapes* in spring 2022, we hypothesized that education was in a pivotal moment as we emerged from the pandemic and began to take stock of what was happening as a result.

The 2021 OECD Education Survey suggested there were six post-COVID-19 challenges in education (OECD, 2021).

1. The inequalities in education and the "digital divide" that existed before were exacerbated by the pandemic.
2. The gap in educational performance among countries was amplified.
3. Students suffered from loss of in-person teaching and learning academically, socially, and emotionally.
4. Teaching workloads became excessive.
5. There were vast differences in access to digital professional development and support for teachers.
6. It became apparent that online learning should not become a substitute for teachers.

In many ways, the pandemic brought into high relief and heightened the challenges that already existed in education. It has been a wake-up call that cannot be ignored. Hopefully, this critical moment in time will be used widely to incorporate the positive digital benefits gleaned from the pandemic that can support teaching and learning in engaging and positive ways, maintain academic, social, and emotional wellness for both teachers and students and create socially just and equitable learning spaces for all. Our call for submissions was purposely broad to throw a wide net around the topic and get at a range of experiences at different levels of education, places, and from a variety of perspectives. We hoped the call would stimulate authors to think deeply about their research and practices before and during COVID-19 and, as a result, help to articulate and shape what now seem to be the most important innovations and changes needed for educational contexts as we move forward. We were not disappointed.

Five themes emerged from the work of the authors in this issue of *LEARNing Landscapes*. The varied experiences highlighted in these articles weave together a tapestry of nuances for reflecting upon directions for innovation and change in education. They suggest the need for:

1. Practicing empathy
2. Cultivating community
3. Addressing learners' needs uniquely
4. Shifting gears
5. Examining values

It should be noted that while articles are published in alphabetical order in all our issues of *LEARNing Landscapes*, for the purposes of the editorial they are arranged and discussed thematically following the two invited commentaries which are discussed below.

Commentary

We reached out to two educators whose work focuses on the theme of the issue to provide their perspectives on education during this pivotal time. Each of them is doing innovative and important work to help meet the needs of diverse students in this post-pandemic world and reflect the themes that emerged from the articles published in this issue. **Debbie Pushor** is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Saskatchewan. She describes in vivid detail how her child's experiences in grade one, which were very positive, brought to light how little the school knew about them as a family and why it is so critical for educators to have this contextual knowledge. She argues convincingly for a shift to "family-centric schools" during this post-pandemic and "pivotal time in society" where learning is recognized as a "from birth-to-forever process" and families and parents are valued and included as collaborators throughout this educational journey. She concludes this is the most important way to eliminate the deficit notions about students and families that are so prevalent in schooling. **Sabrina Jafralie** is a gifted, secondary teacher at Westmount High School in the English Montreal School Board, and course lecturer at McGill University in Montreal. She describes her educational experiences as an Afro-Indian Canadian student when little or no attention was paid to the challenges facing diverse student populations. The impact of these and the values of her activist family have contributed greatly to her long-standing passion for social justice. Following the teachings of Desmond Tutu, Jafralie argues strongly for positivity, but also action, in the currently highly politicized educational context. A starting point of action is with each teacher, which necessitates self-reflection and awakens an understanding of biases and assumptions that can bring harm into the classroom. She shares, in particular, how her journey in teaching the Quebec Ethics, Religion, and Culture (ERC) program at both secondary and preservice teacher levels has allowed her to promote critical thinking, create a space for a multitude of perspectives, challenge dominant narratives, find new ways to present curriculum meaningfully and empathetically, and help to ensure that new teachers will be agents of help, not harm.

Practicing empathy

Keely Cline, an Associate Professor at Northwest Missouri State University, **Maureen Wikete Lee** and **Merlene Gilb,** assistant professors at St. Louis University, and **Lauren Bielicki,** Director of the Family Center in Webster Groves School District, St. Louis, share how a preschool predicated on the basic tenets of Reggio Emilia schools intentionally gave voice to these young students and fostered empathy among them. Triggered by an unhappy moment for a mother and her child when sharing birthday cupcakes with classmates, the school ended the practice of food-giving and refocused on birthday celebrations where the children together made the choice to make gifts for each other. The authors include delightful images of the gifts demonstrating the empathy gift-making developed, which fostered equity and a sense of inclusion. **Jackie Marshall Arnold** and **Mary-Kate Sableski**, associate professors at the University of Dayton, Ohio, posit that there is a dearth of research on how to select children's literature to help initiate important and needed discussions on difficult topics and/or traumatic events. Their class of 26 preservice teachers chose from a range of children's literature provided by the authors and practiced with peers to learn how to use the literature to connect meaningfully with students. They argue that intentional and careful book selection to connect with children's lives builds empathy and community among them as

well as the needed English language arts skills. **Dany Dias**, Assistant Professor at Université de l'Ontario français, in Toronto, Ontario, explored for her dissertation the potential of literature to expand the worldviews of her grade eight students. This article shows, with very interesting examples, how the students developed empathy and the ability to take the perspective of others.

Cultivating community

Jody Dlouhy-Nelson, a doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia Okanagan School of Education, and **Kelly Hanson**, a teaching consultant in public education, were invited to design a curriculum guide to accompany the traveling Witness Blanket exhibition during its stay at the Kelowna Arts Museum. The exhibition (2015) was created by Indigenous artist Carey Newman in response to an invitation by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tell the story of residential schools in Canada. The authors worked for 18 months with the Syilx Indigenous community in what became a "Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle" highlighting local perspectives, experiences, and voices. The work was necessarily emergent, a living project. Realizing that a written product of the research would not be welcomed, they focused on rich, oral stories of the Syilx experiences of residential schools, which were accessibly portrayed on a website and available to everyone. They share candidly their vulnerabilities and challenges, suggesting that building community during a project requires more than sensitivity alone. **David LeRue** is an artist, educator, and PhD candidate located in Montreal. He bases his work on his experiences as an art teacher to adults. He provides an excellent overview of Community-Based Research Creation (CBRC), which emerged from Community-Based Art Education (CBAE), generally defined as art education that takes place outside of school and university contexts. He suggests that his work differs from CBRC. For example, CBRC consults the community during the work, but the final product is that of the researcher. Alternatively, he works closely with each participant to create a piece of art that can stand on its own. While his work is similar to oral history research, which records oral personal/community experiences, it is different because it documents personal/community experiences in an art form that requires much more commitment and time. LeRue helpfully diagrams his research process and provides powerful examples of art that have been produced. Ethical threads which run throughout his arts-based research encourage emancipatory practices that create participant agency, foster reflection and action, and avoid deficit notions about communities. **Candance Doerr-Stevens** is an Associate Professor in Education at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, **Teresa Layden** is a 12th-grade teacher at the Arizona School of the Arts, and **Stephen Goss** is an Assistant Professor of English and English education at Kennesaw State University, in Georgia. Although very comfortable in the digital world before the pandemic, they realized, once teaching totally online, that to build relationships and foster community with students and colleagues in this context required much more than the use of words alone. They turned to arts-based approaches to engage students more actively and fully and modify the "airtime" they spent together. They share in this article wonderful, visual examples of digital poetry, selfie collage-making, and reflections on curriculum sharing via videoconferences. These arts-based, multimodal approaches motivated students to turn on their screens, transformed their learning, and forged collective inquiry as well as a collaborative community. Their work highlights how creative and active learning can be reimagined to work successfully in digital spaces. **Sumer Seiki** is an Associate Professor at the

University of British Columbia Okanagan School of Education. She shares how her narrative inquiry with two participants explored the practice of "hung dee moy," a Toisanese-Chinese support system in which women family members share traditions, offer practical support, and build community through connectedness. Felicia and Mary were interviewed by Sumer between 2016 and 2022. During this time, they explained how their mothers, who came to California in the 1950s to work in cannery factories, created a sisterhood using *hung dee moy* to mitigate the overt racism they experienced as well as the extreme isolation they faced due to living restrictions that barred them from moving freely in their daily lives. These compelling stories show the power of connectedness for building a sense of community, even in dire circumstances, and the intergenerational learning that occurs about both the political and the personal when this tradition is preserved and passed on from mothers to daughters.

Addressing learners' needs uniquely

Melissa Daoust is a teacher who works with refugee and immigrant students and is a doctoral student in education at the University of Ottawa, **Lee Schaeffer** is an Associate Professor at the University of Saskatchewan College of Kinesiology, and **Vera Caine** is a Professor and Director of the School of Nursing at the University of Victoria. Their narrative inquiry took place with two Nipugtugewei kindergarten teachers, Brenda and Joyce, with whom they co-created an "out-of-doors curriculum" in a Mi'gmaq community in northeastern Canada where the study was conducted. The term "out-of-doors" was purposefully used in lieu of "outdoors" to underscore the actual and metaphorical nature of the curriculum, which was rooted in the land and uniquely designed to honour, engage, and connect students with their community, language, and culture. They share how one young student experiencing learning difficulties flourished when the curriculum shifted in this way. The reflections of the participants, shared in found poetry, show profoundly the important role that the personal practical knowledge of teachers plays in curriculum spaces. **Andrea Van Vliet** is a program manager for early childhood education at the Ministry of Education in Saskatchewan. She shares poignantly how her personal and professional journey in education has made her aware of the long-term existence of the attitudinal differences that exist in society towards childcare education and formal schooling. She found that these became even more apparent to her during the pandemic when she and her partner had a child in daycare and another in elementary school. Van Vliet provides a very helpful overview of the general history of childcare and more specifically that of Saskatchewan, concluding that the lack of value and respect for childcare is grounded in economics and social class. She posits that the basic tenets of childcare—kinship, playful engagement, and interrelated content—are consistent with good teaching practices at any level and suggests that educators have much to learn from the field of childcare education for addressing the unique needs of each learner. **Diane Montgomery** is a PhD candidate at the University of Prince Edward Island, **Matthew Montgomery** works in the field of audio engineering, and **Molly Montgomery** is an undergraduate health sciences student at the University of Western Ontario. This article recounts the schooling experiences of Matthew and Molly, who were challenged respectively by autism and anxiety, and includes the perspective of their parent Diane. Diane recounts how her philosophical stance about her children's experiences was shaped by the work of Rogers (self-directed learning) and Dewey (experiential learning) and then, together, the authors examine Matthew's and Molly's experiences through the lenses of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997), self-determination (Deci & Ryan,

1985), and implicit theories of intelligence/mindset (Dweck, 2016). The compelling stories are situated and shared in audio files of a rap song, and an oral account, as well as in poignant excerpts. These bring the work to life. The authors conclude that the widely used Individual Education Plans (IEPs) developed to help to direct and support teachers in meeting the diverse and unique needs of "exceptional" learners often neglect the important need to engage students, build on student interests, foster independence, and provide a variety of approaches to learning that help to do this. **Rabab Abi-Hanna** is an Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education. **Tiffany DeJaynes** is an Associate Professor and **Amanda Gulla** is a Professor, both in English education. All are at Lehman College, Community College of New York. The power of poetic inquiry is the main thrust of this article and is supported with engaging examples grounded in an overview of the field. These authors, all of whom are clinical education professors who were supervising students' fieldwork during the pandemic, turned to found and black-out poetry to help support each other during these demanding times. They describe how creating poetry was a "discovery process, a way to explore challenges and reveal unarticulated concerns" many of which were the same—challenges, sensibilities, and goals for students—despite coming from varying disciplines. They became learners with their colleagues, who were able to address and respond to unique and individual challenges as well as common ones in a supportive environment, through the poetic process. No doubt the willingness to be vulnerable enhanced their feeling of community. A bonus of the work was that they shared their process and products with their preservice teachers to help them understand and appreciate experiences from many different perspectives.

Michael Dubnewick and **Tristan Hopper** are assistant professors in kinesiology at the University of Saskatchewan, **Sean Lessard**, is an Associate Professor and Adjunct Professor at the University of Alberta and Regina respectively. **Brian Lewis** is the Executive Director of Growing Youth Movers (GYM), a youth development program. The GYM after-school program is located in a community high school in Regina and is currently integrated within the high school curriculum as part of the Leadership Pathway Program for students in grades 10, 11, and 12. The aim is to integrate school-based curricula—leadership, arts, land-based, outdoor, and physical education with GYM to help meet the needs of learners in preparing for life after high school. This narrative inquiry was conducted with 10 Indigenous youth who were part of the program. It was through discussions over time with these students that the authors were able to uncover the "threads" of responsibilities that these youth face daily that push back against those of school. They emphasize the extensive weight and resulting tensions these responsibilities place on students' shoulders each day, month, and year. Through "reconstructed poetry" and compelling excerpts from their research conversations, the authors suggest that GYM acted as a liminal, or in-between space between school and home/community, where youth could destress and did "not have to worry so much . . . about getting the right requirements and stuff for the future." They discovered in their research not only the need to reimagine education, but also to "resist reproducing research and practice that begins and ends in concepts" in order to attend to the unique needs of students.

Shifting gears

Bhawana Shrestha is an Echidna Global Scholar at the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC. **Mahima Poddar** is an instructor with the US Embassy Book Bus, in Nepal, while **Samaya Khadka** is an undergraduate in business administration at Kings College Nepal. These authors describe how they have shifted from top-down teaching approaches to those with a student-oriented focus. The study explores how five mostly higher education classrooms used Design Thinking as a process to work collaboratively, creatively, and iteratively on problem solving where prototypes are produced and tested with users to find solutions that are practical. Initially, this student-oriented approach produced substantial frustration because of its huge pedagogical shift. Later, the benefits of this collaborative and creative work were realized and embraced. **Ralph Adon Córdova**, an educational ethnographer and consultant who is working with **Nikki Gamrath,** head of school, and **Sarah Colmaire,** assistant head, describe their post-pandemic, collaborative shift to a learner-oriented professional development initiative titled Depth of Study (DOS) in a K-8 school in Berkeley, California. They share, with very helpful examples, how DOS precipitates making the invisible visible, creates a culture-in-the-making, and demonstrates the over-time nature of change. The ethnographic practices of keen observation, documentation, and analysis helped students to discover and understand more deeply. Concurrently, through this professional development, the teachers witnessed the benefits of DOS and changed their approaches to teaching.

Examining values

Lori Rabinovitch is a researcher and a retired educator from the English Montreal School Board. She suggests strongly that education reform is a very complex process that requires a diligent examination of the often very entrenched and taken-for-granted Western values that dominate change. More specifically, she draws on her own local and international experiences and provides compelling examples to argue that curriculum reform is doomed to fail if not contextually grounded in locally articulated values. Her work illustrates the need for time to build collaborative relationships to truly understand local community needs and values for positive change to occur. **Stephanie Ho** is a PhD candidate in education at McGill University and an English language arts teacher at St. George's School in Montreal. As part of her doctoral research, she had intended to explore, through in-person, paired interviews, the perspectives of seven secondary five students about a form of Surrealist-inspired pedagogy that she uses in her teaching. Then COVID struck. She had to pivot and arrange for consent to conduct these interviews online. She found their online discussions naturally shifted from the topic of Surrealism to big, real-life questions that arose because of the unknown and constantly changing situation everyone was facing daily. Their discussions wove together their personal and school lives and went deeper than she ever could have anticipated, suggesting there are good reasons to use digital and intimate online spaces to explore deeply the perspectives of participants. Last and certainly not least, **Türker Kurt** is an Associate Professor in Science Education at Gazi University in Ankara, Türkiye. **Pinar Ayyildiz** is a translator, sociologist, professional development teacher, and language instructor. **Tuncer Fidan** is working as an internal auditor at Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University. These researchers identify the practices that perpetuate inequities in student access to universities in Türkiye. These, and the values undergirding them, are the tracking and stratification of students, socioeconomic status, and a "qualifying-elimination system" that ensures that students ranked in the top three categories stay on top. These authors recommend eliminating a

single-entry exam and qualitatively changing the nature of exams to embrace more open-ended questions and a range of modalities for expressing knowledge. Their hope is that their work in Türkiye will inspire other countries to work collaboratively with them to eliminate global inequities in student access to higher education.

I wish you an enjoyable summer and an invigorating read.

LBK

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Lynn Butler-Kisber (B.Ed., M.Ed., McGill; Ed.D., Harvard) is a Professor of Education in the Department of Integrated Studies, Faculty of Education and an Associate Member of the Institute for Health and Social Policy, Faculty of Medicine, McGill University. She was recipient of the 2022 Faculty of Education, Distinguished Teaching award at McGill and is the immediate past Chair of the Elliot Eisner Special Interest Group at the American Educational Research Association. Her teaching and research include qualitative research methodologies; leadership; multiliteracies; and professional development. She is particularly interested in arts-based methodologies, more specifically in visual inquiry (collage, photo/film, and visual narratives) and poetic inquiry on which she has written and presented extensively. She focuses on issues of marginalization, equity, and social justice. Her most recent publication (2023) is *Narrative inquiry of displacement: Stories of challenge, change, and resilience* (with Clark/Keefe and Savin-Baden, Routledge). She is founding (2007) and continuing Editor of *LEARNing Landscapes,* an online, open access, peer-reviewed journal that integrates theory and practice, encourages multimodal submissions and the inclusion of a variety of voices. Current projects include: The NEXTschool Initiative, and the Climigrant Project. She has done a range of international research and development projects in Dominican Republic, China, Indonesia, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and in the UK and USA.

Teacher's Choice: Agents of Harm or Help? Innovation as a Lever for Social Justice and Intersectionality

Sabrina Jafralie

Abstract

As educators, the need to adapt, change, and help students is always at the forefront. Today, there is a growing demand for teachers to innovate the curriculum to ensure accessibility and representation of student diversity as well as address inequities in education. This is an educator's professional reflections on the relationship between innovation in education and the use of social justice in Quebec's pedagogy, how to reduce injustices in the classrooms, and why it is necessary.

"Writing and learning from the lands of The Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabeg peoples, who have long ties to what is now the Island of Montreal. Kawenote Teiontiakon is a documented Kanien'kéha name for the Island of Montreal. The City of Montreal is known as Tiohtià:ke in Kanien'kéha, and Mooniyang in Anishinaabemowin."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu, one of the most famous anti-apartheid freedom fighters in South Africa, reminds us that a "little bit of good" adds up. During one of the worst periods in humanity, Tutu still inspired and called for positivity. This is innovation—it is an act of change. Most people define innovation as the ability or process of taking something old to create a new process, service, or model. This is what Tutu teaches us as educators to find something new in the old. In South Africa, the old regime was dark, negative, and violent. And as teachers, the old and dark are when our students are unseen, unheard, and unvalued. And yet in this darkest moment, innovation is a way that we can spread and teach positivity.

I have always wanted to be a teacher. I am a proud to be part of this profession. I am an Afro-Indian Canadian teacher, who proudly teaches at Westmount High School—a school that is always on the cutting edge, ensuring that our students get what they need versus what the curriculum may want to transmit. As a young child growing up, with an amazing single mother, my family taught me that helping others is in our DNA. It is who we are as a family and our legacy. I come from a long line of activists in education, who have committed their time and lives to making sure that students feel valued. This was done by taking a holistic approach to education. This is where my journey of changing the old into the new began. This was the debut of innovation for me as a teacher.

Currently, we are trying to educate, learn, and teach in a system that is highly politicized, and complex, and has completely ignored the need to integrate and teach the histories of equity-seeking groups in Quebec. We are teaching amid a number of laws and bills that have restricted our curriculum and the career choices of some of our students. As a result, the goal is clear: we must change the old and create an education experience that is equitable and inclusive.

I made a clear decision to use the tool of teaching as an avenue to help others. It was and, continues to be, a simple choice. We are responsible for making decisions about how we teach, what we teach, and the skills we would like to develop. Every single choice we make has the possibility to change the world into what it needs to be. Every time we enter a classroom and interact with our students, we have one single choice we need to make. Are we agents of harm or help in the classroom? It is important because teachers spend a significant amount of time with students, which, as a result, shapes and influences their school experience. Therefore, we must decide if we want to help create positive outlooks of learning for our students in the world in which we all live and interact.

When teachers overlook or fail to understand this choice, negative experiences happen. Currently, when we harm our students, we affect their lives immensely. Borri-Anadon and Collins' (2022) work with Afro-Canadian students illustrates that these students expressed feeling humiliated and disrespected by teachers. Their research draws on decolonized approaches and Black traditions to help uncover systemic barriers experienced by Afro-Canadian students. As educators, knowing that there is a group of students feeling demoralized should activate our need to undo this harm—to essentially change the old system into a positive experience, despite being in a broken and structurally discriminatory one. This is a must.

There is also a growing number of students who have reported bullying and experiencing micro-aggressions. This experience of micro-aggression, a term coined by Dr. Chester Pierce (Johnson & Johnson, 2019), is brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults toward people who are not classified within the "normative" standard. And our students experience both bullying and micro-aggressions from both their peers and teachers.

These student narratives let us know that the current state of education continues to fail and devalue our students. Knowing this, I knew making changes in what and how I teach was needed. I chose to use an intersectional (Crenshaw, 1989) and social justice (Pauly, 1989) approach to address the gaps in our pedagogy. These two approaches allow teachers to look at our students as diverse and holistic. Using an intersectional approach as educators is the acknowledgment that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression. Moreover, we must consider anything that can marginalize people—gender, race, class, sexual orientation, physical ability, and so on. It allows us to see the complexities of our students, and adding the social justice lens, helps us diversify and apply a tool which provides a framework in our curriculums to help guide learning, plan actions, and evaluate resources for social change.

Why are these approaches important? The two answers are: 1) to identify gaps and 2) to promote and bring about a sense of belonging. As human beings, we crave one thing—to belong and to find our place in this world. When our students enter the school system, they look to find their "group, crew, tribe"—their people. But they also look for themselves in the curriculum they experience. However, the current pedagogy reinforces a narrative of the dominant Western culture—one that excludes and signals to students from historical equity-seeking groups that they do not have a place here in this system, in this province, and in this country.

Imagine, that students spend at least 11 years in school from Kindergarten to Secondary Five. During that time, our Indigenous, Afro-Canadian, Asian Canadians, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh, and other groups do not see themselves represented in the curriculum. What they do learn about their histories is reduced to an unflattering and inferior narrative. This is why it is necessary to change the old into the new and find ways to show our students they matter. To do this requires consistency and dedication. For example, most educators now celebrate and integrate Black History Month into their pedagogies. However, why reduce the contributions of Afro-Canadians or any other equity-seeking group to a month? In my current curriculum, I use the social justice lens to diversify my sources, material, and topics. Last year, I focused on a new social movement per month, as opposed to reducing it to a specific time in our school year.

Innovation in education first requires self-reflection. When we make the conscious choice to be agents of help, we must also make a decision to be reflective, take into account our biases and lived experiences and be aware of the potential harm we can bring into the classroom. Also, we must change our mindsets and approaches, and be honest about gaps in our learning. It is never easy to recognize our predisposition to discriminate against our students or promote the current pedagogy as the most representative form of learning. Being reflective as teachers helps us to become more aware of underlying beliefs, and/or assumptions we have about our students, and what we teach. The ability to reflect helps us rethink and design truly equitable and positive learning environments. Reflection is required to help us consciously develop a mindset where equity and inclusiveness are at the forefront. This process, in turn, also opens the door to re-examine our approaches and incorporate a social justice approach in all our teaching and learning pedagogies.

In my case, the use of a social justice lens in my teaching did not happen overnight. It did not start with an immediate change to the curriculum. My desire and passion were to ensure that my students understood that they are agents of change in the world. As a student myself, I had a mixed experience. I was taught and understood about my value and history as a mixed-race Canadian. My mother was an Afro-Nova Scotian Baptist woman, while my dad is a Caribbean Indian Muslim. At home, both of my parents made certain that this history, absent in the school setting, was instilled in me at home. Fortunately, I did have teachers who valued me and recognized my learning style. This combination of knowing about my history as an Afro-Canadian and being seen by my teachers created a fairly positive school experience for me. Still, this absence of diverse pedagogy played a distinct role in who and how I am as a teacher and what I have taught in my classroom. Knowing that I wanted to approach pedagogy differently was a start, but ironically, it was when I began teaching Moral Education, and now the current Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture (MELS, 2008) (ERC) program, that I found a path forward.

I pause here to take a moment to discuss the ERC program as it always receives a variety of responses that includes criticism. It is not a perfect program, yet it does open many doors for students and teachers. It paves the way to innovate teaching. Many educators do not realize that the ERC program provides students with a very vital skill—critical thinking. Throughout the program, the emphasis is on developing in students an understanding of the greater good and to recognize that in others. These two fundamental goals demand that students must think deeply and in a critical manner. ERC has provided me with a way to introduce and root social justice in my classroom. Drawing from the program, I have been able to

introduce to my students the need to think for themselves. In turn, it has given me the opening to explore topics that were glaringly absent from the curriculum, for example, religious literacy, the women's movement, the genocides in Rwanda, and new social movements such as Black Lives Matter and the #metoo movement. This was my innovative moment. I took the opportunity provided in this program and opened the doors for my students. For over 10 years, this subject has given me the platform to present a multitude of social justice issues to students.

As mentioned, the ERC program promotes critical thinking as a fundamental skill. And for me, it was the perfect storm. I believe that critical thinking helps both teachers and students learn how to create new ways of learning and thinking. It allows us to think differently and outside of the box to voice what needs to be said and what is feared to be said. With practice, care, and understanding, critical thinking permits educators to help students express themselves respectfully, while being able to absorb and understand a diverse number of perspectives that they can examine and process. It does not promote one dominant view. Rather, it creates space for different views to exist. This is how I innovate, how I make certain that social justice is present in my class, and nurture inclusiveness. For example, when Bill 21 was first proposed, it was necessary to address my feelings as an educator and to reduce any bias that I held. Instead, I created a series of lessons in which the students and I examined the history of French Canadians, the notion of secularism, the varying opinions of the law, and finally the multiple impacts of the law. Additionally, when I am addressing the Black Lives Matter Movement, and the injustices experienced and faced by People of African descent, it is vital that I research and present a narrative that does not pigeonhole the community. What this means is creating lessons that permit students to see the diversity in the African communities and their experiences not only in Montreal, Canada, but also worldwide. Innovating and social justice in pedagogy means creating space for a multitude of perspectives, despite their similarities and contradictions. As teachers, we must ensure that this perspective and its impact on equity-seeking groups are presented and that students are not solely introduced to the dominant narratives, but, rather, they learn to challenge it.

Critical thinking is the one of the most significant and innovative skills that signals to our students to embrace change and to "draw outside of the lines." The ERC program has given me the opportunity to present a multitude of social justice issues to our students. Additionally, it has allowed me as a teacher to be challenged by my students and to be consistent with my reflectivity. This has ensured that I am acting as an agent of help in the classroom. Students, both in secondary school and university, often ask me why don't I exclusively teach at one level—high school or university? My answer is because of innovation and access. Secondary school teaching for the last 22 years has challenged me to find new ways to present the curriculum while ensuring that students are not harmed and are able to navigate this world and its injustices. Secondary school students also keep me invigorated, creative, and honest. On the other hand, teaching preservice teachers allows me to ask them the question, that is, will they become agents of harm or help? And if they choose help, this provides me both a platform and an opportunity to present the need for a social justice approach and inclusiveness in future learning environments. In addition, it gives me access: I get the opportunity to prepare future citizens and teachers. This is my innovative way of doing my "little good bits" in education. And, in turn, I hope that my acts of goodness will inspire a movement of goodness in the classroom.

Finally, we cannot teach if we cannot innovate and ensure that every single student we are privileged to encounter feels worthy. Worthiness stems from their understanding of diversity, their access to learning, and their feeling valued. We all have the capacity to make change happen. To reiterate, it is a privilege to teach, and it is our duty to innovate to make every student's learning/school experience positive and liberating.

I leave you with the powerful words of W.E.B Dubois, an African-American author, "Children learn more from what you are than what you teach" (Dubois, 1920).

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Sabrina Jafralie (she/her/elle) has led an impressive career as a secondary school teacher and a university course lecturer in her 21 years working in both the United Kingdom and in Canada. Her research includes equity and religious literacy, inclusion, and purposeful dialogue. She received her Master of Arts in Theological Studies from Concordia University, and a PhD in Teacher Education from McGill University in 2017. In 2018, she received the certificate of achievement for the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence. In addition to her teaching and research, she does substantial activism. In 2019, she garnered the Activist of Year Award. And in 2021, she was recognized as a Black Change maker in Canada. In September 2022, Dr. Jafralie was a Ted Talk X speaker. Recently, Dr. Jafralie was included among the top 100 Black Women to watch by the CIBWE.

Education [and Schooling] in a Pivotal Time

Debbie Pushor

Abstract

While the terms "schooling" and "education" are often used as if they are synonymous, they name different, yet complementary, aspects of a child's learning experience. Education is a birth-to-forever process that is undertaken by parents and family members. Schooling is just one part of that education process. To reach desired educational outcomes for students, it is imperative that we step away from "schoolcentric" practices and instead "walk alongside" parents and families as they work to realize their hopes and dreams for their children.

I remember attending my son Cohen's parent-teacher conference in the spring of his Grade 1 year. In the area of Social Studies, his teacher's comments were extensive and effusive. While the curriculum, she noted, focused on family and community, she expressed her awe of Cohen's vast knowledge of curricular concepts reflective of social studies expectations in grade levels much beyond Grade 1. She shared examples of things he had said and created that evidenced his knowledge of provincial government, of the role of the Premier as leader of the province, and of how political parties campaign for voter support. It was obvious that she had been awaiting our conference time with much enthusiasm; she was so excited to share her amazing discoveries of Cohen's knowledge with us. That moment, for me as a parent, was uplifting—and disheartening. While it filled my heart to see that my child's teacher valued my son's knowledge and interests, it became readily apparent that she did not know much about our family, about who we were or what we did, about the home context in which Cohen was learning and growing.

At the time, my partner Laurie was working in the Premier's office. He had about a 10-year history of roles in government, primarily working in ministerial offices within the legislative building. Cohen had visited the Legislature a number of times over the years, sat on the Premier's knee as a toddler, spent time in a campaign office and at political rallies, and attended the children's "Breakfast with the Premier" session at a political party's convention. While Cohen was learning social studies at school, he was also immersed in a rich education at home, one that included natural and authentic life experiences through which he gained knowledge and understanding of both provincial governmental and political processes. Had the teacher known more about Laurie's career background, about his personal, practical, and professional funds of knowledge (Elbaz, 1981; Gonzalez et al., 2005; Moll et al., 2005; Polanyi, 1958; Pushor, 2015a), how might she have had greater insight into Cohen as a student and as a learner in her classroom? Why is it important for teachers to know children's families and the way in which parents are engaged with their children in and out of school times and places?

Schooling Is Just 20% of a Child's Education

Children are awake approximately 16 hours a day and, in those waking hours, they are in school from approximately 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. each weekday, for about 36 weeks of the year. Let's do some math:

16 awake hours/day x 365 days/year = 5,840 hours/year.

6.5 hours/day x 5 days/week x 36 weeks/year = 1,170 hours in school/year.

1,170 hours out of 5,840 awake hours = 20% of children's awake time is spent in school.

If only 20% of children's awake time is spent in school, that means that for 80% of their time they are learning and living in spaces and places other than schools. What are the implications of these percentages for teachers and schools?

Parents Educate Their Children From Birth to Forever

I believe passionately that education begins the moment a child is born. Parents and family members bring that baby into their home and, as they rock, sing, and read to the child, as they introduce the child to the world around them, as they do things with them, as they take them places, as they teach them things, the child's education unfolds. When a child arrives at school in Prekindergarten, Kindergarten, or Grade 1, they have already had years of education. That education continues for 80% of the child's schooling years, and then, once the child exits the school system, the child continues to be educated by their parents and family members as they apply for jobs or postsecondary education, as they learn to do their taxes or negotiate rental or mortgage agreements, as they move into the new realms of their adult life. Education, then, is a lifelong process under the purview of parents and family. It encapsulates all that they do to realize their hopes and dreams for their child and to support that child in realizing their own hopes and dreams. Schooling, while a critical and formalized part of a child's education, is just one element in that birth-to-forever process. If teachers do not know how parents and families are educating their children, they are missing opportunities to bring that learning into curriculum, to build on home and community learning, to honor families' culture and identity, and to work together toward learning outcomes, rather than working in isolation.

Moses (2022) labeled this phenomenon of teachers' lack of awareness of the education children are receiving at home as "consistently invisible family engagement." To explain, she wrote that her parents were "intentionally consistent" in their parenting of her and her sibling and yet, most of their consistent efforts were "invisible" to her teachers and administrators (para. 1). I remember a time when I took a class of graduate students to a Sweatlodge ceremony in a Reserve community close to the city. A Sweatlodge is a spiritual ceremony for prayer and healing, that in our case was led by Cree, Ojibway, and Dakota Elders who know the language, songs, traditions, and protocols of their culture's inherited tradition. In the dimness of the low, domed lodge, just before the door to the Sweatlodge was sealed, a vice principal seated beside me leaned over with excitement and told me that two of the Indigenous youth across the circle were Grade 8 students at her school. She admitted that she did not know that they participated in cultural ceremonies. As the two youth sang and drummed within the ceremony,

her understanding of them as leaders, as significant members of their community, and of their culture and identity grew immensely. Now that she knew what she knew, what might she change for all of them in terms of teaching and learning opportunities and possibilities?

What the Pandemic Brought to the Surface for Many

When schools closed because of the Covid-19 pandemic, many children moved to online learning or to home schooling arrangements while others became lost to the school system during this period. This interruption of in-school learning prompted an outcry about the "learning gaps" and the "learning loss" that would result. Children's learning was being spoken of as if it was a near to complete loss yet, given what we can see from the math I did above, what children lost was some portion of their 20% of schooling time. Children continued to live and learn in the spaces and places that comprised the other 80% of their lives during this time, as invisible as that may have been to their teachers, school leaders, and/or to other educational experts or policymakers.

What public and educational discussion of learning loss reflected was a "schoolcentric" (Lawson, 2003) view of children's teaching and learning experiences. It was a view that ascribed value only to the 20%, to the formalized component of their education, and not to the consistently invisible family engagement that was also contributing to the teaching and learning opportunities in the other 80% of children's education. What was centered in this narrow schoolcentric view of children's education was the school curricula and the attainment of defined outcomes sought within that curricula. What became the focus of discussion, and, in many cases, cause for alarm, was the work that parents were doing—or not doing—to support formal curricular learning during their children's school closures.

When children returned to school, the alarm about learning gaps and losses prompted a strong focus in schools on the need for interventions, interventions that would reduce the gaps and would help to rebuild the losses in children's learning. The Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.) defines intervention as "… 'stepping in', or interfering in any affair, so as to affect its course or issue" (Definition 1). This word implies that someone in a hierarchical position is stepping in to exercise authority over someone else. It implies expert knowing. While the Oxford English Dictionary continues, in Definition 1, to say that the term "intervention" is "now frequently applied to the interference of a state or government in the domestic affairs or foreign relations of another country," the meaning of the term is reflective of a schoolcentric view in which power and authority are at play, where teachers wear a "badge of difference" (Memmi, 1965, p. 46), their professional degrees and certification that afford them expert status, and where formally defined curricula is privileged as the education that counts. Despite the perhaps good intentions, this schoolcentric approach is one that promotes intervention in order to "fix" children, parents, and families who are seen to be deficit, lesser in some way, not living up to the school's agenda. How might moving away from a belief in and practice of an interventionist approach create space for strength-based inspiration, innovation, and change in approaches to schooling?

A Shift to Familycentric Schools

Returning to the notion of education as a birth-to-forever process, brings to mind an image of a newborn child nestled in the arms of a parent or family member. What words immediately come to mind for you as you think about the processes the family members will engage in to foster their child's ongoing development? Was "intervention" the first word that popped into your mind? I didn't think so. Were you drawn, instead, to verbs such as nurturing, care, love, support, encouragement? Families accompany their children through life as they grow and develop. In this same way, a "familycentric" (Pushor, 2015b) approach to schooling is a process of accompaniment (Green & Christian, 1998). It reflects a philosophy and pedagogy of "walking alongside" (Pushor, 2015b). In a familycentric approach, there is a belief in parents as holders of knowledge of children, teaching, and learning, knowledge different than the knowledge teachers hold, but complementary and just as important (Pushor, 2015a). As Darcy Hutchins (May 11, 2023), Director of Family, School and Community Partnerships for the Colorado Department of Education, stated so well in her keynote address at *Walk Alongside International: A Parent Engagement Think Tank* in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, teachers have rich knowledge of *content*—of curricula, teaching and learning strategies, assessment practices—but parents have knowledge of *context*. They know their child's history, the people in their life, what makes them laugh and cry, the range of experiences they have lived, their culture, identity, and language. They can detail for teachers the 80% of the child's education that would otherwise be invisible on the school landscape. As teachers and administrators "walk alongside" parents in their lifelong work to educate their children, it is a process of "caring for" and "caring about" (Noddings, 2002) the children, the parents and families, and the education process in which home and school each play a part. It is in the intimacy of connection and relationship that there is possibility for truly getting to know one another, and for building programs and curriculum out of the fabric of families' lives.

This is a pivotal time in society. There is so much at stake. We can continue to talk and think about children and families in deficit terms such as "recovery" and "interventions," maintaining our sense of power, authority, and expert knowledge, or we can interrupt the taken-for-grantedness of a schoolcentric stance and come alongside families, all families, truly seeing and valuing their knowledge, assets, strengths, and hopes and dreams for their children and themselves.

> A little bit of you, and a little bit of me.
>
> In stories that we weave.
>
> If you would walk with me. (Aglukark, 2022)

The time is ripe to take up a familycentric philosophy and pedagogy of "walking alongside."

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Debbie Pushor, PhD, is a mother of three adult sons, and a former public school teacher, consultant, principal, and central services administrator. She is a Professor in the Department of Curriculum Studies at the University of Saskatchewan, Canada. In her program of research, Debbie has engaged in narrative inquiries into parent engagement and leadership, a curriculum of parents, parent knowledge, and systematic parent engagement at both elementary and secondary levels of schooling. In her undergraduate and graduate teaching, Debbie makes central an often absent or underrepresented conversation about the positioning of parents in relation to school landscapes.

Poetic Inquiry as a Tool for Interrogating Mentoring Relationships in Teacher Preparation

Rabab Abi-Hanna, Tiffany DeJaynes, and Amanda Nicole Gulla

Abstract

In this article the authors, a Mathematics education professor and two English education professors, describe how we used poetic inquiry in peer-led professional development workshops for field supervisors who observe and evaluate teacher candidates. Poetic inquiry was taken up to better understand our shared experiences of mentoring teacher candidates and to deepen our thinking about our own pedagogical practices. The experience of writing and sharing these poems in our monthly workshops highlighted commonalities in our values and approaches to mentoring teacher candidates and allowed us to reflect on our own identities and how they influence our practices.

Poetic Inquiry as a Tool for Interrogating Mentoring Relationships in Teacher Preparation

Teaching Internship with College Supervision

7 Full-time teachers, 7 coaching visits
7 pre-conferences, wait, “Professor, I am disappointed, can I do another one?”
That makes for 8 observations, on-line and in-person
Why are there only 7 days in a week?

The train is packed at 7am, heading to first in-person observation
7 rings on the phone, my mute button was accidentally on
I missed the phone alert, a fire in school is going on
Hey Professor Cruz, will observation still move on?

7 minutes away from school, the show must go on!

Teaching Internship is theories put to practice
Watching classrooms go, you must be quick like a mantis
Chit-chats here and there, you perform critical analysis
Preparing GLOWs and GROWs, advocating like an artist

Do Now’s are too long and sometimes are too short
When will this Do Now ever end?
Teacher Interns have to read “Teach Like a Champion”
Or read a related chapter of "First Days of Schools" by Wong

Lecturing here and there, students’ minds wandering off
Teaching is more about what students can do rather than what teachers know
Effective mathematics teaching is about asking good questions

Probing that stimulates thinking and not rhetorical questions

A need to master five practices for orchestrating effective discussions
"Never say anything a kid can say" is the mantra to live on
Purposeful and intentional planning, will never do it all
But teaching with LOVE and LOGIC will complete it after all (Celia Cruz, 2022)

Celia Cruz, a Mathematics education professor, shared this poem in one of our meetings. She insisted that she had never written a poem before, but was on her way to observe one of her teacher interns (a candidate who is a teacher of record working towards initial certification) when she felt compelled to capture the breathless rhythms of her day, traversing the city to coach novice teachers who were navigating the rough waters of learning to become a teacher. Her poem brought out the complex amalgamation of emotions and thoughts associated with her role as a coach alongside the candidates' need for reassurance and guidance. We can feel the overwhelming day she is experiencing through the breathless quality of the first two stanzas, all while getting a glimpse of her perspectives on teaching and learning.

This poem was an impressionistic mixture of a day in the life of a field supervisor, bits of dialogue with teacher candidates, and reflections on the mentoring relationship. The experience of writing a poem opened a door for the faculty member to process and express her thoughts about her work, and share these insights with peers in our professional learning workshops. It is striking that the author of this poem had the poetic instincts to use a hip-hop inflected rhythm and loosely slanted rhyme in part of the poem, like here:

Teaching Internship is theories put to practice
Watching classrooms go, you must be quick like a mantis
Chit-chats here and there, you perform critical analysis
Preparing GLOWs and GROWs, advocating like an artist

As Prendergast (2009) points out, "There are rhythms to the inquiry process as there are rhythms in poetry" (p. xxvii). These rhythms are part of the impressions we absorb when we attend closely to speech and to the ways in which we move through spaces in the course of the work that we are simultaneously doing and observing. By setting her descriptions of interactions with students to a rhythmic beat, our Mathematics professor turned poet is playfully gesturing towards the high school setting in which these interactions are taking place.

Why Poetic Inquiry in Teacher Education?

Poetic inquiry has been used as a way of deepening understanding of others (Davis, 2021; Gulla, 2014; Hansen, 2004). Pithouse-Morgan (2019) discusses how scholars in a range of social science disciplines have explored poetry as a means of professional learning research and practice. Wiebe and Snowber (2011) suggest that the act of poetic inquiry, specifically writing autobiographical poems, "insists on a willingness to be vulnerable…from which we can profess a creative experience of educational practice" (p. 449). Across disciplines, findings indicate that, "poetic professional learning can heighten self-insight,

empathy, and social awareness on the part of professionals such as teachers, social workers, and nurses, as well as offer insights into the individual and collective learning experiences of these professionals" (p. 135).

In teacher education, poetic inquiry has been used as a means for helping candidates "explore how their identities may shape them as teachers" (Gulla, 2014, p. 142). Lyle and Caissie (2021) describe using poetic inquiry to encourage an engagement with self and others, creating a space for more shared and humanizing educational experiences. In *A Poetics of Teaching*, Hansen (2004) describes poetic inquiry as a "process of active response to the world involving a deepening understanding and sensitivity" (p. 122). The process allows teachers the opportunity to know each student as a whole person with strengths, weaknesses, interests, and concerns (Hansen, 2004). Chisanga and colleagues (2014) show that the collective process of creating encourages reflexivity and highlights "that what we know and how we know are interconnected" (p. 24). Taking part in a reflexive practice leads us to look inward and reflect on our own biases, pedagogy, and discipline (Meskin et al., 2014). We began weaving the poetic inquiry experiences into our monthly workshops with field supervisors with the intention of providing them with a strategy that would enable them to reflect upon and articulate in new ways what they were observing in classrooms and in their interactions with teacher candidates.

The scholarship of caring in higher education connects relational pedagogy to active engagement through creative and imaginative work. Maxine Greene (2010) speaks of the social imagination as "a transmutation of good will, what [she] call[s] wide-awakeness in action" (p. 1). Greene cites Freire's (2005) statement that the poor people of Brazil must be able to "imagine a lovelier world" (p. 30) in order to bring about change. Indeed, we are reminded of Peter Pan's admonition, "Lovelier thoughts, Michael!" (Barrie, 1911) to young Michael Darling when he attempts his first flight in the nursery. In order to achieve flight, whether literally or metaphorically, the imagination must be engaged.

In a lecture at the Museum of Education, Greene (1998) insists that she wants people to be moved by encounters with works of art—to "not just feel, not just think, but take someone's hand and act." She understands how works of art can inspire imaginative thinking which leads to empathy through a sense of connectedness—the ability to walk in another person's shoes. Parker Palmer (1998) tells us that, "good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that students can learn to weave a world for themselves" (p. 11). Palmer envisions classrooms in which teachers and students are engaged in a cooperative inquiry into the subject at hand. Harriet Schwartz (2019) tells us that "we must be present enough to hear the student's story and notice the student's affect" (p. 21). This suggests a kind of deliberate deep attentiveness, akin to Greene's notion of the social imagination. The instructor or field supervisor's investment in inquiring into their relationships with teacher candidates through the act of writing poems can manifest in greater empathy through reflection.

Hansen (2004) characterizes *poetics* as heightening the senses of appreciation and alertness; it depicts how we interact with the world. Poetic inquiry can be used to "reveal and explore the meaning that people find in the world and to understand their lived experience" (Haggith, 2021, p. 2). Likewise,

Zimmerman and colleagues (2019) claim that poetry has a way of conveying the experience of being in a classroom and what it is like to teach and learn; they see poetry as "a particularly powerful medium through which to explore the realities of teaching" (p. 304). As a culturally relevant methodological tool, poetic inquiry engages learners and encourages sense making (Davis, 2021).

Furthermore, creative writing contributes to developing metaphorical thinking, which is an important component of critical thinking; "[m]etaphors serve the essential cognitive function of bridging from the familiar to the unknown by using descriptive imagery that allows learners to use their prior knowledge to understand new information" (Gulla, 2014, p. 144). Creativity stretches their thinking and promotes the generation of new ideas and the connection to old ones.

The Broader Context

In university-based teacher education programs, the foundational and methodological induction culminates in the clinical practice experience, in which teacher candidates have what is often their first teaching experiences. In one 15-week semester, the candidate learns what it means to get to know their students, their curriculum, and the school culture and expectations. However, there is a considerable cognitive and social-emotional leap from taking classes on a college campus and writing lesson plans and reflection papers, to teaching actual students in a community school. Once candidates reach this culminating step in their preparation programs, they rely on clinical faculty and mentor teachers to guide them through the daily realities of being a teacher. This experience entails a shift in the student's experience of the degree program in which they are matriculated, as they suddenly move from a student role to being one of the adults in the room in charge of delivering the high school curriculum. This can be challenging regardless of the student teacher's identity. Some undergraduate students in particular might only be a year or two older than the high school seniors they are supposed to be teaching. For others, there might be wide gaps in age and/or culture that need to be navigated in order for teacher candidates to find their authentic teaching voice.

This article's three authors are two professors of English education, Tiffany DeJaynes and Amanda Gulla, and a professor of Mathematics education, Rabab Abi-Hanna in the Department of Middle and High School Education at Lehman College, City University of New York. Beginning in the fall of 2021, Amanda Gulla and Tiffany DeJaynes began leading a series of monthly meetings intended to provide support for field supervisors responsible for mentoring teacher candidates in rolling out new requirements for student teaching. Very quickly, those meetings moved onto more substantial discussions about our values and practices. Amanda Gulla, a poet and a practitioner of poetic inquiry, began sharing poems she had written based on observation field notes gathered in schools. This led to incorporating poetic inquiry into the workshops as a way of helping the field supervisors think about their practice in new ways. We also read and discussed two books, *Cultivating Genius* by Gholdy Muhammad (2020) and *We Want to Do More Than Survive* by Bettina Love (2019). These books helped us frame discussions of anti-racist pedagogy and what that could look like in clinical practice spaces. The faculty were specialists in Math, Science, English, and TESOL education, and most did not consider themselves poets or even creative writers. Poetic inquiry was taken up as a professional learning activity to better understand their shared

experiences of mentorship and clinical supervision of teacher candidates and to deepen their own pedagogical practices. Once we began the poetic inquiry work, we wanted to find a way to be able to help the supervisors who had little or no background in creative writing feel comfortable writing poetry. A fortuitous conversation about creativity and art in math led us to invite our Mathematics education colleague Rabab Abi-Hanna to lead a discussion around identifying the mathematical principles at work in Picasso's painting *Guernica*. This discussion led to the creation of the poem, *Talking about Guernica on a Snowy Morning* that appears later in this article.

The clinical faculty who are responsible for evaluating teacher candidates' readiness to become fully certified teachers are seasoned experts in their classroom disciplines. During the past two years, however, as schools shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teacher educators have had to recalibrate how we prepare candidates. Furthermore, teacher candidates have entered school buildings where there is a pervasive sense of disorientation. Mentor teachers in whose classrooms teacher candidates are apprenticing have had to make multiple adjustments to changing conditions, so even seasoned veterans are finding themselves in uncharted territory. Furthermore, during the 2021-22 academic year, as both K-12 schools and higher education returned to in-person teaching and learning, teacher candidates who had done all their coursework and fieldwork virtually were having their first experiences of being in classrooms with children and adolescents who had been learning remotely for the previous year and a half. These circumstances were unprecedented for all concerned. Many students had difficulty adjusting to being in school again, and teachers have had to support them in adjusting to the as-yet undefined "new normal."

As part of our work reimagining the structure and assessment of student teaching, we devised a study to explore these questions:

- How do field supervisors coach teacher candidates and decide on which instructional practices (e.g., questioning) they ask candidates to refine?
- How has the shape of our collaborative, shared learning community affected the changes we see in field supervisor practice?

We realized that most clinical faculty focused on specific characteristics that mattered to their discipline. We wanted to offer a new way to see their practice and deepen the conversation and feedback they are giving to students. Amanda Gulla suggested using poetic inquiry as a way to help field supervisors engage in a kind of active listening to teacher candidates, and as a way to articulate their values and concerns related to their practice of guiding teacher candidates through their practicum experience. The poetic form was particularly freeing for field supervisors, as poetry created a space that allowed them to express their own complex and sometimes contradictory emotions as they navigated the shifting landscapes of city schools.

Our Reflective Process: Uncovering Shared Values and Experiences

Our data collection consisted of field notes and transcripts of monthly meetings with all field supervisors, cross-referenced with teaching artifacts such as lesson plans and handouts from teacher candidates, assignments from the student teaching seminar, and feedback from their mentor teachers.

As we proceeded with these monthly professional development sessions, we began to ask ourselves what strategies we might incorporate into these sessions that could help teacher candidates learn from the challenges of a school system under pressure to redefine learning goals in a world still reeling from a global pandemic. As teacher educators, we are engaged in the process of exploring the question: "To what extent can the schools in which the teachers work become institutions in which the teachers learn as well as teach?" (Proefriedt, 1994, p. 121). In other words, we are currently in the process of considering how to make the most of that 15-week semester so that candidates feel truly prepared to be teachers of record by the end of it. In the spirit of John Dewey's (1934) experiential learning, we consider how creative engagement deepens understanding of an experience. "The point of such activities," Maxine Greene (1980) tells us, "would be to make people see, to break with compartmentalized viewing, to take new standpoints on the world" (p. 318). In this context, using a poetic lens is consistent with the existing expectation that teacher candidates learn to become reflective practitioners, as "The potential power of poetic inquiry is to do as poetry does, that is to synthesize experience in a direct and affective way" (Prendergast, 2009, pp. xxi–xxii).

As we read and discussed the poems our colleagues had created, two significant themes related to identity emerged. One was simply "Who am I?" or as Parker Palmer (1998) says, "Who is the self that teaches?" Another theme is the shared values and experiences that guide us as we observe and mentor teacher candidates across disciplines. Regardless of subject area, we all expect teacher candidates to use questioning and discussion as "techniques to deepen student understanding rather than serving as recitation or a verbal quiz" (Danielson, 2011, p. 54). We also expect teacher candidates to enact a pedagogy that demonstrates a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in both the content of the curriculum and in their interactions with students and school staff.

The practice of poetic inquiry in these monthly meetings has consisted of blackout poems made from transcripts of recorded coaching sessions between field supervisors and teacher candidates, as well as found poems made from recollections of coaching sessions and conversations that were not recorded. The idea was to use these poems to gain insight, to emphasize underlying meanings that are illuminated by analyzing word choice, images, and metaphors used in conversations about their emerging teaching practices. This data reveals what is often not said explicitly or directly. From the poems written by field supervisors, we came to understand that there are many commonalities across disciplines in the ways we evaluate teaching.

We began our modeling of poetic inquiry by creating a found poem based on a recording of a discussion in one of our Zoom meetings with field supervisors. In the previous session, we modeled the practice of an "arc of questions" which Palmer-Wolf (1987) describes as "an investigation in which simple factual inquiries give way to increasingly interpretive questions until new insights emerge" (p. 5). Using Picasso's

painting *Guernica* as our "text," we led the supervisors through an arc of questioning aimed at helping them to examine and articulate how Picasso used symbolism and composition to construct a narrative. After this session it occurred to Tiffany and Amanda that we had constructed our questions through an English Language Arts lens, while we were working with faculty across disciplines. For the following session Rabab Abi-Hanna, who is a Mathematics education professor, led the discussion, returning to the same painting but focusing the questions on more mathematically oriented questions about the ways Picasso used lines, shapes, perspective, and dimensionality. While the field supervisors had enjoyed the previous conversation, this time they participated with great enthusiasm. Using the painting as a *Do Now* and the prompt "what are the math concepts that you recognize in the painting?" to bring out prior knowledge proved to be very productive. The idea was to stimulate their thinking and allow them an opportunity to participate in the mathematics conversation. Mathematics teaching in the United States is often criticized for its focus on "lower level skills and tightly controlled and curtailed *question-and-answer* routine called *recitation*" (Hiebert & Grouws, 2007, p. 392); the questions posed tend to be directed and do not challenge students or elicit critical thinking. By approaching the idea in a creative and engaging way, we created a space where all can participate. The contributions were based on participants' observations. They were discussing concepts of two-dimensional and three-dimensional figures, surface area, volume, geometric shapes, triangles, lines, curves, symmetry, and perspective; participants who were not mathematics educators noticed that they knew more math than they had previously realized. We recorded the session and Amanda Gulla (2022) produced this found poem based on excerpts from the transcript:

<u>Talking about Guernica on a Snowy Morning</u>

How many figures can fit in the room?
How can they all breathe?
There's just so much math!
The number of things going on in that space…
Volume. Density.

The artist is leading the eye.
Lines, curves, and symmetry.
The shapes construct the narrative--
a preponderance of triangles,
reflections and transformations.
It's two dimensional.
The artist didn't paint a third dimension.
The figures are like shadows.
As if they are transparent—

we see all planes at once.
The head of the bull,
looking at you
and away from you.

This poem captured the energy of the moment. Field supervisors were impressed with the synthesis of the ideas that emerged during our meeting. At the end of the discussion one of the seasoned math supervisors commented: "You could talk and talk about all the math in this painting. You wouldn't even have to do any math, just talk about it together and the students would say, 'I understand this.'"

In particular, the math educators participating in the discussion became excited to discover that a painting could be a source of such a rich mathematical discussion. Amanda Gulla, who synthesized this poem from our recorded discussion, described her writing process as "gathering what stood out to my ear, and organizing it to capture the energy and the flow of our discussion" (informal communication, 2022).

After this session we invited the field supervisors to write their own poems. The following poem was written by Rabab Abi-Hanna:

Revealing Questions

Questioning and discussion
Central to teachers' practice

Decompose a number and use distributive property to multiply. Brilliant!
6 times 73, 6 times 70 is 420, 6 times 3 is 18; 420 and 18: 438.

Important techniques to deepen understanding
Divergent, convergent questions

I can multiply fractions across, why can't I do the same when dividing fractions?

Make connections, challenge views
Students valued

Confusion on students' faces. Of course! They don't know a decimal point - they use comma instead

Effective teachers pose questions
Promote student thinking

A square is a special case of a rectangle?! How? Why?

Foundation of logical reasoning, critical skill

How does understanding the decimal numerical system help you understand any other base?

(Rabab Abi-Hanna, 2022)

In this poem, the author integrates mathematical language as a modality of sensemaking, which viscerally brings the reader into the mathematics classroom. Over the years, Rabab realized that questioning is vital to her teaching and understanding where her students are. Questioning gives students the opportunity to articulate their thought process and, in turn, it gives her insight into their understanding. For example, the distributive property is taught in elementary school without any understanding of its importance and its role in mental mathematics (one of the standards students are expected to master). Asking intentional questions revealed that the teacher did not see the connection between the distributive property and being able to use it to multiply, and neither did the students. Rabab recalls a conversation with an elementary teacher who did not see the value in teaching her second-grade students the distributive property. After a series of purposeful questions, and pointing out how the numeral is decomposed to make the multiplication simpler, the teacher enthusiastically exclaimed, "That's brilliant! I did not know that!" Purposeful questioning opens the door for mathematical discourse and the flow of thoughts, and sometimes, it heightens the looks of confusion on students' faces. Addressing the difference in the decimal notation used in Europe and other countries legitimized the uncertainty students felt. They knew their perspectives were valued. Planning deliberate questions is a powerful strategy that creates an inclusive classroom, and everyone has something to contribute to the conversation. And more often than not, it lays the foundation for a deeper discussion.

The act of writing this poem required that Rabab revisit moments in her teaching where the right questions significantly moved students' understanding forward. Reliving and reflecting on those teaching moments made her more aware of the dynamics of teaching through questioning. Intentional questions aimed at unveiling doubts and understandings (or misunderstandings) and required having the sensitivity to "read the room." Reading this poetic reflection makes those teaching moments vividly present, providing insight into not just what she did, how she did it, and how the students responded, but also to the palpable energy of a dynamic teaching and learning relationship.

The Selves That Teach: Unearthing the Values That Shape Our Identities

The outcome of our meetings unveiled the commonalities of what we were all experiencing as clinical faculty. We all encountered a disequilibrium when faced with the uncertainties the COVID-19 pandemic brought about, and the social awakening against racism our communities were experiencing. Suddenly we were confronted with the inequities that were daily realities for our students, such as uneven access to broadband and safe, quiet spaces that would allow them to work and study from home. We needed to adapt to this new virtual situation we confronted. Our teacher candidates looked to us for guidance, and we had to relearn ways of interacting with and supporting them during this unpredictable time imposed on us. In addition to maneuvering the obstacles of the pandemic, we were confronting our own identities against the backdrop of nationwide protests against racist policing during the summer of 2020. In order for us to find the commonalities shared within our disciplines, we needed to look within ourselves and find out who we were as individuals. After reading Bettina Love's *We Want to Do More Than Survive* (2019), Amanda Moody, one of the participants who is a TESOL Lecturer, led the discussion related to the reading and produced her poem that is a meditation on Love's description of what it means to be a "coconspirator," rather than merely an "ally" (p. 115).

Below is her original "black out poem," where she marked out various words, leaving only those that spoke to her in some way.

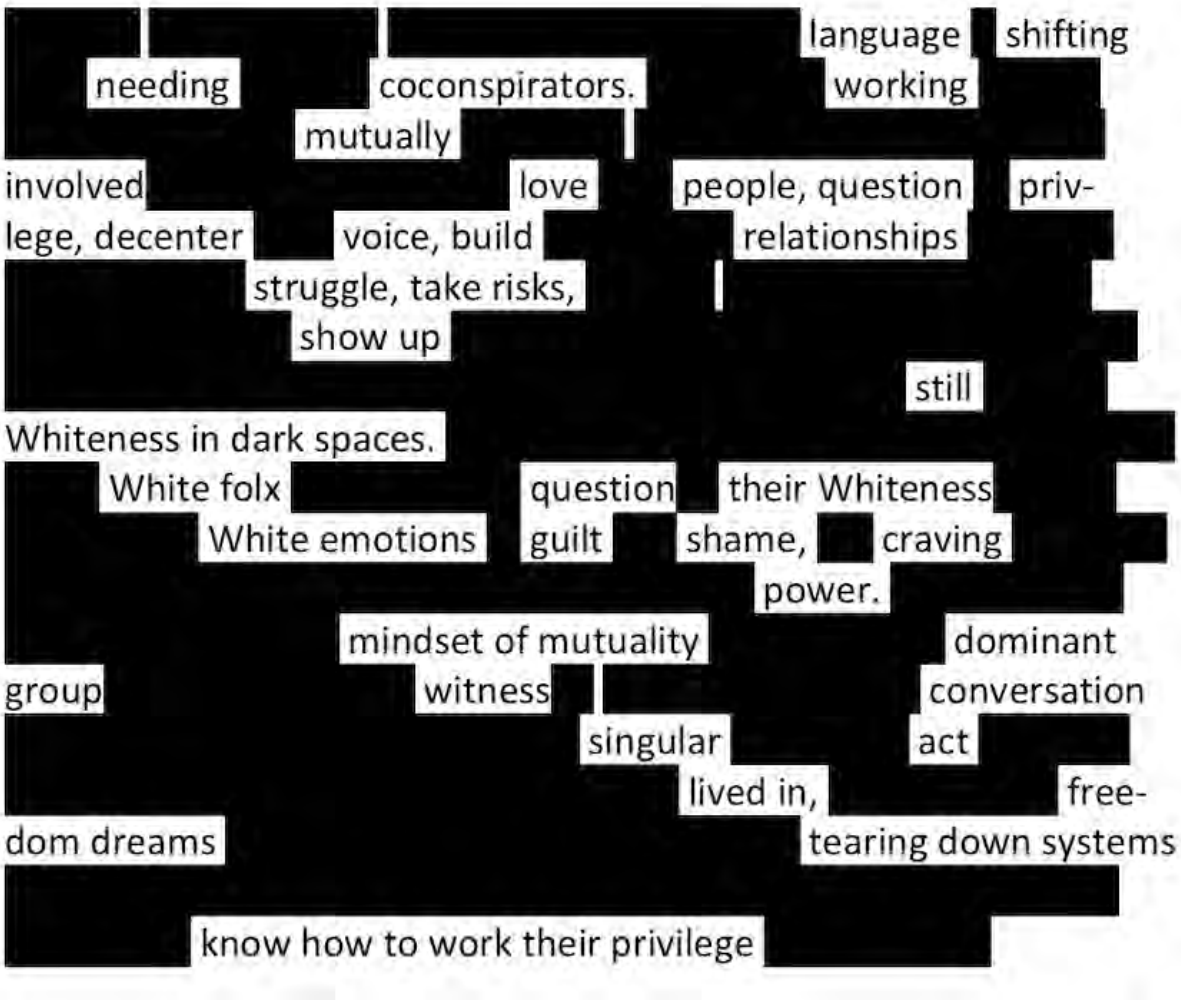

Fig. 1: Black out poem.

Amanda Moody's (2022) poem below reimagines her blackout poem (above) into a found poem. She leans into Love's original language, but reshapes the ideas by playing with word order and spacing. Her poem, which opened one of our sessions, became a de/re-construction of Love's critique of ally-ship and eager White folx.

To Wake up White

Language-shifting,
Needing coconspirators.
Working
Mutually involved
Love people
Question privilege
Decenter voice
Build relationships

Struggle
Take risks
Show up.

Still Whiteness in dark spaces.
White folx:
Question their Whiteness
White emotions –
Guilt
Shame
Craving
Power
Mindset of mutuality.

Dominant group:
Witness conversation –
Singular acts
Live in
Freedom dreams
Tearing down systems
Know how to work
Their privilege.

In our meeting Moody shared,

> I believe in her call for us White people to start waking up, confront ourselves as racialized beings, and dismantle oppression in our lifework. We must descend the staircases we have built, see under ourselves, read between the lines and excavate the dark spaces in what we say and do.

Her poem visually represents this staircase, and makes visual the ways in which "White folx" must work their way down the stairs moving from "white guilt" (a personal response) to doing the endless work of "tearing down systems" of oppression. In speaking to how she is intentionally trying to do this work in teacher education, supervision, and mentoring practices, she invited us (her peers) to be collaborators who are doing (or wish to do) the same. A participant who had objected to Bettina Love's work a semester prior, nodded, "Beautiful, thank you." It was a small moment of being called in through poetry. Moody's vulnerability and close engagement with anti-racist ideas through poetry had helped our colleague see the text anew. In transparently discussing her own process of moving toward being anti-racist and designing pro-Black learning spaces, she shared, "I'm not there yet, I'm working on it." The path toward becoming a "coconspirator" is deeply personal and she invited us on that journey with her.

Another workshop participant, Iain Coggins (2022), an English education field supervisor, wrote an extended metaphor, imaging his subway commute to schools across the city to observe student teachers as a contemporary embodiment of 19th Century English poet and schools inspector Matthew Arnold:

Ruminations of a Field Supervisor

Glum Matthew Arnold comes to mind
traversing Midlands,
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools,
lamenting diminishment
of poetic life, trundling
each milestone of the moors;
Trundling out a mission, road-fill for
Highway-builder father, yearning
to be "Free from sick fatigue,
the languid doubt." And out
the door I go across the Bronx, trundling
each station of the Number Two, the Four;
trundling out my mission, through one door,
then another in hill-stacked boxes,
up, down steep staircases, high
ceilinged rooms, and therein
finding poetic life perhaps
not in students, nor in teachers
but in eyes I bring to see
the nectar in a fleeting smile;
relief of a day finished;
spark of last minute idea;
contentment that comes
from a plan put off
for a few days more;
And voice I bring to praise.
Not what I see, but what
I am determined that I will

In our conversation, Rabab noted Iain's hope amidst the slogging along. Iain reflected on how fellow educators often express, implicitly and explicitly, that field supervision is "peripheral if not drudge work rather than 'mission driven'" as he sees it. His comparison to Arnold helped him consider how work in schools can be of service without romanticizing it. He noted,

> [Arnold's] work as a school inspector was not his calling. Rather, he wanted to be a major poet, like Wordsworth, with whom he and his family were acquainted. Instead, he had to obtain steady employment to win the hand of his bride, and so he became a civil servant. Yet at the same time, he was a major voice for education reform, and he was mission-driven. I'm wondering about the quality of tension between one's work and one's passion, how they fuel each other, or don't; and where, when, and how their intersection shifts, like a new road laid temporarily alongside an old road until the latter is plowed under or built over.

Iain's poem recalled Celia's poem from the introduction, the frenetic and sometimes disjointed nature of our slogging through our urban environment to "inspect" classrooms and teachers' practice. Our cohort of intrepid field supervisors saw themselves in his poem—the peripatetic, perambulatory nature of our work. His metaphor of "trundling" served as a sort of rumination on field supervision, joining the pragmatism of the work with fantasy. "Iain the inspector," as Amanda Gulla quipped, brought together a

clear sense of purpose, values, and a sense of honoring the small things. Iain's jotting of poems on the corners of lesson plans during his commute between schools was reminiscent of William Carlos Williams penning poems on prescription pads as he traveled between house calls to visit patients: passion and mission intersecting.

Conclusions

Poetic inquiry is a discovery process, a way to explore challenges and reveal unarticulated concerns. It gives us the space and time to look inward and reflect. It puts into perspective the importance of developing social awareness, empathy, and self-insight. Davis (2021) refers to poetic inquiry as an inductive process of poetic analysis and writes, "poetic writing is an introspective, interpretive act of critical thinking" (p. 115). Just as mathematics educators draw on inductive reasoning—looking for specific examples and observations to make generalizations and find patterns—clinical faculty, regardless of specialization, leveraged poetic writing to locate common challenges and shared sensibilities. Although the inductive process looks different across our disciplines, engaging in poetic inquiry together allowed us to highlight the power of creativity and reflexivity, and revealed our shared goals and vision for our students.

As clinical faculty gained insights through the poetic inquiry process, they shared both the process and the product with teacher candidates to help them to process the extraordinary and sometimes ineffable experiences of their apprenticeships. By incorporating this arts-based qualitative methodology, our intention is to provide a tool that will allow clinical faculty to articulate their observations about the complexities of the teaching and learning relationship.

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Fostering Hope and Resilience Through Children's Literature

Jackie Marshall Arnold and Mary-Kate Sableski

Abstract

Significant traumatic events affect communities and schools. Teachers need tools to help navigate challenging conversations with their students. Consequently, we utilized our children's literature course on the use of picture books that would invite dialogue supporting children responding to traumatic events. Specifically, we reconceptualized an existing read-aloud assignment to focus on selecting and using literature that facilitates children's responses to challenging life experiences. This article describes the read-aloud assignment, providing a content analysis of the books the preservice teachers selected, and examples of both preservice teachers' responses and K-12 students' responses to the literature.

Background

In the summer of 2019, our midsized, mid-western city experienced a series of challenging events. The Ku Klux Klan selected our city center as a site for a rally in May. Over Memorial Day weekend, several tornadoes tore through our area, leaving a path of destruction that continues to affect our community. Finally, in August, our city made headlines as the site of a mass shooting in our entertainment district, only one day after a similar tragedy occurred in El Paso, Texas. In addition, Dayton was the focus of a Frontline episode in early 2019, focused on our centrality in the opioid crisis, bringing to national attention the negative economic and societal impacts on our community. As teacher educators, we were keenly aware of how these events might affect the children and teachers in our area who would return to their classrooms at the end of the summer. Further, we knew the preservice teachers with whom we worked would need to be prepared to respond to the needs of the children they would meet in their field placements. The preservice teachers at our university are predominantly not from the area—they spent the summer in their home cities, potentially unaware of the context to which they were returning in August. Thus, we aimed to create space in our courses to help our preservice teachers consider the impact of these events on the students they would meet in their field placements and student teaching, and to provide potential tools with which to have these difficult conversations in sensitive, informed ways.

The focus of this article is on how we opened up space in our children's literature course to invite dialogue around how to support children in responding to traumatic events using picture books. Specifically, we reconceptualized an existing read-aloud assignment to focus on selecting and using literature to facilitate children's responses to challenging events. In this article, we will describe the existing literature surrounding using children's literature to facilitate difficult conversations with children, describe the read-aloud assignment, provide a content analysis of the books the preservice teachers selected for the assignment, and present examples of both preservice teachers' and K-12 students' responses to the literature.

Review of the Literature

Using children's literature with students can support their understanding and processing of traumatic situations and experiences (Wiseman, 2013). Teachers can use literature to support students as they look for answers and wrestle with contexts that are challenging and complicated. As educators, it is critical that we do not avoid the difficult conversations that students need to have, but instead prepare for these conversations through literature. Iaquinta and Hipsky (2006) write, "teachers can use children's literature to help students solve problems and generate alternative responses to their issues" (p. 210). Literature can be instrumental in helping students develop respect, tolerance, and empathy while also navigating and guiding complicated emotions (Harper, 2016; Kemple, 2004).

In order to successfully use literature to have those conversations, teachers must build relationships with their students and within their classrooms. "The real core of education is the relationship between the teacher and the student, and the extent to which that relationship nurtures the longing of the child to matter in the world, and the longing of the teacher to nurture and fulfill that desire" (Shriver & Buffett, 2015, xv). As Garcia (2019) writes,

> teachers should be well versed in meeting the needs of the students in our classrooms. This is fundamentally part of what teaching is about: students who hurt, are sad, or feel scared are a central priority in our classes. Forget standards and high-stakes assessments; comforting our students and helping them feel better within the world is a key part of our charge. (p. 72)

However, rarely are teachers prepared for how to build those meaningful relationships (Garcia, 2019).

Highly skilled teachers develop a social and emotional classroom foundation through nurturing, supportive relationships and through lessons that scaffold students' strengths and abilities. They also develop a classroom culture that encourages intrinsic motivation, facilitates classroom cooperation, and builds students' prosocial behaviors (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Harper (2016) discusses using comprehension strategies such as a Venn diagram, emotional puzzles, and open-minded portraits to support difficult conversations in the classroom. Bibliotherapy is another technique to help readers navigate challenging experiences and emotions (Sullivan & Strange, 2002). As Simmons (2020) writes, "We can best support our students who may be at risk for trauma by getting to know them; discovering their gifts; paying attention to and meeting their unique needs; being consistent, nurturing adults in their lives" (p. 89). Yet, little research currently exists discussing the complexities of selecting literature to use with children who have experienced traumatic events, and even less research exists discussing how to prepare for those complex shared experiences (Garcia, 2019).

We seek to build upon the conversation discussing how classroom teachers (and preservice teachers) might prepare and deliver a shared reading experience with young children that helps them navigate potentially traumatic contexts. As Wiseman (2013) states, "Reading picture books about topics relevant to children's lives can provide an opportunity for children to engage with ideas and experiences that are significant to them" (p. 2). Current research indicates that when schools support social emotional learning experiences, students benefit both academically and emotionally (Durlak et al., 2011; Dutro & Bien, 2014, Fisher et al., 2019; Haertling & Schmidt, 2017; Jones, 2019). This growing body of research

indicates that supporting students' navigation of difficult emotions is beneficial in multiple contexts (Dutro & Bien, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2019; Zins et al., 2004). Harper and Trostle-Brand (as cited in Harper, 2016) state that, "sharing high-quality picture books with children may heighten their awareness of emotions, enhance their sensitivity to other's feelings, promote empathetic behaviors toward others, and foster moral development" (p. 81).

Description of the Context

In our courses, we utilize children's literature consistently as a way to facilitate many different types of conversations. As we prepared for the semester following an extremely challenging summer, we looked to our bookshelves to help us find the words we needed to communicate the emotions we were feeling. School districts in our area were scheduled to start at least one month late due to renovation efforts following the May tornadoes. Just across the street from our building on campus, elementary school students who lived just steps from the location of a mass shooting were returning to classrooms. These children were waking up in fear when they heard fireworks going off as part of the local minor league baseball game, the sounds too similar to the horrific night they experienced just a few weeks prior. All of these stories and experiences weighed heavy on our hearts, and we sought to address them by bringing them to the forefront as part of our children's literature course.

Twenty-six sophomore and junior students were enrolled in the children's literature course as part of their four-year Teacher Education program. Students represented diverse licensure areas including early childhood, middle childhood, and intervention specialist (special education). The course serves as an introductory course to the reading/language arts (listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, visual representation) and the role literature plays in these processes. Topics examined include the foundations of literacy, research, theories, and related models of reading, various children's and young adult literature, the integration of technology in literacy, an overview of the importance of on-going assessment in teaching reading/language arts, and an awareness of cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity in individual learners. A focus of the course is on learning how to identify quality examples of children's literature, using resources such as the Horn Book database, a rubric to identify diversity in children's literature (Arnold & Sableski, 2017), and elements of quality writing. Preservice teachers align theory with practice throughout the course by connecting key theories of literacy instruction with the use of children's literature in the classroom.

When reviewing the course for natural opportunities to bring these difficult conversations into focus, the read-aloud assignment stood out to us as an ideal place. The read-aloud assignment asks the preservice teachers to apply the classroom content to practice by engaging in a read-aloud experience with students at a local elementary school. The elementary school where we traditionally brought the students for the assignment is located at the center of each of the tragedies our community experienced. Students at this school lived in locations that could have been affected by the opioid crisis, the tornadoes, the Ku Klux Klan rally, and the shooting—and their teachers were also looking for ways to answer their questions and have these conversations about difficult experiences in the classroom. So, we set to work at revising the

assignment to ask our preservice teachers to focus their book selection on literature that would serve these needs in the school community.

In preparation for the read-aloud, several class sessions focused on examining the critical elements of a read-aloud. Each class session included modeling of at least one read-aloud by the instructor, including a debriefing conversation in which the students identified the elements of the book that marked it as a quality selection, as well as the elements of effective read-alouds they observed in action. To guide the book selections, the instructor (Mary-Kate) engaged in a discussion with the preservice teachers regarding the multiple traumatic and stressful events that had taken place in our community over the summer. The goal of the in-class conversation was to help the preservice teachers identify that many of the students in their field placements have been affected by one (if not more) of these tragedies or events, and that the literature selected should provide support or exploration of ways to help children respond to these events in their community.

In specific, preservice teachers were asked to consider the following elements as they selected a book to read-aloud to the students. First, they were to consider the literary quality of the book, using the Horn Book ratings or critical reviews from other sources, such as *School Library Journal*. Second, they were to identify three examples of effective writing in the book to highlight for the students during the read-aloud. Further, they were to address response to trauma using indirect or direct techniques in the book they selected. The instructor provided the preservice teachers with a list of books about *Tough Topics* (http://www.ala.org/alsc/publications-resources/book-lists/toughtopics2019) for them to reference and use as a starting (or ending) point in selecting books. The preservice teachers were not required to select books from this list, but they were invited to do so. Finally, preservice teachers were asked to consider the grade levels in which they would be reading aloud. For the read-aloud experience, preservice teachers were placed in classrooms aligned most closely with their licensure areas. Early Childhood candidates were placed in K-3rd grade classrooms, Middle Childhood candidates were placed in 4th-8th grade classrooms, and Intervention Specialist candidates, whose licensure area would be K-12, were placed across the grade levels. Given these placements, preservice teachers searched for books that would appeal and align to their assigned grade level.

Preservice teachers brought their books to class for the instructor to review and provide any potential feedback regarding their selection. As the instructor reviewed the titles with the preservice teachers, some books were identified as potentially problematic given the limitations presented by this particular assignment. Preservice teachers were serving as “drop-in” readers, only meeting students for the first time when they arrived at the school to engage in the read-aloud. Thus, the relationships and community that would be beneficial in having difficult conversations with students were absent from this experience. Additionally, the school identified for this assignment was a private, religious school, located very close to the campus. The location and willingness of the faculty to participate in this experience made it an ideal selection, but the context of the school, coupled with the absence of relationships and community between preservice teachers and students, were limiting factors for the book selections. These factors were important in carefully navigating text choice for both the preservice teachers and the K-8 students. For example, one preservice teacher at first selected *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman, 2016). This

is an award-winning text that sensitively depicts a family with two mothers. This book does not address a challenging event or topic, but rather broaches a potentially controversial topic in this particular school context. Class conversations helped the preservice teachers identify their background experiences that might shape their perception of traumatic and difficult situations. The instructor used these initial book selections as opportunities to talk with the preservice teachers about the nuanced process of book selection, in which the specific elements of the goals of the read-aloud, the community of the classroom, and the broader context of the school and community, inform teachers' book selections.

After books were selected, the preservice teachers practiced giving the read-aloud with each other in class. Preservice teachers were encouraged to practice as much as possible to build fluency in all components before engaging in the read-aloud experience with children. During these practice sessions, preservice teachers also engaged in a formal peer review process. The preservice teachers would also engage in this peer review when they completed the read-alouds at the school, so the practice sessions helped them prepare both for their own read-aloud, as well as the peer review, which they would complete while their classmates read aloud. Each classroom was assigned two to three readers, so peer review was a way to ensure each preservice teacher received feedback and learned from their classmates' experiences.

Upon arriving at the school, the preservice teachers were guided to their preassigned classrooms. The preservice teachers introduced themselves and engaged students in the read-aloud experience of their selected text. During each read-aloud, the other preservice teachers in the room completed the peer review form. The classroom teacher monitored the class and provided any redirection needed to help the students stay engaged in the read-alouds. After the read-alouds were complete, the preservice teachers gathered in a conference room and responded in writing to the following questions: *Why did you select this book (cite the quality, diversity, and response to trauma)?* and *How might it help students respond to traumatic events?* Additionally, the preservice teachers reflected on the read-aloud in general, describing what went well and what they would change if they could complete it again. In the following section, we will share the experiences, reflections, and lessons learned about having difficult conversations with children's literature.

How Literature Generates Conversation

We explored how this read-aloud experience generated conversation in the classroom from two perspectives. First, we examined the content of the picture book selections through a content analysis of the books. Second, we used thematic coding to analyze the written reflections the preservice teachers completed following the read-aloud. These perspectives helped us understand the characteristics of books that can be used to have difficult conversations with children in the classroom, as well as the experiences, both positive and negative, of the preservice teachers in reading these books aloud in classrooms.

Book Selections

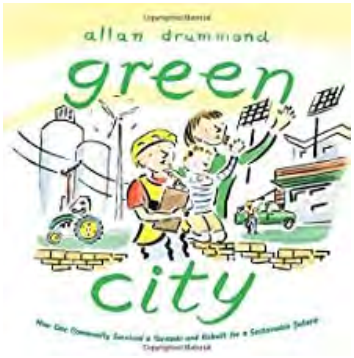
In class, the preservice teachers required multiple rounds of conversation and selection as they worked to understand what was being asked of them by the assignment. Selecting a book to support students during difficult times proved to be quite challenging for the preservice teachers. Their concerns centered around the content of the books, and not wanting to share a "depressing" story or something that would bring up topics to which the preservice teachers would not know how to respond. Further, the preservice teachers struggled with the notion that a book could be supportive of students dealing with challenging situations, without being directly about the topic. "I can't find any books about tornados," was a comment frequently heard in class. In response, the instructor shared books such as *Love* by Matt de la Pena (2018), to illustrate how books could address a theme that would facilitate challenging conversations, while not directly discussing a specific event. These in-class conversations shaped the preservice teachers' book selections, and led to the following categories of books selected for the read-aloud assignment.

The selected books had a message that was either "specific" (a specific traumatic event, for example) or were more "thematic" in that they had an overall message but did not reference a particular traumatic component. Of the 26 books, 14 (54%) were coded as specific (see Table 1). Examples of specific topics discussed in these 14 books include homelessness, divorce/separation, tornados, and refugee/immigration stories. For example, *Flowers for Sarajevo* (McCutcheon, 2017) is a heartfelt story depicting life for a family in the Bosnia War. *Green City* (Drummond, 2016) is a realistic fiction story articulating a community's experience after a tornado destroys their community and their decision and determination to rebuild a sustainable community. These books articulated specific traumatic contexts and the ways in which the characters persevered through the trauma. When preservice teachers brought these books to class for instructor approval, they were met with much envy by their classmates, as locating books about the specific events was seen as the main goal at the outset of the assignment. As later discussion will show, this sentiment changed once the preservice teachers actually engaged in the read-aloud with students, but initially, the preservice teachers sought to find books that were concrete reflections of the events the community experienced.

In comparison, 12 (46%) books were coded as thematic (see Table 2). These books focused upon overarching themes of hope, peace, kindness, and love in the face of adversity. For example, *When Sadness Is at Your Door* (Eland, 2019) is a touching story to support young people who are experiencing sadness and depression. *What Do You Do With a Problem?* (Yamada, 2016) discusses ways in which individuals can face and deal with the problems that just will not go away. *The Rabbit Listened* (Doerrfeld, 2018) is a touching story reminding the reader that sometimes people who are struggling just need someone to listen and hear them, not try to solve their problems. Preservice teachers selected these books after encouragement and prodding from the instructor, and with assurance that they would be appropriate ways to have these difficult conversations, without directly addressing the traumatic events. The uncertainty of sharing these books, and having these conversations, which the preservice teachers brought to the assignment, led them to lean on books that provided a concrete representation of an event they could be prepared to discuss. Preservice teachers had to be nudged to select books that left the conversations a bit more open, and invited responses they might not be able to predict, from the students.

Table 1

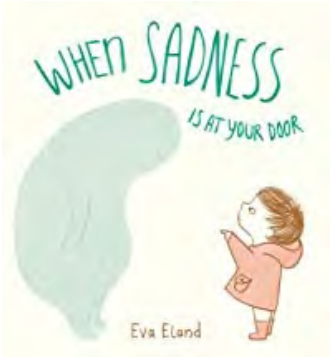
Books Coded as Specific Examples of Traumatic Experiences

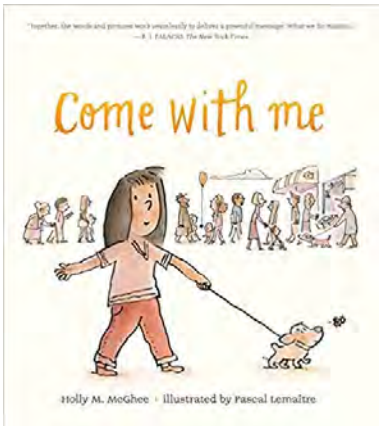
Book Cover	Annotation
	*Flowers for Sarajevo* (McCutcheon, 2017) In this lyrical and moving book, John McCutcheon shares the power of beauty in the face of violence and tragedy. This book takes place during the Bosnian War, but the themes of perseverance and community are relevant to modern-day contexts.
	*Green City* (Drummond, 2016) A testament to community and tenacity, this book tells the story of one town's response following devastation from a tornado. The book centers on the collaboration and grassroots efforts of community members to thoughtfully redesign their city, and make something positive out of tragedy.
	*The Quiet Place* (Stewart, 2012) A young girl who recently immigrated to the United States from Mexico struggles to feel "at home" in her new surroundings. With the help of family members, she creates a special place of her own where she can safely process the complex emotions she faces as she adjusts to her new life in America.
	*Fly Away Home* (Bunting, 1993) In sensitive and moving text, Eve Bunting addresses the realities of homelessness. As a book to help children see either themselves or others reflected, this story is an important exploration of a complex topic.

	*The Invisible String* (Karst, 2000) In this book centered on helping children process grief over the loss of a loved one, children are given a powerful metaphor to help them feel connected to those who have died. Widely used in counseling settings, this book offers comfort and connection to children experiencing grief.

Table 2

Books Coded as Thematic Examples of Traumatic Experiences

Book Cover	Annotation
	*Love* (de la Pena, 2018) Love comes in many different formats, and this book explores the complex ways in which love manifests in children's lives. Through both positive and challenging contexts, children will see the incredible power of love.
	*When Sadness Is at Your Door* (Eland, 2019) Sadness can be overwhelming and scary, but this picture book helps the reader give sadness a name and a face. Suggested activities for what to do when "sadness is at your door" are an integral part of this story.
	*What Do You Do With a Problem?* (Yamada, 2016) This story is for everyone who has had to deal with a problem that will just not go away. The child in this story tries to avoid the problem, but it only gets bigger. When the main character decides to face the problem, it turns out to be something much different than what it appeared to be.

	*The Rabbit Listened* (Doerrfeld, 2018) The Rabbit Listened is a poignant story for children to consider how to deal with loss. When something terrible happens, all of Taylor's animals want to give advice on what Taylor should do. When Rabbit arrives, and just listens, Taylor has just what is needed.
	*Come With Me* (McGhee, 2017) When a young girl grows overwhelmed by the negativity filling the daily news reports, she turns to her family for advice as to how to respond. She learns that being a positive presence in one's community can be enough to make an impact.

Written Reflections

The written reflections on the read-aloud indicated that the assignment fostered the capacity of the preservice teachers to use children's literature to have difficult conversations in the classroom. In their reflections, the preservice teachers explored themes of connections to the local community, children's responses to the read-alouds, and their own professional learning.

Connections to the Local Community

The preservice teachers made connections to the local community, which was a primary goal of the assignment. One of the most profound examples of this came from a preservice teacher who chose to read *The Invisible String* (Karst, 2000), which is a picture book about loss. The preservice teacher wrote,

> Before reading I did not think that the children would connect this with the tornado that came through Dayton. I was surprised how this was brought up and the children all wanted to share their stories after one child did. Then the children connected the book to their personal lives. One child connected the book to how she loves her father and how although he is in prison he is still connected to her. Another child then shared a similar story about his uncle, who is also in prison.

The preservice teacher was struck by the personal connections the students made to the book. During an in-class debriefing session, this preservice teacher shared this story with the rest of the class. Many of the other preservice teachers had similar experiences with their read-aloud, as they went into the assignment initially skeptical that students would be able to make any connections to the literature they chose and found that the connections, particularly thematic connections to broad themes represented in the books, were numerous.

Other preservice teachers selected books with the specific intention of connecting to the issues facing the community. Preservice teachers selected books with either specific examples of challenging contexts, or with broader themes to help children respond to challenging contexts. One preservice teacher, who read *Come With Me* (McGhee, 2017), stated,

> Around the city of Dayton, we have had shootings and tornadoes, which are two things children and everyone in the community had to battle their fears with. But, as the story goes on it teaches the students that living in fear does not help you, it shows the negative and scary things in life that they are winning. While we all might have a small part in the world, everyone's part matters so taking the walk outside and meeting people along the way and showing them to not live in fear is important.

In their reflections, preservice teachers connected their books to the issues the students they read to were facing. This was an ongoing topic of discussion in class, as preservice teachers struggled to select books that would facilitate difficult conversations without being didactic or overly traumatic. Through conversation with the instructor and classmates, and through exploration of books in class, preservice teachers found that they could read a book about a theme, rather than a specific topic, to help facilitate difficult conversations with children. One preservice teacher selected an older book, *Egbert, the Slightly Cracked Egg* (Ross, 1997), because of the themes it presented. She stated,

> In light of the recent hate crimes and tragedies of Dayton, feeling accepted and finding a place to call home is something students may struggle with. Egbert provides students with hope that they will also find a place they belong, even in the face of adversity.

By selecting books with broader themes, some of the preservice teachers were able to facilitate difficult conversations that invited students to connect to the stories in unique ways, facilitating the difficult conversations in ways that focused on the lived experiences of the students.

Other preservice teachers picked books specifically to connect to the events students experienced in the community. For example, one preservice teacher selected *Green City* (Drummond, 2016), because it,

> specifically talks about the trauma of a tornado and how a city coped with that loss. It has received many awards and directly shares ways that a town can recuperate from a disaster. This can help the students because it can give them hope that things can rebuild and that their life and their city will flourish even after a tragedy.

Even when texts were specific to a particular event, sharing the books with children helped them make connections to broader themes related to trauma and challenging contexts.

Student Responses to Literature

The preservice teachers noted the responses the students made to the books they chose in their reflections, as often these responses took them by surprise. One preservice teacher who read *The Quiet Place* (Stewart, 2012), shared,

> I was not sure if this would be something that all the students could relate to, however, it ended up being very relatable. There were two students in the classroom that were new to the class that year and their first language was Spanish like the girl in the book. After reading the book, students made connections to parts of the story, and we also had a discussion about how they can be welcoming to new students in a classroom that may not feel safe and how they were welcoming to their two new classmates in the beginning of the school year.

The Quiet Place is about a young girl who immigrated to the United States from Mexico, and the challenges she faces in adjusting to a new culture while missing her family. The preservice teacher stated that she, "chose this book because it brings up the topic of having students that traveled from a different country and now are learning English as their second language in the classroom." Although she chose the book with the guidelines of the assignment in mind, she did not have knowledge of the specific demographics of the students in the class. The community of the classroom enabled the students to make connections to the book, despite the fact that the preservice teacher was not a part of that community. She commented,

> I think that there was already a community created in this classroom by the teacher because the students were so trusting in sharing about their connections to the story. The read-aloud not only allowed me to practice my skills, but also to realize the importance of choosing the right book for a specific group of students and the topic that needs to be discussed.

This example illustrates the power of a strong classroom community to invite connection and response when having difficult conversations in the classroom using children's literature. When children are invited to bring their lives to the discussion through literature, they can see both their specific experiences reflected in the literature, as well as make connections to broader themes of trauma and difficult conversations. As Dutro (2017) states, "children's stories are already in the room, whether acknowledged, invited, or not" (p. 329). Literature can serve as both a "window and a mirror" (Bishop, 1990) to help students grapple with their own traumatic experiences and those of the broader community.

Professional Learning

The goal of an assignment such as this one is to give preservice teachers tools for their future roles as classroom teachers. In their reflections, the preservice teachers indicated several key take-aways they were able to determine from engaging in this experience. Though many of them were unsure about the assignment at the outset, the scaffolding provided in class helped them to select a book, read it aloud to a group of students, and identify components they will hopefully apply in their future teaching, particularly when facilitating difficult conversations. As Dutro (2017) writes, this was one critical approach to prepare teacher education students whose "histories, privilege, and life experiences may be different from those in the communities where they will teach" (p. 331).

Preservice teachers' key take-aways were primarily focused on the potential of using literature to facilitate difficult conversations in the classroom. One preservice teacher commented that when using children's literature to facilitate difficult conversations, "Students are not directly targeted to tragedies they may face, but are welcomed to explore the unique ways in which they can challenge the gloom that impacts their life." This preservice teacher identified the critical role literature can play in helping students both connect to, and work through, the tragedies that may occur in their communities. Another preservice teacher builds on this through her comment, "The use of trauma-related literature at this school has the ability to generate conversations that may not have been discussed and creates a new platform for expression." The read-aloud assignment helped her to experience the potential of literature to open up spaces for dialogue and discussion that may not have existed without the presence of literature in the classroom. Another preservice teacher perhaps summed it up best when she stated, "I learned that the best way to reach your students and allow them to feel safe can easily and appropriately be done through the use of literature." This assignment, and the professional learning it inspired, helped the preservice teachers feel safe to explore a topic that may have been uncomfortable for them, and in so doing, see the potential for using literature to help their future students feel safe to engage in difficult conversations in the classroom.

Implications

Teachers must be prepared with as many experiences and tools as possible to support their students as they navigate challenging experiences. The purpose of this assignment was to engage preservice teachers in an experience that would prepare them to use literature to have difficult conversations in their future classrooms. We wanted to invite our preservice teachers to consider the power of the classroom read-aloud, in not only engaging students with literature, modeling effective reading, and so on, but also to help them see the potential of the read-aloud to "dig deep" into the issues and complexities facing the students in their future classrooms. Rather than ignoring the pressing issues they might face as they walked into their field placement classrooms, we chose to use these experiences as a way to help our preservice teachers consider their roles and responsibilities to their students.

In so doing, we hope we have helped our preservice teachers to develop into compassionate teachers. As students experience and live through traumatic events (and in the case of our community and many others, multiple traumatic events) there is the danger of becoming "desensitized" to the traumatic contexts. It is critical that a teacher understands and embraces the importance of empathy and compassion as they share and relate to stories being read and discussed (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Rather than just reading the book to the students, and focusing on the standards to meet, the comprehension strategies to teach, or the grades to assign, it is of equal, or possibly greater, importance for the teacher to show students how a book makes them feel, and ask the students to do the same (Dutro & Bien, 2014).

To foster this kind of response to literature, developing a community is of utmost importance for an authentic shared experience. As Harper (2016) writes:

> Picture books are ideal for assisting families and teachers in developing children's social-emotional literacy, sensitivity, and self-regulation. When comprehension and vocabulary strategies are taught in conjunction with reading high-quality children's literature, children make meaningful connections to the global messages of emotions. A good story combined with responsive and developmentally appropriate discussion can provide the opportunity for children to explore emotion-provoking conflicts and events that might mirror those emotions they or their friends routinely experience. (p. 85)

The preservice teachers who engaged in this read-aloud assignment felt trepidation and concern over not knowing the students prior to entering the classroom, because they knew how critical and important a strong classroom community was from class discussions. Once in the classrooms, they were able to identify very quickly which classrooms had a strong community in place, and which did not, by the level to which the students were willing to engage in the difficult conversations their literature selections invited. A strong classroom community is one of multiple factors, including the background of the teacher and the content of a text, that can contribute to the impact of literature about challenging contexts (Dutro, 2019; Simmons, 2020). This was a firsthand experience of the power of a strong classroom community that will, hopefully, stay with these preservice teachers as they seek to build strong communities in their future classrooms.

Using literature to have difficult conversations with children is not, as this assignment demonstrated, a simple matter of selecting a book about a difficult topic and reading it to children. Meaningful discussions occur in the context of strong community, thoughtful and intentional book selection, and a compassionate, committed teacher. Laying the foundation for these principles in the formative years of undergraduate teacher education programs is one way to ensure that children of the future who unfortunately witness or live through traumatic events will find a safe space in their classrooms and teachers to share, to talk, and to move through these challenging contexts.

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Bigger Than a Cupcake: Reimagining Birthday Celebrations Through an Equity and Inclusion Lens

Keely D. Cline, Maureen A. Wikete Lee, Merlene Gilb, and Lauren Bielicki

Abstract

This article shares the story of a preschool teacher who courageously embarked on a yearlong journey of re-envisioning how an important milestone in children's lives—their birthdays—were celebrated in the classroom. She accepted the preschool leadership's invitation to align birthday practices with the center's identity influenced by the Reggio Emilia Approach. What resulted was the teacher co-constructing a new set of rituals with the children that contributed to more equitable spaces that celebrated children's individuality and fostered agency within an inclusive child-centered, children-driven learning environment.

Bigger Than a Cupcake: Reimagining Birthday Celebrations Through an Equity and Inclusion Lens

Few days are more special to a child than their birthday. During their preschool years, children begin to understand and get excited to celebrate their big day. Common to those celebrations are treats. When those celebrations take place in a classroom with an invitation for a caregiver to provide treats, it is natural for children to notice and compare how each child is celebrated. Before long, traditions form, and a bar is set. What follows for even a young child is a feeling that they need to live up to that expectation. With that comes pressure on a caregiver to provide what has now become expected.

It was on a sunny morning that a single mom entered the Ambrose Family Center Preschool holding her child's hand while balancing a container of cupcakes. It was that special day for Asia, her fourth birthday. But there was nothing joyous in the way Asia and her mom entered the building. Asia was in tears. Mom was openly frustrated. It clearly had been a hard start to their morning. Knowing that it was Asia's birthday, one of the directors approached to see what was wrong and offered her a hug. Through tears Asia explained that she did not like her cupcakes and did not want to take them to her classroom. Mom explained that Asia wanted the bigger cupcakes decorated with rings featuring characters from Asia's favorite movie. The expression Asia's mom shared with the director was deeper than frustration. There was a clear sense that the expense of the smaller rainbow-colored cupcakes was already a sacrifice and the best she could do for Asia. After having time to work through her tears and have a conversation with the director and her mom about how truly beautiful her cupcakes were, Asia made it into her classroom where the children greeted her with, "happy birthday." The striking nature of those moments led the director to gather the preschool teachers that afternoon to share Asia's story and consider what messages were being sent to caregivers regarding how birthdays are to be celebrated. An examination began to ascertain if those messages aligned with the vision and values the preschool professed.

The idea of an adult lens and decision making surfaced in the discussions. According to Curtis et al. (2013):

> Adults have all of the power in the lives of young children. We control the time and routines. We are bigger and have more language, skills, and life experiences. We are in charge of the lights, the food, the materials, and the activities that we make available to children. We decide who and what we will pay attention to and how we will respond. …The ways we use our power have a huge impact on children. We can use our power to support children's abilities and feelings of self-worth, or we can inadvertently use our power to oppress children and undermine their confidence and competence. It takes continual reflection and negation to use our power on behalf of children's healthy development. (p. 90)

Common approaches to celebrating birthdays in schools (e.g., bringing cupcakes and singing "Happy Birthday") are guided by adults' worldviews of what it means to celebrate, and children's voices are often marginalized. How might adults instead use their power to elevate children's voices? In response to Asia's experience, preschool staff reflected on their responsibility to honor the rights of children and determined change was necessary. Creating and sustaining inclusive and equitable spaces was essential to fulfilling this responsibility. The inspiring practices that emerged highlighted children's individuality and fostered agency. "Fostering agency in young children provides opportunities to build a child-centered and child-driven learning environment where multiple and opposing points of view, empowerment, equity, and social justice are at the center of recognizing each child's strengths and talents" (Wright, 2021, pp. 30–31).

Rituals and traditions may help children feel a sense of belonging, thus promoting a sense of community and an emotionally secure learning environment (Howell & Reinhard, 2015). Birthdays are recognized as important events in the lives of young children, and schools commonly develop their own routines, rituals, or traditions that provide expectations for how birthdays are celebrated. However, do common approaches to celebrating birthdays in schools truly help young children feel special and honored? Do they elevate children's voices? Do these rituals and traditions contribute to equitable and inclusive practices? Do these approaches promote a sense of belonging and sense of community among children? Do they have meaning to the children? These are among the questions that administrators and teachers at one preschool began asking themselves. They were concerned that birthday celebrations at their preschool, primarily focused on the common practice of bringing treats, imposed an adult worldview on children and revealed issues of inequity.

This paper documents a pivotal year for one preschool classroom as the teachers and administrators courageously embarked on a journey of aligning their form of birthday celebrations with their identity, including their vision, mission, and beliefs influenced by elements of the Reggio Emilia Approach. This is a story of how one teacher developed an innovative and inspiring approach to celebrating birthdays that resulted in her co-constructing a new set of rituals with the children. These rituals set the stage for the possibility of establishing new traditions in the years to come. Presented are key themes based on classroom blogs and an interview with the teacher that characterize the class's new approach to birthday celebrations and how the processes emerged and evolved. Furthermore, this story illustrates how children's agency can be empowered when adults work with them to co-construct meaningful rituals

(which may become traditions) in a truly inclusive environment. Inviting children to join in this work may contribute to more equitable and socially just spaces where children see themselves as part of something that is meaningful—something bigger than the self.

Principles of Teaching and Learning in the Reggio Emilia Approach

The Reggio tradition promotes a strong sense of "participant democracy" that includes the rights of each child to full citizenship (Moss, 2012, Chapter 6, p. 106). The central premise is that children are inherently entitled to rights just as adults are. These rights are reflected in the Reggio Emilia Approach through values and discourse producing a learning culture that promotes the potential and participation of every child. A fundamental construct of Reggio pedagogy is the concept of "the hundred languages," a theory that recognizes children as "possessing many cultural possibilities, which can too readily be systematically denied and taken away by the culture of school and society" (First steps: 1964-69, 2016, Chapter 2, p. 104). These "languages," often symbolic in nature, represent the many ways children express themselves (through music, clay, dance, construction with natural materials, etc.). The hundred languages children bring invite inclusion and equitable participation through a diversity of points of view and of cultures honoring families and propelling a shared journey of learning that builds with children, teachers, and families (Cline et al., 2019).

The Context

The staff at the Ambrose Family Center Preschool were engaged in a three-year study of the Reggio Emilia Approach. Together, the staff identified vision, mission, and beliefs statements to articulate a collective identity to guide their work with children and families, as well as with each other as a learning community (Figure 1). Newly developed, these values reflected what was collectively determined to be central to the culture of the preschool. It then became necessary for those values to be confirmed and sustained in practices.

Ambrose Family Center

Webster Groves School District

Vision

Children Transforming Their World

Mission

Beliefs and Commitments

Children first.
Children are curious and playful by nature.
Children's understandings cannot be hurried.
Children guide our learning.
Children show and share their understandings in many ways.
Children need deep human connections.

Fig. 1: Vision, mission, beliefs, and commitment statements.

What followed was a review of the preschool's handbook, which included information to help families understand the expectations and routines of the preschool program. The preschool codirectors led the staff in conversations about the fidelity of the practices in light of their newly formed identity and the issues of inequity presented in Asia's story. Of particular focus was the influence of an adult lens on the expectations and routines, rituals, and/or traditions for how children and their birthdays were honored.

The description of "Birthday Celebrations" in the handbook prior to aligning the language and practices to the adopted values read:

> Birthdays are an important milestone in the lives of young children. Birthdays place children at the center of attention for one wonderful day each year. Typically, the children in the classroom decide as a group how to celebrate each other's birthdays. Please notify your classroom teachers in advance if you would like to plan an additional treat for your child's birthday. A light snack, a chorus of "Happy Birthday," and the attention of friends and teachers are the only ingredients needed to make this day special in a preschool classroom. We encourage healthy pre-packaged snacks (preferably no cupcakes), and please check with your teachers before bringing any treats containing peanuts or nut products. Please let your teachers know if you do not wish for your child's birthday to be celebrated.

This served as a starting point for revising the handbook language to more authentically reflect the new identity of the preschool.

After a yearlong process of discussion, reviewing literature, and work sessions on revising the handbook language related to birthdays, the revised handbook entry reflected a more child-centered approach to honoring children on their birthdays:

> Birthdays are an important milestone in the lives of young children. Birthdays place children at the center of attention for one wonderful day each year. At the Ambrose Family Center Preschool, children in each classroom decide as a group how to celebrate each other's birthdays through a meaningful "birthday tradition." Teachers will share with parents/guardians the "birthday tradition" for your child's classroom which does not include bringing treats from home. Please honor the very special classroom experience designed by the children as they celebrate each other's birthdays. Enjoy what is created for your child in honor of their birthday. Please let your teachers know if you do not wish for your child's birthday to be celebrated.

The new handbook language led to the codirectors inviting teachers and staff to introduce, initiate, and communicate this new thinking to children and families.

No directive as to how this was to be done was given by the codirectors; rather, an invitation went forward to teachers to research and systematically document children's ideas. Teachers were encouraged to serve as producers of research, generating new ideas about learning, rather than following certainty and traditions in order to better understand children in richer and more complex ways (Edwards, 2012, Chapter 9). This story highlights the experiences in the Pink Room, a mixed-aged classroom. While instructional responsibilities were shared in a co-teaching model, Ms. Lauren, the lead teacher at the time, assumed the primary role of planning, assessing, and documenting learning through the classroom blog which detailed the yearlong journey.

The Pink Room co-teachers were early adopters of the preschool's newly formed vision, mission, and belief statements. For example, the co-teachers were intentional in eliminating a class schedule, allowing the organization of time to belong to the children and their work to not be hurried. Embracing the invitation to rethink birthday celebrations was a natural fit for the Pink Room. After some planning, the transition was initiated by sharing the idea with the children and consistently documented throughout the course of a year as the exploration unfolded.

A New Approach to Birthday Celebrations in the Pink Room

Ms. Lauren reviewed the revised handbook language, considering what she could do to make her classroom practices align with the preschool's new identity, specifically as it related to honoring a child's birthday. She was initially overwhelmed with the autonomy and endless possibilities but keyed in on the handbook language: "children decide as a group how to celebrate each other's birthdays." Thinking about the shared commitment of putting children first and knowing she did not have all the answers, Ms. Lauren engaged the children in conversation during class meetings where most of the shared decisions in the classroom were made. She shared control of the process with the children and trusted that they could move through the changes together. The children were accepting and excited about having conversations about their friends' birthdays and how they could be celebrated. Together they agreed that Ms. Lauren would ask the birthday child how they would like to be celebrated on their special day. The birthday child would request a gift that would be made and presented by the peers. What follows are themes and conclusions about the class's yearlong journey that emerged from the classroom blogs and teacher interview.

Themes

Knowing the Child and Seeing Children as Individuals

As the celebration of birthdays developed and changed over the course of the year, children continuously revealed themselves to one another through the ritual of giving and receiving. Throughout this process there was an emphasis on *knowing the child and seeing children as individuals*. Ms. Lauren was intentional in asking each child to describe how they wanted to be celebrated and specifically what peer-created gift they might want to receive. She recognized that not all children like to be celebrated in the same way. Ms. Lauren chose to put the child first, allowing the birthday child to set the tone for their own unique celebration. Ms. Lauren described her thinking and reflections on how the birthday traditions evolved:

> . . . some people like to be celebrated in a quieter way. Some people like big birthday cakes so I think I was really just thinking about the personalities of the children and the interests of each child.
>
> And it's funny because...not too many would say, 'We need to bring in a birthday treat'... I think that was very adult-driven. So, it just showed us that, okay, they are going to be okay with receiving these gifts and their reactions show that the change was necessary.
>
> . . . when I would hear some of these requests, oh my! And the children would get it done for sure . . . we wouldn't hurry them.

Ms. Lauren, participating alongside the children, willingly embraced the emergent nature of the process and allowed each celebration to be unique to the birthday child.

Over the course of the year, each child was honored with an individualized gift (Figure 2). No gift was replicated. Evidenced in the uniqueness of each gift, the knowledge of the child and the time given to the creators to complete the gifts took primacy in each exchange. Ms. Lauren recognized that her interpretation of the change in the handbook language regarding birthdays was grounded in her thinking about the children as individuals:

> . . . some children would take a day or two to think about it because some gifts would take longer than one day to create. So, that was a huge change and just the length of time for a child to really feel like it was not just their day, but it was their time, I think, their time for children to make them feel special and to think about them longer than during their birthday treat.

Car Necklace	Whale Fish / Puffer Fish	Kitty Purse	Candle With Birds & Sparkles	3D-Printed Candle
				
Stroller	Ice Castle	Chocolate Chip Cookies	Red Race Car Made Out of Wood	Car Made Out of Metal Not Wood
				

Fig. 2: Summary of gifts created and shared throughout the school year.

Ms. Lauren recognized that the birthday traditions were moving beyond a moment to celebrate a child's day of birth and shifting to a period of time in which children were being honored for being unique members of the classroom community.

Gifts were created from children's individual requests and details were added based on what the gift givers knew about their classmates. During the gift making, children anticipated what the birthday child would prefer when selecting materials, choosing colors, or meeting a child's specific request. At times, the birthday child was asked specific questions about preferences. Ms. Lauren's intentional focus on the birthday child as the receiver of a gift seemed to foster children's focus on creating a gift that would please the birthday child. The process of giving and receiving was centered on honoring each child's

individuality as a member of the classroom community. The children placed their trust in the classroom community throughout the gift-making process. Each child remained at the center of the celebration, aligning with the teacher's focus on prioritizing putting children first. Ms. Lauren described the children's roles in the celebrations:

> . . . they wanted to make it the best that they could for that child.
>
> I think it showed that each child has contributions, and their contributions are special.
>
> . . . it highlighted the contributions of all children in the classroom no matter where you are developmentally, skill level, I don't know, that makes me . . . cry.

The birthday celebrations highlighted not only the individuality of the birthday child, but also other children's unique and caring contributions to the celebration.

When asked how they would like to be celebrated, the children were revealing themselves to their teachers and classmates. The gift designers honored the individuality of the birthday child while revealing more of their own identities while making the gifts. Ms. Lauren explained:

> . . . the children giving the gifts, that was also one of my favorite parts because . . . back with the birthday treats, . . . the friends were really just all concerned about the birthday treat. And when they were creating a gift for their friend, they were more concerned or thinking truly about that person, that child, you could just really see how well the children knew each other and their connections they'd make like 'No, she needs a pink purse because that's her favorite color' and 'she likes cats, so we're going to put a cat on this book'.

The blog entries communicated powerful images of the uniqueness and individuality of each birthday child, featuring photographs with captions and children's quotations that provided evidence of the children's processes and reactions. Ms. Lauren described how celebrating and documenting the birthday traditions deepened her knowledge of the individual children and resulted in her challenging some of her own assumptions:

> It was interesting to me the decisions that children would make; they surprised me a lot. I would make assumptions on what a certain child would want, thinking that I knew their interests. . . . these birthday gifts gave me an insight on just another level, on who the child was and some of their interests that I could use in the future and support in the future.

The blog entry titled *Celebrating Taylor* (Figure 3) also illustrated this theme. When Taylor was asked how she would like to be celebrated on her birthday, she requested a "kitty purse." This distinct request reflected Taylor's individuality, along with Ms. Lauren's intention to see each child as an individual and celebrate Taylor as she wished to be celebrated. Ms. Lauren's written descriptions from the blog entry capture the intentionality of the children's decisions based on what they knew about Taylor:

> The children found a piece of fabric they thought Taylor might like.
>
> The children chose pink because Taylor likes pink.
>
> Taylor requested sparkles and bows. Those were added.

The intentional selection of materials reflected what Ms. Lauren identified as “emotional thoughtfulness” during the interview as well as the children’s desire to make the best gift for their classmate, by choosing to “make it out of fabric so it lasts longer” as described in the blog entry.

<table>
<tr><td>Taylor‘s birthday is tomorrow and she asked for a kitty purse. A group of children began to discuss how they would create this gift for Taylor. Olivia said, "We need to make it out of fabric so it lasts longer." Maggie suggested that we sew the fabric because her mom showed her how to sew. The group agreed with these ideas and got to work.</td><td>The children found a piece of fabric they thought Taylor might like. They began by drawing an outline of a cat‘s head. Then they cut it out. The children then traced their cutout so they would have two pieces to sew together.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Ms. Lauren held the fabric as the children began to sew the pieces together.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">    </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">After the pieces were sewn together, a strap was added. The children chose pink because Taylor likes pink. They also found materials for the cat‘s face.
Taylor requested sparkles and bows. Those were added. The purse is complete!</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">     </td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cards were also created for Taylor</td><td colspan="2">We sang Happy Birthday…</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">  </td><td colspan="2">  </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">We presented her with her gift.</td><td colspan="2">Lookin’ good, Taylor!</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
</table>

Fig. 3: Celebrating Taylor, Pink Room classroom blog.

Taylor’s celebration also demonstrates the unique contributions of classmates to the gift-making process. Children were invited to participate and each chose if and how they would be involved. The children engaged in different aspects of the gift making and revealed their own uniqueness and individuality during the purse-making process. Taylor’s classmate, Maggie, drew on her previous experiences and suggested that they sew the fabric. The gift makers relied on each other’s knowledge of Taylor’s preferences, care and thoughtfulness, and unique skills. Taylor’s celebration provides a clear illustration of how the Pink Room celebrations focused on what was known about each child and how the teachers and children were able to see and celebrate one another as individuals as both givers and receivers of very special birthday gifts.

Child Originated

The ideas for gifts and processes for how to plan and prepare for and carry out birthday celebrations were *child originated*. Creating was deeply rooted in the culture of the classroom. The children designed and created each of the birthday gifts in small, self-selected groups. Children were given choice in participation, and groups formed authentically with support (as opposed to direction) from the teachers. As groups of children formed, the ideas for the type of gift, materials to be used to create the gift (including process and location for production), and how the gift would be presented were guided by original ideas generated from the children.

The classroom environment included the children having access to a wide range of open-ended materials, as well as the time (within and across days) to engage in the process of creating. The ideas for the type of gifts came from the birthday child directly and were informed by knowledge of the birthday child by the group, with ranging levels of specificity. Regardless of the method used to determine what gifts would be made and the gift-making process, shared decisions—from the inception to presentation—originated from the children.

Each birthday gift was unique and unrepeatable, reflecting the idea of individual differences and the unique identity in children as demonstrated by the wide range of gifts created by the children (refer back to Figure 2). No two gifts were alike. Gifts did not seem to be significantly influenced by commercialism. Gifts were unlike what you could find in a store. Children did not request toys advertised in commercials or displayed in stores. While there were instances where popular movies may have inspired ideas (i.e., a book featuring a red car, similar to that in the Disney film "Cars"; and an ice castle, similar to that in the Disney film "Frozen"), children created one-of-a-kind representations that moved far beyond trying to reproduce any specific commercialized product. When asked if children seemed to understand that gifts would be handmade versus store-bought, Ms. Lauren explained that this assumption seemed to already be a part of the classroom culture and was not an issue.

The blogs demonstrated that the process of creating appeared to evolve, becoming increasingly complex over the course of the school year. The first birthday celebration of the year involved children collaborating to make, wrap, and present the car necklace to a classmate, all within the course of a single day. Birthday celebrations that took place later in the school year involved more steps and required longer periods of time to complete. The process of creating was unique to each birthday gift, but there were some common steps observed across the projects such as designing, creating prototypes, engaging in trial-and-error problem solving, and redesigning before arriving at a finished gift to present to the birthday child.

The story of the process of Riley's birthday celebration provides a salient illustration of how the children planned and carried out the celebration in a complex way. As illustrated in the blog *Celebrating Riley* (Figure 4), Riley requested a "candle made out of paper with sparkles and birds." This example shows how the children flexibly navigated the emergent, unfolding process for preparing for Riley's birthday celebration when they added an entirely new stage by seeking out the help of the preschool's technology specialist to create a second (even more complex) gift.

The blogs documented that children became increasingly focused on satisfaction over the course of the year. This includes the anticipated satisfaction of the receivers (from the perspective of the creators), as well as the creators' own satisfaction in their work. The example of creating the candles for Riley provides an illustration of how the children went on to make a second gift for a child because they were excited to have the opportunity to give her what they thought she most wanted.

Riley will turn 5 when we are on break! She asked the children to make her a candle out of paper.They asked her what she wanted on her candle. She wanted birds and sparkles. The children got to work!




We overheard Riley say to herself that it would be cool to print a candle on the 3D printer. She doesn't know that we heard her, so we will surprise her!!

The children found a special container to keep the candle safe.





Riley was so surprised when she was presented with her gifts! She couldn't believe that she actually got her own 3D birthday candle!



Fig. 4: Celebrating Riley, Pink Room classroom blog.

Emotion and Empathy

Emotion and empathy were evident in the images as well as the language used in the blogs. Emotion and empathy influenced both Ms. Lauren's invitation to explore new possibilities in celebrating birthdays, as well as the children's openness to, freedom, and interpretation of that invitation. This became interconnected to the evolution of the birthday rituals that formed and re-formed over the course of the year (e.g., personalizing types of gifts, wrapping, and receiving of gifts).

Ms. Lauren openly expressed her love of birthdays and gift giving in her personal life in her interview. She interpreted the new practices and procedures regarding birthdays through this personal lens. In her interpretation, each individual child would decide what they would like to receive. She thought about children as individuals and then of herself as a giver and receiver of gifts. Ms. Lauren initiated the transition by involving the children by asking how they wanted to celebrate their birthday and what gift their peers created they might like to receive. The emotion and purposefulness of her personal gift-giving experiences transferred to her classroom community. Working alongside the children as a co-learner/investigator, Ms. Lauren participated in a mutual process of study and discussion with the children, sharing the emotion of the experience. In doing so, she recognized that she was a part of something bigger that was emerging, both in herself, as teacher, and in the children:

> . . . birthday traditions were truly joyful, mutually respectful, and special experiences. I also feel that the change has moved us from thinking about the tangible way to celebrate to the emotional thoughtfulness a celebration can support and reflect.
>
> I would feel the children were very emotional - I was excited for people's birthdays coming up - I could see how special they felt - It didn't matter if you know as an adult, you have all of these ideas of what something could look like or be like. And I think, as a child, you have the same thing. I can't remember one gift that a child didn't have a smile or got really excited . . .

The creation of Max's gift provides an illustration of the empathy and emotion children brought to the process of creating and the process of the giving of gifts (Figure 5). For Max, the children settled on making an orange stroller. The empathic connections the group of children brought to the decision to make this specific gift were that Max had a new baby at home, that he loved babies, and that his favorite color was orange. The children focused on creating something that would be meaningful to Max. This took priority over completing the gift by his birthday, with the children taking an additional two weeks to complete the stroller. The extended time to work on the stroller included test runs that resulted in bringing in an expert (Mr. Johnny, the school custodian) to help with balance and securing the wheels to the stroller. Testing also included putting a doll in the stroller and caringly covering up the "baby," as not only the fit but also the baby's comfort was important to the children. Because this gift was a long-awaited surprise for Max, wrapping the stroller was important to the children and a bigger task than they expected. The decision to cover the stroller with fabric helped protect and enhance the surprise and delight the gift evoked. The images from the blog capture the emotion of the moment when the gift was presented.

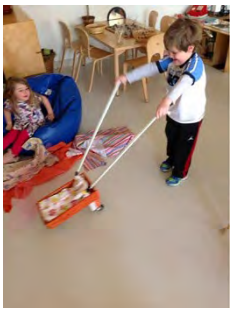
<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">The children decided that the stroller they have been working on for a few weeks is finished! In the past two weeks the children painted the stroller. Charlie suggested painting it orange because Max told him that's his favorite color. After giving the stroller one more test run, the children were not satisfied with the balance of the stroller. We asked Mr. Johnny for suggestions on ways we could fix one problem. He told us that securing our back wheels might help with the problem.</td><td colspan="2">The children cut two more pieces to make wider legs, glued the legs on the bottom, and secured the wheels. The stroller moves better now! The children brought the stroller back to the room and decided to try it out with Owen's baby.</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Covering up the baby was important for comfort. The children felt it was a perfect fit. Wrapping the stroller was a bigger task than the children expected. They decided to cover the stroller with fabric so Max wouldn't see it.</td><td colspan="3">Today was the day we finally gave Max his birthday gift! The children were so excited when Max arrived! Max couldn't wait to uncover his gift!
"A stroller!"
Max tried out his baby stroller! He loved it! He can't wait to take it home for his babies!</td></tr>
<tr><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td><td>  </td></tr>
</table>

Fig. 5: Celebrating Max, Pink Room classroom blog.

Ms. Lauren recognized virtues related to empathy and emotions as being important factors in the classroom culture that was also forming. She embraced the challenge of creating a classroom environment that would nurture ongoing empathic connections, guided by the teacher but created by the children. One of the key characteristics of the Pink Room community was a focus on care. Central to this was the concept of respect—being gracious, making someone feel special, and listening—exemplified through the children's experiences of the creating, giving, and receiving of gifts. By intentionally emphasizing these characteristics, they became embedded in the daily classroom environment. Ms. Lauren described this focus on care in the following ways:

> . . . creating a culture of care from the very beginning is essential to this. And so, some of the questions you asked about . . . being a gracious receiver, I think that's all embedded in a culture of care. And, respect, I think that's a huge word for early childhood and what does that really mean. That's why I like to use the word "care."
>
> . . . these birthday traditions contribute to the characteristics and the culture of the classroom, and so children can see . . . 'How do you make someone feel special?' 'What does care look like?' 'What does it look like to listen to one another?' So just having all of those questions, as an adult in the back of your head, and to just continue to challenge to create an environment where all of those kinds of characteristics and that culture can be created by the children and the adults, I think they work hand-in-hand, the characteristics are embedded. It should be embedded from the beginning . . .

As a result of this intentional focus, Ms. Lauren noticed children seeing their peers differently than they had before. Children became aware of each other's unique skills/talents and how those skills might contribute to the creation of the birthday gifts. These contributions made each child feel a part of something special in an inclusive environment; that their friends cared for them in a very human way:

> I saw children look at some of their peers in a different way that they might not have before . . . their contributions, I think it really highlighted what each child in the classroom had to offer in, in not just a tangible way, . . . they know how to hammer a nail, but in a way where they saw that their friends cared about them.
>
> And that they didn't just rush through some work to get a product to be given . . . to them. . . . I think the outcome was a creation of a culture of care. I think we always are working on that as human beings. It was something that you could just see and be a part of and feel it and know that . . . they truly care about each other. So, that's the biggest one. It's hard to get past once you feel like you are part of a culture like that it's alongside children, . . . you just feel like you're part of something that's great.

Life Lessons

Ms. Lauren demonstrated that she recognized that the children's experiences in the classroom afforded opportunities for foundational *life lessons* including lessons about relationships and what it means to be part of an inclusive and equitable community. Such lessons could be lived out in the context of the classroom and beyond that, carried forward throughout life. Ms. Lauren wanted children to learn not just how to celebrate a birthday but to celebrate—and be in community with—one another.

Ms. Lauren expressed concerns about the former approach to celebrating birthdays in her classroom. As demonstrated through her words, she did not see this approach as consistent with the school's belief about putting children first. Furthermore, she expressed concern about how it was influencing children's experiences and shaping their views about what they should expect on another child's birthday:

> We really thought about putting the child first, does the birthday treat truly make that child feel special on their birthday? What are the other children thinking about that child's birthday? We'd just see children say, 'What did you bring?' and you know, not even say 'Happy birthday.' Just 'What treat did you bring? What treat did you bring?'

Ms. Lauren saw the new approach to birthday celebrations as providing an opportunity for children to learn about what it means to authentically celebrate one another, which she considered to be a valuable life lesson. Furthermore, the new approach provided an opportunity to practice being a member of a community, including in the roles of giver and receiver:

> . . . learning to be a great human being and being a part of life, and how you interact with each other, and how to be a giver and a receiver, and how to make people feel special and care for each other, I think it is the biggest life lesson, I guess. I think it just contributes to a bigger idea or a bigger thing.

Ms. Lauren was mindful of her role in the classroom community, and this extended to birthday celebrations. While the ways that birthdays were celebrated were child originated, Ms. Lauren still saw and valued her own role as a participant and model in the classroom community as children learned life lessons:

> My role now, as things have shifted, is that I get to be a part of actually celebrating who the child is and being a part of making that child feel special. And then also, modeling and just being a part of the gift giving process. I love to give gifts, and so just being a part [of it] and seeing how a 3-year-old, 4-year-old, 5-year-old can love it just as much and they're creating, you know, they're intentional in creating something so special for [someone] else. I think that just being a part of that makes this just a life lesson and it's changed from being a school birthday celebration to, I think that's how it shifts to tradition, just being a part of life, being a giver and a gracious receiver. And so, I just felt a part, alongside of the child, a part of something bigger than a cupcake.

Conclusion

Birthdays are special occasions for young children. In schools and classrooms, rituals and traditions play a role in contributing to the community that forms. Adults play a powerful role in a young child's life. Constructs like time, routines, and traditions are most often in the control of adults, including common approaches to celebrating birthdays guided by an adult worldview. In response to Asia's experience, preschool staff reflected on their responsibility as adults and determined that change was necessary. Adults used their power to elevate children's voices. Re-envisioning the rituals and traditions of celebrating birthdays in schools through the eyes of the children offers a unique window into creating inclusive and equitable spaces that highlight children's individuality and foster agency within an inclusive child-centered, and child-driven learning environment.

What insight might early childhood teachers and school leaders gain from Ms. Lauren's and the children's journey? Considerations from this story are broader than simply re-envisioning birthday celebrations. This story invites an awakening to and interrogation of routines and traditions that blindly continue in our spaces of learning. What innovative and equity-advancing discoveries might unfold as we give voice to the children to help us see new possibilities and become less sure of current practices?

Behind every decision is a choice of values and ethics (Rinaldi, 2001). Early childhood teachers and school leaders can begin by thoroughly and full-heartedly embracing an equitable and inclusive child-centered approach in their unique context. They can develop and commit to living out a school-wide (or classroom) identity grounded in mission, values, and beliefs that center on children's extraordinary potentials, competencies, and autonomies (Malaguzzi, 1993). And finally, they can embrace an attitude of not-knowing and discovery as a perpetual researcher to gain unique insights into children's ways of thinking that lead to co-constructing meaningful rituals, which may lead to traditions that truly honor every child. In the end, this story is not a story of birthday celebrations but one of creating an environment that has the potential to empower children and help them to see themselves as part of something meaningful. In this case, something bigger than a cupcake.

Note

The actual name of the child whose story was shared in the opening of this paper has been replaced with a pseudonym. The names of all other children in this paper are actual names used with the families' permission.

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Intentionally Collaborating, Instructing, and Reflecting: Core Principles of Teaching Practice

Ralph Adon Córdova, Nikki Gamrath, and Sarah Colmaire

Abstract

Emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic, a school's teacher-leaders draw on an Interactional Ethnographic Approach to co-construct an inquiry community of Professionals Developing Professionals called Depth of Study (DOS). The study examines the three premises that undergird DOS: Making Visible the Invisible through an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective, Culture-in-the-Making, and The Over-Time Nature of Change: Periphery to Center. Through the analysis of three Telling Cases, the authors make visible how each of the three premises learned within the DOS setting affect student learning in the classroom setting.

Intentionally Collaborating, Instructing, and Reflecting: Core Principles of Teaching Practice

> Insight, I believe, refers to that depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another. (Bateson, 1994, p. 14)
>
> What would it be like to have not only color vision but culture vision, the ability to see the multiple worlds of others? (Bateson, 1994, p. 52)

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to have culture vision, the ability to see the multiple worlds of others? We have. And we had to in order to behold the opportunity ahead of us post the Covid-19 pandemic shutdown. As we emerge, having been forced to teach remotely, we see that the pandemic manifested among us a culture of isolation. Now, we find ourselves on a journey to transform our school's culture from one of survival and isolation into a collaborative inquiry community of *professionals developing professionals*. In this article we examine how our school, Berkeley Hall, approaches ongoing, site-based, educator professional learning called Depth of Study (DOS). It is a collaborative space for developing shared conceptually and pedagogically coherent practices that supports teachers to collaboratively inquire into their teaching practices.

In the last five decades we have seen the field of professional development for teachers evolve and transform, shaped by epistemological shifts responding to the eras' dominant conceptual bases for what constitutes ongoing professional development and learning for teachers (Carter Andrews & Richmond, 2019, Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; McDonald et al., 2013). In the present era, we find ourselves navigating an articulated terrain with various maps to guide us (Athans, 2022; Córdova et al., 2012; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Nguyen, 2019). Whether it is Ball's "high-leverage teaching practices" (teachingworks.org) or the "durable practices" for professional development programs of

Córdova et al. (2015, 2016), all argue for the creation of intentional inquiry-driven learning communities centered around conceptually and pedagogically coherent practices. How are we, then, to develop these collaborative inquiry-centric and practice-focused, intentional learning communities for our teachers working in the field?

Overview

Here we explore the three premises for intentional culture building that undergird our DOS approach to site-based teacher learning, Depth of Study (DOS). We begin by articulating the research questions driving our inquiry, followed by the location and setting of our study. We then discuss the roots of and routes to the three coauthors' professional learning journeys followed by a presentation of the conceptual and methodological perspectives orienting our study. We organize the data analyses in the form of Telling Cases (Mitchell, 1984) to make those premises visible in action. We conclude the piece with a discussion about the power of harnessing an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective to both design and examine our DOS culture-building work at Berkeley Hall.

Driving Questions:

1) If the *why* of intentional culture building behind DOS makes a difference, what difference does that difference make? Related to this question, we explore three premises that both guide and explain our DOS work.
2) What does professional learning look like in a DOS setting and how does it influence teachers' classroom-based practices? Related to this question, we examine the cultural guide work that Córdova engages in to help teachers conceive of a part-to-whole relationship between DOS and their classroom settings.

Location and Setting

Berkeley Hall is an independent school founded in 1911, located in the greater Los Angeles area. It is a Nursery through Eighth grade institution with 260 culturally and linguistically diverse students. There are 35 teachers with teaching experience ranging from 40 years to 1 year of practice. The first author, Córdova, is an educational ethnographer and consultant working with the second (Gamrath, Head of School) and third (Colmaire, Assistant Head of School) authors to co-construct a collaborative, site-based, inquiry-centric learning community; a model that places teachers as leaders and co-experts of their practice and professional learning.

Before proceeding, we wish to make explicit that at the core of our DOS work is a concept we refer to as *professionals developing professionals* (PDP) and not professional development. We do so because the term "professional development," a compound noun, connotes a static and monolithic entity. Whereas, professionals developing professionals position professional learning as activity guided by professional educators developing each other.

Roots of and Routes to Professional Learning

The conceptual and pedagogical origins of our DOS work can be traced back to pivotal moments in our own individual professional learning journeys. While space does not allow for an in-depth accounting for the roots of and routes to our approach to professional learning, we want to make explicit that the origins of our ideas (roots of), and the form they evolve into over time (routes to) are embedded in our individual and shared histories. For Córdova, an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective for conceiving of culture-in-the-making (described in next section) can be traced back to 1995, when he became a fellow of the National Writing Project (NWP.org) Summer Institute, which he further built upon during the completion of his doctoral degree in 2004. Gamrath traces her understanding of an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective, and teachers teaching teachers, to 2012 when she participated in an NWP Summer Institute in Illinois, then led by Córdova. She later built upon this foundation to complete her doctoral degree in 2018. Colmaire describes her introduction to professionals developing professionals to 1998 when she first began working closely with the Teacher's College Reading Writing Project as a graduate student at Columbia University; she later completed her doctorate in 2022. The three authors share a complementary theoretical and pedagogical perspective for what constitutes professional learning; one that positions teachers as co-experts and co-leaders.

Conceptual and Methodological Perspectives

The theoretical and methodological perspectives that undergird both our DOS approach, and analyses of the telling cases in this piece, are grounded in an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1995), which lets us understand classrooms and learning settings as cultures-in-the-making (Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group, 1992a, 1992b) and knowledge as situated and socially constructed. From these perspectives, we seek to make visible the conceptual premises that drive our intentional culture-building DOS work by drawing on theories from anthropology (Frake, 1977; Gumperz & Cook-Gumperz, 1986; Spradley, 1980), critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Ivanic, 1994), and literary theory (Bakhtin, 1986).

The three premises central to our DOS work are:

1. *Making Visible the Invisible through an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective.*
2. *Culture-in-the-Making.*
3. *The Over-Time Nature of Change: Moving from Periphery to Center.*

Telling cases, proposed by Mitchell (1984), serve to make visible something that was previously not available to be known.

History of Depth of Study at Berkeley Hall

The origins of DOS can be traced to 2019 as a school-wide endeavor to support faculty to develop a shared commitment to students' ongoing academic improvement. From its origins, participating in DOS enabled teachers to develop goals and enact them. DOS teams worked together in an ongoing, structured way to strengthen specific aspects of teaching and learning at Berkeley Hall. Teachers analyzed student

work and performance data in order to identify facets of the curriculum and student experience that could benefit from improvement and then bring together their best ideas to make it happen. There had been a dedicated time to DOS, which was led by outside consultants who came in a once a month with a pre-packaged program to articulate and chart goals, collect and examine artifacts of student work, and track progress. When our school shut down in the spring of 2020 due to Covid-19, educators worked remotely, and DOS ceased to continue.

Depth of Study Today

DOS takes place weekly on Wednesday mornings at 7:30-8:25 a.m. It is built into the master schedule with students arriving on campus at 8:30 a.m. The academic year is divided into trimesters, with each trimester divided into three, 3-week cycles of DOS activity. The following sections comprise discussions of the *Why, t*he *What*, and the *Wow* of DOS in order to make visible its rationale, structure, and finally, its process. Thereafter, we present a discussion on the Three Foundational Principles for Intentional Culture Building salient to our approach to DOS. This is followed by a subsequent presentation of the principles in action; each paired with an examination of artifacts via three Telling Cases (Mitchell, 1984).

The Why

Depth of Study is a time and place for educators to codevelop how they want to engage with each other and explore diverse ways to engage with students and each other in teaching and learning processes. Educators have developed DOS as an evolving process to hold themselves accountable to important stakeholders: each other, students, and their parents. This dialogic perspective, or conversation between how they engage with students and the decisions that led to those actions, become a rich source for study. When educators examine their decision-making and teaching events, they can collaboratively develop a shared language about what powerful teaching, planning, and assessment look and sound like.

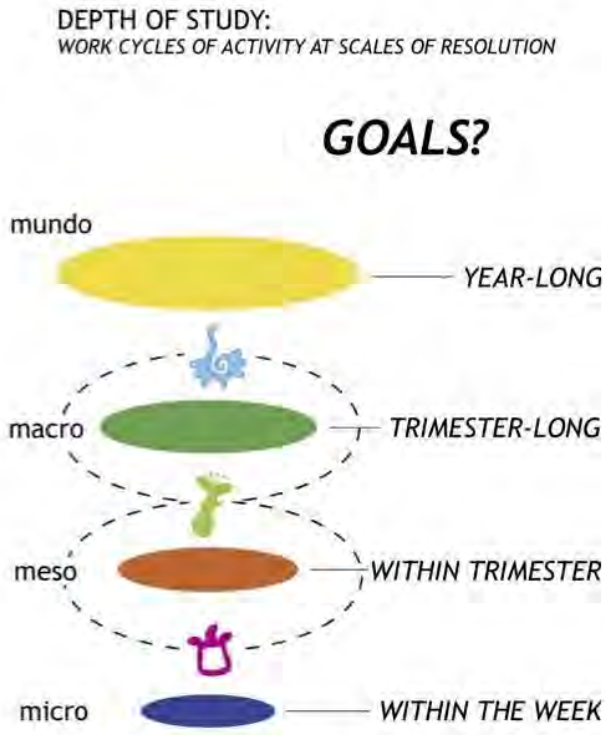
The What

Depth of Study is a structured time for educators to convene weekly in order to explore the most pressing issues about teaching and learning which affect our students. It is a dedicated time for collaboratively inquiring into the day-to-day life of teaching and learning at Berkeley Hall.

Across each trimester, faculty meet weekly in cross-grade and cross-discipline groups to engage in a range of professional development topics developed collaboratively between faculty and leadership. At the onset of each DOS trimester, faculty collaboratively articulate goals for their individual grade level/discipline, grade-level band (Lower and Upper Division), all aligned to the 2022-2023 academic school year's research goal, "What structures and systems will nurture an ever-evolving (and self-informing) culture of reflecting, intending & taking informed action?"

The How

Figure 1 depicts the part-to-whole relationship among the long and short time spans of DOS activity. Each week's DOS focus has a structure, processes, and protocols.



The year-long, or **Mundo**, view encompasses our DOS work for the whole of the 2022-2023 academic year.

Each **Macro** Trimester is divided into **Meso** Work Cycles, or slightly smaller units of time, which are guided by goals.

Each **Meso** Work Cycle is further divided into smaller, or **Micro** units of time which will define your weekly DOS time together.

It is our intention that by drawing on an over-time *and* whole-to-part and part-to-whole accounting of how we invest our time in DOS, that we will grow intellectually and spiritually both as individuals and as a collective.

Fig. 1: DOS part-to-whole.

The three authors collaborate with DOS facilitators and teachers to determine yearlong goals, and the content experiences and practices for DOS. In order to support participating teachers to extend the focused activity within and across individual DOS meetings into the classroom, Córdova (first author) takes on the role of "thinking-partner" during the week by collaborating closely with teachers. They invite him to design and plan a three-day unit of study where together they explore the content of DOS, translating it into the realm of the classroom. Córdova partners with teachers in a variety of ways. Some teachers only want him to demonstrate inquiry approaches to teaching and learning, while others wish to co-teach with him. Others only want him to observe them and provide feedback on their teaching practices.

Three Foundational Principles for Intentional Culture-Building

An Interactional Ethnographic Perspective (Santa Barbara Discourse Group, 1992a, 1992b) positions the teacher-researcher as both participating in an experience and also naming the experience, thus further intentionally shaping the experience. This stepping inside an experience, and stepping outside of it, enables the teacher-researcher to develop a meta-language to make the invisible visible. The three foundational principles are offered as essential processes for intentional culture building. They work together as a system that accounts for an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective, experiences and practices, and the periphery-to-center and overtime nature of developing shared cultural understandings, practices, and belonging.

Telling Case 1 of Premise 1: Making Visible the Invisible Through an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective.

The "DNA" represents salient disciplinary practices that emerge specifically from the field of anthropology and Interactional Ethnography; and generally from within and across all disciplines both formal and informal. These practices and actions enable us to behold a phenomenon such as an artifact, experience, or event in order to engage in progressively unfolding layers of discovery. Through the processes of *Deep-Dive & Document*, we can orient ourselves to become present and curious about the phenomenon before us. *Notice & Name* engages us to describe and label the phenomenon, while *Analyze & Announce* requires us to question and account for what we see to self and others.

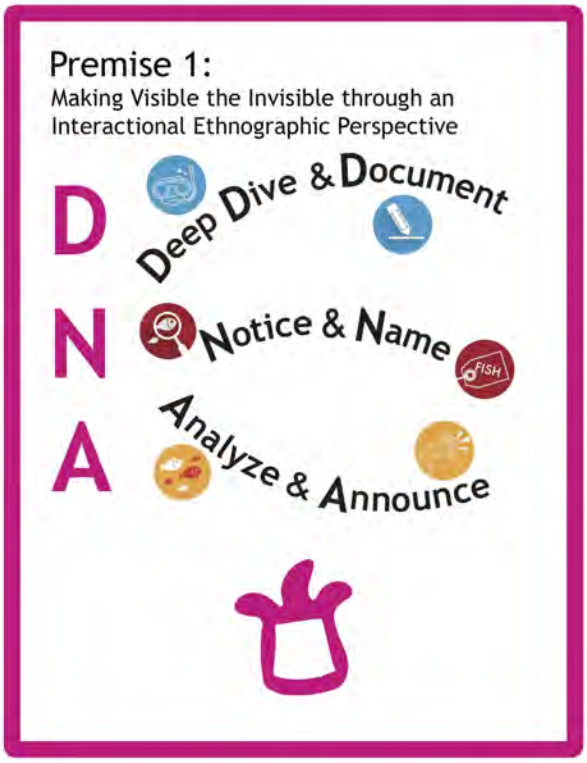


Fig. 2: DNA making the invisible visible.

Snapshot of Practice During DOS: Ethnography of the Day

A salient practice of DOS is a process we call the Ethnography of the Day, which is a living document that we coauthor. During our professional work together, a participant educator volunteers to take on the role of the Ethnographer of the Day. This role requires that the volunteer become a participant-observer by concurrently participating in the DOS events and taking notes on what participants are working on from the beginning to end of the day's work. The Ethnographer of the Day then synthesizes the notes and summarizes them for the whole group to be shared during the subsequent DOS meeting. The Ethnographer of the Day also interrogates the events captured in the notes in form of questions they to pose to the group.

In order to practice an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective as a way to make sense of our daily events by making visible their significance, the Ethnographer of the Day observes in two ways to produce the Ethnography of the Day. It is organized into columns with time stamps (see Table 1). The left is labeled *Note-Taking,* and the right one is labeled *Note-Making*. Note-Taking is a process of documenting descriptively the events and sub-events of the day's activities. By creating a written description of events, the reader—or in the case with DOS, the group of participants—is able to behold the prior day's activities absent of interpretation. Interpretation or evaluation is important. However, we have found that too often we retell an event with a layer of evaluation or analysis, which may or may not be what actually happened. By narrowing what is described under Note-Taking, we strive to account for the event as descriptively as possible in order for the beholder to offer their own interpretation or evaluation.

The Note-Making side of the observation is the place where the Ethnographer of the Day makes sense of the observation, offering their questions, interpretations, and insights. Whereas the Note-Taking observations can be seen as descriptive almost verbatim accounts or written phenomena of what actually happened, the Note-Making offers a dialogic, generative, and meaning-making space. When the Ethnographer of the Day offers interpretations based upon the descriptive observation, they engage in a dialogic process of engaging with the description in order to make sense with and from it. In doing so, two perspectives are placed together, side by side, letting them talk to one another (Bateson, 1994).

In Table 1, we see an excerpt from Kendall's, a DOS participant, Ethnography of the Day dated 7/20/2022, which is the account for the prior day's events. An excerpt from within the 9:00-9:10 a.m. sub-event under the Note-Taking column reveals, *"…Ralph checks in with the group, asks how we slept, forecasts the day…"* Kendall captures how Ralph (first author) framed or articulated the session's forthcoming events. By having chosen to capture Ralph's framing of the day, and not something else, Kendall is signaling that beginnings matter, and how they actually begin matters more. Under the Note-Making column for that captured observation, Kendall wonders about the significance of how the day is being framed, *"I wonder if everyone is feeling the value of checking needs and becoming aware of what awaits for the day/direction we are headed."* Here, we see Kendall using the verbs: *wonder, feeling, checking, becoming aware, [direction we] are headed*. We argue that those active verbs encapsulate how the DOS group is working through the unknown (wonder), harnessing empathy (feeling and checking), learning to notice what is unfolding (becoming aware), and implicating a way-finding progression (are headed).

Table 1

Excerpt From Kendall's Ethnography of the Day

Time	Note-Taking	Note-Making
9:00	Opening Circle: Ralph checks in with the group, asks how we slept, forecasts the day by outlining what he hopes for the day and the schedule, and the intended outcomes for the day.	*I wonder if everyone is feeling the value of checking needs and becoming aware of what awaits for the day/the direction we are headed. Is Ralph intentionally modeling this for us or has it become so ingrained in his teaching/facilitation practice? Or perhaps it's just best practice? I wonder by the end of the day how we will feel about our progress with the intended outcomes?*

The Ethnography of the Day makes concrete the importance of what may otherwise remain an abstract culture-defining aspect of an ethnographic perspective. Kendall harnesses the dialogic space that opens up between the Note-Taking and Note-Making observations in order to explore and make sense of what the participants are co-constructing. By providing a written account of the prior day's events paired with his interpretations, the participants are able to recall what happened and behold a colleague's accounting and interpretation of it. Participants are also able to see how they might organize their own Ethnography of the Day when it is their turn. Furthermore, we also see that the individual (Kendall) engages within the collective (his colleagues) in a meaning-making, dialogic process of the individual-within-the-collective (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, we argue that the literate practice of producing an Ethnography of the Day and engaging in developing an ethnographic perspective is an enacted case of Premise 1: Making Visible the Invisible through an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective.

Telling Case 2 of Premise 2: Culture-in-the-Making

Building on the first Telling Case above, we focus our second analysis on how DOS participants manifested a shared understanding and language of what constitutes Premise 2: Culture-in-the-Making by examining a process and experience we call the *Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity*.

Here we argue that students do not simply learn math, reading, writing, social studies, and so on, as bodies of content knowledge to consume and replicate outside of context. By instructing in academic language and practices, we position students to take up disciplinary content through enacted ways of thinking, doing and knowing, such as what mathematicians, readers, writers, social scientists, *say* and *do*. When we approach teaching and learning from this perspective, we assist students to appropriate and develop fluency in the languages of the disciplines paired with the practices used by members of the disciplines. From this perspective, a mathematician is not something a Berkeley Hall student will become later when they grow up. Rather, from the moment they enter Berkeley Hall, students will be afforded

rich opportunities to engage in mathematical language and practices as meaning-making tools, thus becoming young mathematicians.

We behold, interact with, and learn from core content or experiences by harnessing practices salient to particular or diverse disciplines such as the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and so on. Figure 3 represents Premise 2: Culture-in-the-Making. Like Note-Taking in the Ethnography of the Day, in the left-hand column, Disciplinary Content, we can entertain the lessons, activities, experiences, that teachers and students engage in as opportunities for learning that we afford our students. Like Note-Making, in the right-hand column, Disciplinary Practices, we entertain the actions or ways of being in the world, that we afford our students to try on in order for them to behold phenomena (content experiences), make sense of it by interacting with and learning from it, and articulating their meaning-making. From this perspective, we seek to nurture powerful dialogic learning to emerge in the dance between Disciplinary Content and Disciplinary Practices.

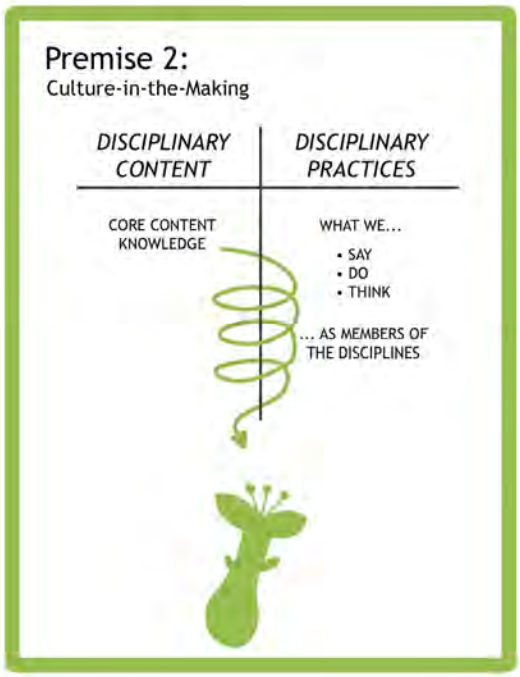


Fig. 3: Culture-in-the-making.

Students do not simply learn math, reading, writing, social studies, as a list of things to know and replicate outside of context. By instructing in academic language and practices, we position students to take up disciplinary content through enacted ways of thinking, doing and knowing, such as what mathematicians, readers, writers, social scientists, do. When we approach teaching and learning in this way, we assist students to appropriate and develop fluency in the languages of the disciplines paired with the practices used by members of the disciplines.

Given this perspective of disciplinary knowledge construction might be foreign to the uninitiated, how do we make this developmental journey accessible? The Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity process we have found provides an ethnographic and kinesthetic approach for making visible what members of disciplines do (actions) and how they produce knowledge (content).

Snapshot of Practice During DOS: Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity

We introduced the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity activity early in the year during DOS in order to develop a shared experience that manifests shared understandings of Premise 2: Culture-in-the-Making. Its process is as follows with participants:

1. Getting into groups of 2-4.
2. Being assigned a different disciplinary identity (e.g., reader, writer, mathematician, scientist, etc.)
3. Generating a written list of as many actions (verbs) that they know that disciplinary identity does.
4. Narrowing those lists of verbs to five.
5. Receiving a different stack of construction paper of one color per different discipline.
6. Writing the five verbs on a separate sheet of colored construction paper.
7. Standing in a large circle facing each other.
8. Speaking aloud, each discipline identifies itself by revealing its five verbs it decided upon and placing them face-up on the floor.
9. Becoming silent, and begin connecting the verbs in a visual manner.
10. Stopping and noticing what shapes and verb associations emerge.
11. Asking if there are other associations.
12. Engaging the process until all visual permutations of verb associations are exhausted.
13. Concluding by participants describing what happened, and what it might mean.

We have documented several meaning-making phases in how the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity unfolds. First, when the disciplinary pairs first reveal their five verbs in the circle, they placed the five same-colored sheets on the floor, in what looked like many sets of siloed verbs, each set in the same color. Then, invariably and spontaneously, participants begin to group like verbs from across the different disciplines (e.g., *publish, wonder, hypothesize, observe, write, etc.*). Following this phase, participants then begin to organize the verbs irrespective of disciplines into meaning-making cycles (e.g., *wonder, hypothesize, observe, write, publish, etc.*).

Figure 4 shows a final permutation of the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity from this year's DOS, which participants shaped into a spiral. One section of the spiral has a sequence of verbs, *evaluate, analyze, summarize, collaborate, lead with intention,* while another section's sequence of verbs contain, *envision, sees, thinks, ideates, infer, imagine*. Participants discuss at length what engaging in the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity reveals about how we approach disciplinary knowledge development in students. The conversation begins with them describing how initially the disciplinary verbs were siloed, then connected across discipline, followed by the importance of the verbs needing to be structured in a meaning-making sequence.

Fig. 4: Transdisciplinarity unsiloed.

We asked participants to think about how they go about introducing disciplinary content to their students, and which essential verbs of that discipline are necessary in order for students to build a disciplinary culture of artists, mathematicians, and scientists. One participant articulated in their Ethnography of the Day for the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity event: *This! Has! Much! Potential! Just think what happens when we see just how each discipline is actually related to what happens in all others . . . they just look like and sound differently*. Here, they articulate the potential implications for practice when we see and harness that while the verbs or actions of each discipline might be particular to the discipline (they just look like and sound differently), they actually are saliently related (each discipline is actually related).

We argue that like the Note-Taking process from the Ethnography of the Day, that the Unsiloed Transdisciplinarity process draws on an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective by asking participants to articulate the verbs or actions of what members of disciplines do. Then, like the Note-Making process, when participants articulate the relationship among the disciplinary verbs, and make connections among them, they engage in a meaning-making process that begins to reveal a dialogic relationship between

disciplinary content and disciplinary actions. As we will see in the third Telling Case, participants see that disciplinary content is inert; only accessible by harnessing and embodying the verbs of disciplines in order to interact with and learn from disciplinary content. In this way a mathematical, scientific, artistic, or Berkeley Hall culture-in-the-making emerges over time, in and through the activities and experiences we engage in and the actions and verbs with which we behold them.

Telling Case of Premise 3: The Over-Time Nature of Change—Moving from Periphery to Center

In Telling Case Two, we learned that we individually and collectively interact with and learn from core content and experiences by intentionally harnessing disciplinary practices, language, and actions. Life, however, is not a series of one-offs, disparately sequenced random series of events. Yet, many students experience learning in schools as such. And this decontextualized, or unrelated "lessons" or content experiences, approach was exacerbated during the isolated remote learning during the pandemic.

In Telling Case Three, we build on the prior two Telling Cases as we argue that there is an over-time and developmental nature for educators developing the knowledge and practices they engage with during the cultural realm of DOS and they then translate that into the cultural realm of the classroom.

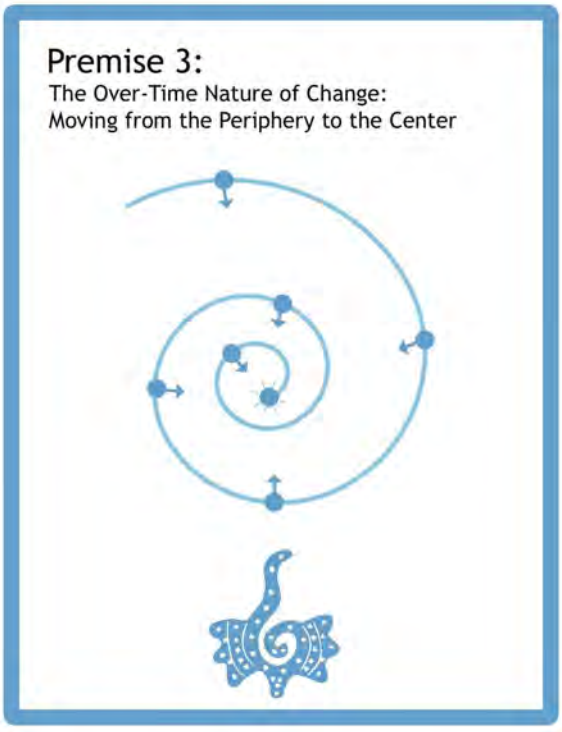


Fig. 5: Premise 3: Periphery to center.

Snapshot of Practice from the Classroom: Constructing Terrariums

Bobbie and Jen are kindergarten teachers at Berkeley Hall and co-teach. They participate weekly in DOS and have asked Córdova (first author) to work with them and their students for the entirety of Trimester 1. The instructional focus for the first three-week cycle of activity was terrarium building by harnessing the Interactional Ethnographic DNA process (see Telling Case 1) of meaning-making.

On Wednesday, September 14, at 1:45 p.m., Bobbie, Jen, and Córdova enacted their terrarium studies. Córdova was lead teacher during the first lesson in the unit, while Bobbie and Jen co-facilitated and took notes to provide him with feedback. Figure 6 is an anchor chart for the "DNA Song." Students learned to sing the song along with corresponding gestures to embody the salient disciplinary practices of Deep-Dive & Document, Analyze & Announce, and Notice & Name (see Telling Case 1 for description). Córdova brought a terrarium into the classroom for the students to interact with and learn from it as an anchor phenomenon in order to harness the DNA disciplinary practices.

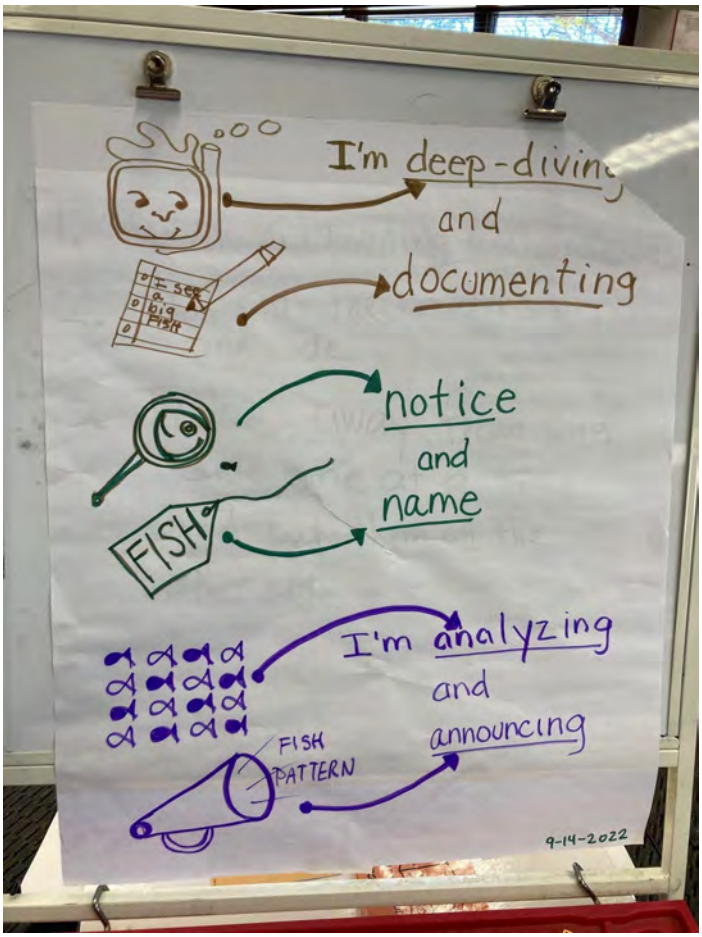


Fig. 6: Interactional ethnographic DNA process in kindergarten.

Students first *"*deeply dove*"* into the observation by noticing and orally documenting what they saw. Córdova documented their observations on the overhead projector. Córdova asked students to notice what was in the terrarium and foreshadowed, *"notice carefully because later you will be documenting*

the terrarium by making a diagram of it." Córdova asked, *"what does naming something mean?"* One student responded by saying, *"you wrote fish to tell it's a fish."* Córdova then framed the last part of the DNA process for the students by telling them a true story. He began with *"most older students have a hard time with the last verbs, analyze and announce. What do you think those actions are asking us to do?"* Students began to shout out, while others raised their hands. Their responses included:

1. *There's fish.*
2. *Fish are swimming.*
3. *There's purple and white fish.*
4. *There's a pattern!*
5. *There's sixteen fish.*

One student then interrupted us by shouting, *"I know, I know! It's a pattern and the thing you put on your mouth* [megaphone] *means you have to shout out the pattern!"* Needless to say, we noticed evidence that the students were beginning to apprehend the DNA process via the pictorial representation of those ethnographic verbs. Students concluded the lesson by documenting the terrarium we had explored together through the DNA process. In Figure 7, we see a student depiction of the terrarium. Notice what the student *noticed* and represented in their diagram? Notice what the student *named* in the diagram?

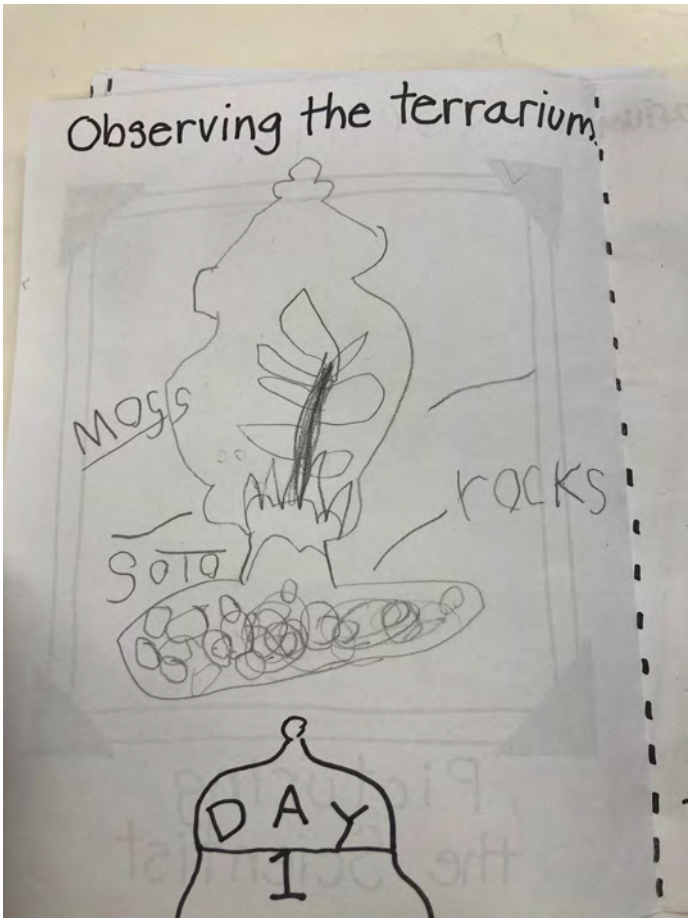


Fig. 7: Kindergarten terrarium diagram

The second day of the study involved students asking questions about how to build a terrarium, which led them to co-build a classroom terrarium. The third day involved students using the DNA process and knowledge of terrarium building to construct their own mini individual terraria.

We argue that the study of terrarium building in kindergarten was possible because the teachers understood the value of Premise 1: Making the Visible the Invisible Through an Interactional Ethnographic Perspective, which they first experienced during an earlier DOS session. The DNA process became a shared understanding around which they and Córdova could collaborate in order to explicitly support their students to develop an inquiry stance, or we argue an emergent Interactional Ethnographic Perspective, in order to interact with and learn from the phenomena of terraria.

This snapshot of classroom practice also makes visible Premise 2: Culture-in-the-Making, whereby students learned the salient ethnographic practices from the DNA process through a song in order to apply those disciplinary actions to engage in, which would become their co-constructing a culture of inquiry in the kindergarten classroom.

The significance of the collaborative work teachers engaged in during DOS around the three premises for intentional culture building and their understanding of its utility are evidenced in the case with the kindergarten teachers and Córdova co-constructing a unit of study on terraria. The over-time and developmental nature posited by Premise 3 conceptualizes participants as individuals within a collective, whose contextualized collaborating begins the process of moving from peripheral and individual understandings to shared and collective understandings. Bakhtin (1986) argues:

> Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener. In most cases, genres of complex cultural communication are intended precisely for this kind of actively responsive understanding with delayed action. (pp. 68–69)

What Bobbie and Jen first beheld and understood about DNA made their way, through their dialogic and practice-based collaborations with Córdova, from the cultural setting of DOS into the classroom. In this way, we make visible the part-to-whole phenomena for why we have conceptualized the structure of DOS at Berkeley Hall articulated in Figure 1: Depth of Study.

Conclusion

What constitutes Depth of Study at Berkeley Hall is a collective effort that brings into focus how the concept of part-to-whole and whole-to-part relationships can be harnessed to co-construct a site-based, ethnographic approach, to professional learning based on the three premises for intentional culture building discussed in this study. We have made visible how the difference of intentional culture building behind DOS makes a difference, and the difference that difference makes in how professionals develop each other professionally. Moreover, we have shown and examined what professional learning looks like in a DOS setting and how it is affecting teachers' classroom-based practices and student learning.

Depth of Study is a place and perspective that nurture depth of understanding and emergent insight "by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another" (Bateson, 1994, p. 14).

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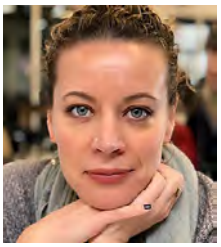

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Living Out-of-Doors: A Narrative Inquiry Alongside Nipugtugewei Forest Kindergarten Teachers

Melissa Daoust, Vera Caine, and Lee Schaefer

Abstract

In this paper, we draw upon a narrative inquiry alongside two creators of an out-of-doors Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program within a Mi'gmaw community, in northeastern Canada. Our intention was to understand their schooling, educational, and communal experiences over time. Diverse field texts were composed and interpreted alongside participants. We turned towards narrative conceptions of knowledge to show how attending to teachers' personal practical knowledge and stories to live by on their professional knowledge landscape is sustaining who they are as teachers and people. It is also a way for teachers to live their responsibility to Indigenous communities and students.

Background

> *One morning, Joyce was doing a math lesson. Newt. Ta'pu. Si'st. Ne'w. Na'n. Numbers in Mi'gmaw.*[1] *I listened. I repeated after Ms. Joyce—whispering the numbers, attempting for them to stay in my brain—beautiful language. My chair was pulled beside one of the boys—for some reason, I was always around him. Big brown eyes, filled with curiosity, generosity, kindness, and a few freckles on his face—somehow, I felt drawn to his warm spirit. He did not talk much in class. Newte'jig. Ta'pusijig. Nesisijig. Ne'wijig. Na'njig. Ms. Joyce was using numbers to tell stories. I heard students laughing. Repeating after Ms. Joyce. Not him though. He seemed disengaged, disinterested . . . I wondered why. It was not a question of readiness or cognitive ability.*
>
> *The following afternoon, Joyce points me in the direction of the same boy. We were out-of-doors, outside, this time. He was writing the numbers in the snow. Tal Tluen [how do you say] one in Mi'gmaw?—I asked. How about two? Three? Four? Five? Later that afternoon, in one of our routines after-school conversations, Joyce tells me a story: I just asked a question, I was assessing, and I noticed a student that was not responding, or not sure, low self-esteem for some reason, something. And I decided to do it out-of-doors*[2] *and he did really well. So, I base my assessment and his mark on how he did out-of-doors as opposed to indoors. All the curriculum is done, could be done out-of-doors.*[3]

Throughout this narrative inquiry study, I [first author][4] worked closely with Joyce and Brenda, who are teachers working within a land-based Mi'gmaq speaking education program in Listuguj First Nation,[5] in northeastern Canada. In this study, we inquired into the experiences of these two kindergarten teachers. Thinking with narrative conceptions of knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) allowed us to attend to the temporality of Joyce and Brenda's stories, to pay attention to how their past stories shape their present stories, and, in turn, shape their imagined future stories. From a conceptual standpoint, it enabled us to see how their personal knowledge landscapes have become rooted in their professional knowledge

landscapes (Clandinin et al., 2014) and how this shapes their relational responsibility to their community, as well as how it sustains them as teachers.

Indigenous philosophies have been rooted in the agency of place, where "place teaches the intrinsic, life-supportive value of being together and facilitates dialogue and relationships across ontological divides" (Larsen & Johnson, 2017, p. 22). Education facilitated on the land is a way for people, specifically First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples, to reestablish a connection to their identity and cultural heritage (Kovach, 2009; Simpson et al., 2012; Simpson, 2014; Haig- Brown & Hodson, 2009). Simpson (2014), a Mississauga Nishnaabe writer, advocates for teaching on the land, as it enables individuals to connect to landforms, plants, spirits, animals, sounds, feelings, thoughts, and energies in ecological networks. In fact, Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry scholar Kovach (2009) claimed that Indigenous peoples are "keepers of the land" (p. 57), as they maintain deep and storied interconnective relationships between people and place. For Styres et al. (2013), land is the first teacher and individuals' roles and responsibilities are acquired through intimate embodiment with land. Children are said to learn *from* and *with* the land where they come to use the "whole body intelligence practice in the context of freedom, and when realized collectively it generates generations of loving, creative, innovative, self-determining, inter-dependent and self-regulating community minded individuals" (Simpson, 2014, p. 7). The bond made with land and place paves the way for children to be mentally and sensorially stimulated to learn from their experiences (Simpson et al. 2012; Simpson, 2014, Smith, 2002). Land-based education provides many other cultural benefits, including ways for teachers and children to reconnect with their language (Kovach, 2009; Wildcat, 2017; Metallic, 2017). In fact, according to Mi'gmaq scholar Metallic (2017), Indigenous languages are considered to be deeply connected with the natural world. Moreover, teachers reported that land-based education facilitated the incorporation of effective cultural, spiritual, and traditional ways of knowing. Examples of these ways of knowing included teaching through stories, teachings of the elders, arts and crafts, traditional dancing and ceremonies, and lessons derived from plants and animals (Wildcat et al., 2014; Archibald, 2008; Haig-Brown & Dannenmann, 2002).

Nipugtugewei Kindergarten

The land-based program was created by Joyce and Brenda in 2012 and is situated within Nipugtugewei Kindergarten in Listuguj First Nation. Students and teachers learn out-of-doors through discovery, dance, play, storytelling, and song, all in their Mi'gmaw language. While Nipugtugewei Kindergarten aligns with curriculum objectives, it is focused on conceptions of well-being, and centered on enabling teachers and students to connect with Mother Earth, as well as their unique culture and language. Because of the conceptualization and creation of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, the relationship between school and education for Joyce and Brenda evolved as they made spaces within the school landscape, spaces that can be both metaphorically and literally out-of-doors, spaces connecting them with their language and culture, with Mother Earth and with spaces of sustenance and relational responsibility.

Conceptualizations of Teacher Knowledge and Practice

The implementation of curriculum rarely takes into account the knowledge teachers hold; instead, Clandinin (1985) explains that teachers are positioned to facilitate someone else's intentions in curriculum implementation. Greene (1995), in a similar vein, noted that teachers feel like a "chess piece or a cog or even an accomplice of some kind" (p. 98). As Clandinin et al. (2014) explain, teacher knowledge is not valued in the classroom; "[w]hat is valued is knowledge for teaching; the codified abstract knowledge of teaching that is often studied and taught to teachers" (p. 207). In addition, many authors have critiqued how mandated teacher education courses in Canada are built off of an industrialized Eurocentric model that is framed by Cartesian dualism, which separates not only the mind and body, but also knowledge from context (Sanford et al., 2015).

Schaefer and Clandinin (2019) highlight the dominance of knowledge *for* teachers in teacher education, such as the subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge and technical skills. Knowledge *for* teachers is knowledge that is considered as important knowledge for teachers to have; in this way "knowledge itself is considered an object, as something to possess or hold and that can be transferred to teachers" (p. 9). Knowledge *for* teachers, embedded in teacher education, is designed to prepare future teachers with the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be effective and successful teachers. Clandinin and Connelly (1995), drawing on narrative conceptions of knowledge, point us to the importance of personal practical knowledge. The failure to understand and value a teacher as holding personal knowledge helps to explain the limited effectiveness in curriculum implementation, in teacher retention and sustainability, and in teachers' commitments to students and the larger community.

Knowledge as Personal and Practical (and Communal)

Clandinin (2013) has shown how knowledge is "personal, practical and expressed in practice" (p. 9). Connelly and Clandinin (1985) introduced the concept of personal practical knowledge, which emphasizes that practical knowledge places an emphasis on the teacher's knowing of a classroom by understanding knowledge as "imbued with all the experiences that make up a person's being" (Clandinin, 1985, p. 362). Our personal practical knowledge is also shaped by familial, cultural, and institutional stories that live in us, and are lived in and on both personal and professional knowledge landscapes (Clandinin et al., 2014). It is important to not only acknowledge teachers' knowledge, but also how Joyce and Brenda live out their personal practical knowledge. Their experiences are shaped by being Indigenous and living in an Indigenous community. It is shaped by their relational responsibility and commitments to community.

Clandinin et al. (2014) conceptualized a way to see how teachers have and continue to negotiate their stories to live by, rooted in a personal knowledge landscape. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) see in-school and out-of-school spaces as knowledge landscapes. This notion of landscapes includes relationships to places, people, situations and is always in the midst. The relationship between *personal and professional knowledge landscapes* offers a new way to teachers as individuals who possess a body of knowledge and express it within their lives and, in turn, through their teaching practices. As we think with Brenda and Joyce's experiences, alongside a narrative conception of knowledge, our intention is to

show how attending to teachers' personal practical knowledge on their professional knowledge landscape sustains who they are as teachers and people. It also is a way to live their responsibility to Indigenous communities and students.

Situating the Study

> Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry come out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. [...] Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477)

Over 30 years ago, Clandinin and Connelly (1990) wrote the first article that conceptualized narrative inquiry as both a methodology and a way of understanding experience narratively. Narrative inquirers often cite Dewey's (1938) pragmatic ontology as the philosophical underpinnings of their work. Part of this ontology denotes that experience is continuous, interactive, and happens within specific contexts. This work is based on the premise of Dewey's (1916; 1938) vision of education. Dewey believed that the experience of the student is the basis for learning, that the acquisition of knowledge comes from within the student and the teacher. In this study, there is a focus on how teachers' individual experiences and stories are shaped by the cultural, institutional, social, and historical narratives of the community. In other words, while there is a focused attention to individual lived experiences, there is also an understanding that these experiences took place within a complex and ever-shifting environment, a sociality, that was imbued with a multiplicity of stories and relationships.

The research design of narrative inquiry includes a commitment to create relationships with participants over time to hear how their stories unfolded over, and in, their lives. Spaces of narrative inquiry are attentive to what it means to live as a researcher in ethical relationships and in collaborative ways (Lessard et al., 2015). The diverse forms of field texts were interpreted alongside participants from within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) with attention to temporality, the personal and social contexts, and place. As we listen to participants' stories, we also draw our attention to the importance of language, language that encompasses silences (Lessard et al., 2021).

A Relational Negotiation: Meeting the Participants

In 2018, I [first author] was fortunate to be offered a teaching practicum in Listuguj, First Nation. This experience allowed me to meet Joyce and Brenda and learn about Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. I first met Joyce and Brenda on the yellow school bus that drove students and teachers to different out-of-door adventures. From the day that I was introduced to both Joyce and Brenda and my time in their program, I knew that our relationships would be special. I also knew that I was not ready to embark just yet on a teaching career, so I pursued graduate school and was invited to continue working alongside Joyce and Brenda for my research. I was introduced to narrative inquiry as a methodology and phenomenon of studying experience at the same time. Narrative inquiry enabled me, as a researcher, to build relationships with participants and to learn alongside each other in the telling and living of experiences.

From 2018 to 2020, I recorded conversations with Brenda and Joyce and also wrote diverse field notes of my time at the school and in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. These methods were negotiated with the community research ethics boards and with Joyce and Brenda.

Meeting Joyce

I came to know Joyce as someone who loves children, and who is deeply connected to her culture and language. For Joyce, teaching is sharing her love and knowledge with others. In our conversations, Joyce often alludes to her childhood memories. Her stories are imbued with being engaged in the out-of-doors, in the community, on the land, and with her family. As she mentions, being in a small and close-knit community, everybody took care and looked out for each other. Being risk takers, climbing trees, going in the woods for long periods of time, exploring and playing where they wanted to was part of her ordinary life. It was part of who she was and how she lived within a collective, within a kinship.

Joyce has been teaching Mi'gmaw at the school for over 20 years as she is one of the most fluent speakers of her community. When Joyce spoke about how she was raised in Mi'gmaw, she had many specific and detailed memories of listening to her mother's and grandmother's stories. Storytelling, as Joyce remembers from her childhood, was part of how she was taught, as well as how she teaches today.

Joyce's early beginnings as a student included stories of attending Indian Day School,[6] of being punished and reprimanded for speaking her language and practicing her culture, of learning within a specific type of knowledge, within timelines, within walls that attempted to erase her personal knowledge landscape. It is visible how these experiences have shaped Joyce.

> *My vision was to go to school and come back and help my people. What I didn't get—that support—I just felt that it's so needed here. Support in their ways of learning. To help people understand that native people have different ways of learning. Rather than paper and pencil and English language and writing. I had a vision; it was my vision. (Joyce, conversation)*

Attending to how these experiences have shaped her present teaching practices helps me to better understand who Joyce is as a teacher and why she is drawn to teach out-of-doors.

> *I felt it in myself as a child and I may be wrong that it shouldn't be, our Native People, themselves intergenerational, the genetics and everything, we were never*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *ever,*
>
> *taught in the four walls. Our great, great grandparents taught our children by modeling or storytelling or just actually being out-of-doors in a relaxed atmosphere to open up their doors through and for knowledge. (Joyce, conversation)*

Thinking temporally with Joyce's childhood stories, the Mi'gmaq ways of learning were out-of-doors, intertwined with experiences, intergenerational stories, and modeling; all parts of who she was and how she lived in her community.

Meeting Brenda

Brenda grew up in Windsor, a city in southwestern Ontario, on the south bank of the Detroit River. As a child, Brenda remembers "bike riding, roller blading, just hanging out at the waterfront, which is always in the woods, and then, every single chance we got we came to Listuguj." Actually, Brenda's parents brought her and her sisters to Listuguj every Spring, Christmas, and during summer breaks. Based on what Brenda shares from her time in Listuguj, it is clear that she was learning a great deal by immersing herself in this place, alongside her family, and especially her grandparents. Brenda refers to this place as a sanctuary—a sacred place.

> *I don't put pressure on myself. I don't have an expectation of myself. I just know, and I know this, that I'm just going to continue. So, if I'm 80 years old, I'm going to learn. I'm going to know much more than I do now, which is cool. I'm not learning it for myself. I'm learning it as they say you do things for seven generations behind you [...] or in front of me. As long as there's still that spark, it's worth it for me. (Brenda, conversation)*

Brenda has been teaching for over 15 years. She has been fortunate enough to be a part of a few curriculum-building projects. She was also teaching kindergarten and found that most of her day was spent trying to control the behavior of her class and a small amount of time was set aside for learning. Brenda was motivated to create a program that would nurture the well-being of her students and connect them (and herself) to culture and language. Brenda joined forces with her aunt, Joyce, and each year they develop different aspects of the program. Each year they focus more and more on mental health, language learning, and cultural traditions.

Turning Towards Narrative Threads

In the process of moving from field texts to interim texts, I drafted narrative accounts for each participant and subsequently identified narrative threads. Narrative accounts are reflective of individual participants' experiences within the three-dimensional inquiry space; some of these accounts are written as found poems.[7] In collaborative dialogues with participants, I read each narrative account to discern resonant threads that reverberated across accounts. In this paper, we reflect on two resonant threads: Understanding school as an educative place, which looks at the importance of fostering individuals' interests and strengths in this out-of-doors kindergarten program and considering personal practical knowledge as key to community making.

Understanding School as an Educative Place

You're sitting,
erasing,
erasing,
erasing,
this kid
Everybody's writing is unique
Why take that away from children?

I was younger
I had the strap,
that nun standing beside me
trying to wack my hand
to make sure
I wrote—right

it's my personality
how I saw my name
how I write

What are they doing to these poor kids?

Not all kids are
the same
at all
you shouldn't be
(Joyce, conversation)

From my time in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten I was attentive to temporality in both Brenda and Joyce's teaching stories; how their past stories have shaped their present and future imagined stories of teaching. I sensed tensions between what they alluded to as *in*-and *out*-of-classroom spaces. These tensions seemed focused around how the in-door classroom is set up and who gets to decide what is included in the curriculum. Specifically, Joyce and Brenda grappled with what knowledge is important to learn as well as when and how this knowledge should be acquired.

> *Ages are so varied. Nobody's going to go back and ask my son, when did you learn to write your name? Kindergarten? Grade one? Grade two? Nobody's going to care. But he's going to care if he feels the pressure of not being able to write it in kindergarten, not being able to write it in Grade one… (Brenda, conversation)*

Although metaphorically and practically Brenda alluded to resisting this pressure when she was a child, she recognizes how some students, like her son, struggle to negotiate the inflexible rigid structures of the four-wall class/room.

In addition, Brenda feels as if her role as a teacher, forced upon her, is to train her students on "*how to take a test as opposed to find out what they're good at or excel in*." Joyce also shares many stories of dis/ease with what she is demanding from her students and asking herself: *What are they doing to these children?* Joyce travels back to her own school stories to question her positioning as a teacher. These

stories, Joyce's, and Brenda's, encompass a continuing search for intellectual freedom, as well as articulation and expression (Greene, 1995).

Creating a land-based program, shifting the place and space of *school*, allowed Joyce and Brenda to negotiate the inflexible in-school structures, the structures that value standards and timelines of learning, such as how one should write their name, in a certain way, before starting grade one. Brenda speaks to this below:

> *We're not saying that our students in kindergarten are outshining other kindergarten students. We're not pressuring them to learn it in kindergarten. It comes more naturally. They're going to be more at ease about learning. If they learn something at the end of kindergarten or even grade one, at least they didn't have all that pent-up anxiety about learning it in a certain timeframe.*

As Brenda articulates, shift from in-door to out-of-doors is not just a shift of place, but a shift of structure which has allowed her and Joyce to illuminate how children are learning differently. The space that is created out-of-doors meets students where they are and enables a freedom to explore and experience. In fact, understanding this program as an educative place (Dewey, 1916; 1938) helps to explain why it is important for Brenda and Joyce to have students use their own voice as they experience hands-on learning opportunities. Dewey (1938) believed that experiences are educative when they are connected with past and current interactions and lead to further opportunities for growth without bounds. This is a place, a knowledge landscape, that bumps with the in-door school mainstream and, in turn, fosters unique ways of living, learning, and teaching.

In-Doors
always feel
this standard
to live up to
get these kids writing their names
get these kids doing this
this element of pressure

Out-of-Doors
way better –
Everybody has their space
to be—
alone
destress
play around
be loud
(Brenda, conversation)

Out-of-doors, Brenda and Joyce have found a learning landscape that allows students to be themselves without imposed physical and institutional barriers. The teaching evolves depending on students' interests and abilities. What is important for teachers is to build trust with children, as Brenda explains: *you know where they come from, you know where they're finishing. You have checkpoints, you discuss with everybody that's around that child. You ask questions.* The educative place created is based on

understanding where the student is in their development to foster a meaningful and individualized learning path.

> Joyce: *Every one of them has different strengths. I noticed some strengths in all of them. This boy, maybe a cry-baby, but he likes taking things apart and putting them together and working with small little things . . .*
>
> Brenda: *So, it's either we can help him with that and discover his strengths in that so he can get a job that he loves, or we can tell him that, no, it's not good enough, you're not good enough, you're not good enough, you're not good enough, he will grow up thinking, he is not good for anything.*

The out-of-doors space acts as an educative landscape that moves from standardizations, from seeing small, towards seeing students in the midst of what is happening, amid their lives, towards seeing big—and, in turn, towards seeing *otherwise* (Greene, 1995). Joyce and Brenda are creating opportunities to imagine other ways of knowing and learning. *The role of the educator is to say*, as Brenda explains:

let's try this.
let's try this,
expose you to this,
expose you to this,
figure it out
what are we going to know?
what are you good at?
what are you going to be?
And you find something they're good
out of all these things

The out-of-doors landscape is the venue that they found and connected with, when they were children growing up in the community. For Joyce, being immersed out-of-doors, learning her language with the land, taking care of her small and close-knit community are memories that she brings to her out-of-doors class/room. Indeed, this program enhances a curriculum that is cocreated between teachers and students centered around exposing students to all sorts of different learning opportunities to allow them to discover what they enjoy doing and learning.

Considering Personal Practical Knowledge key to Community Making

I'm learning along
I'm teaching them
I'm teaching myself
to pass on

Waterfall—
how do you say that?

At school
within the four-walls
never had the opportunity
to come up

out-of-doors
I go to my father
he'd say it—
it comes back

a word
I never heard
I would go to him
he would give me
the words
(Joyce, conversation)

Reflecting on Joyce's experiences as codeveloper and teacher in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, it is evident that she is able to co-compose a landscape that welcomes and sustains her stories to live by and her personal practical knowledge; knowledge that is personal, practical, and expressed through her teaching practice (Clandinin, 2013). Joyce's stories of school bump with her stories of education. Her stories of learning include growing up in Listuguj First Nation, her parents and grandparents' cultural teachings infused with a language connected to place. These teachings, intertwined with the freedom of getting lost in the woods and learning about the land, shape her personal practical knowledge, which, in turn, shape her identity as a teacher and her positionality in the community. Joyce recalls:

> *We learn from and through play. It was so natural to be outside all the time. In winter, as cold as it is, we were out-of-doors because we chose to go out-of-doors. Parents would feed other children in the neighborhood. They would give them water and let them use bathrooms. Let them play. They were all welcome. There was a neighbor, my brother hung out with, just down the highway in a corner and this woman just baked all the time. And as soon as the kids smelled them, from a foot distance away, they would smell the donuts being deep fried. All the neighborhood kids just go and then she would give them out.*

Teaching as a relational responsibility was shaped in her childhood. This way of teaching is different from being in an in-door class/room, where the teacher is focused on specific, individual, and oftentimes narrow outcomes that dismiss students' lives, cultures, and languages. For Joyce, sharing the Mi'gmaw language with her students is her passion. As Joyce mentions: *It's not only the curriculum but the language I want to know if they have an understanding. I'll talk to them and sometimes they're more comfortable outside than indoors with responding to language*. Teaching, imbued with their personal knowledge landscapes, what they know and have learned outside of and in their community, is how Joyce and Brenda are finding ways to express their stories to live by within the program. They have noticed that when they teach out-of-doors, they enjoy themselves and as Brenda says, *if teachers are enjoying themselves, the kids are going to enjoy learning*. For Brenda, being immersed in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten has sparked her interest to learn Mi'gmaw.

> Melissa: *Nipugtugewei Kindergarten enabled you to learn the language?*
>
> Brenda: *Yeah, it made me believe that it's possible. It's not as hard as I thought...Ms. Joyce was the teacher, but the out-of-doors was the venue. Just seemed like everything fell into place and I was able to express myself in a safe place being outside, and it's easier for me to teach the language outside as well because the kids are interested in anything that we have to say or do…*

Because of her experience teaching out-of-doors, Brenda has enrolled in a Mi'gmaw language learner program in her community, a space where she continues to learn as a way to not only model for her students, but to also become more versed in her language. By staying in-doors, Brenda mentions that she would not have tried to learn the language alongside her students and explains that, *"it is an institution, and they expect you to come prepared and with proper grammar. Outside, I was just free to make mistakes. Inside, I would never have tried."* Learning language in a safe environment, with the land, is how Joyce and Brenda imagine this professional knowledge landscape, a landscape that is situated amidst the community.

Discussion

This research is an inquiry into the lived experiences of two teachers who created an out-of-doors Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program within their Indigenous community. Attending to Brenda and Joyce's personal and professional knowledge landscapes was pivotal to understanding their stories to live by and their imagined stories of teaching. It is their personal knowledge landscape that has strengthened a deep sense of relational responsibility and commitment to Listuguj First Nation. We learned that they co-composed a knowledge landscape that nurtured what Dewey (1916; 1938) referred to as an educative space. According to Dewey (1938), educative spaces are connected with past and current interactions, which lead to further opportunities for growth. Joyce and Brenda created a program which focuses on who their students are and are becoming while facilitating Mi'gmaq ways of learning and teaching by understanding land as pedagogy. Indeed, teaching out-of-doors for Joyce and Brenda moved beyond our current understanding of land-based education. Their teachings were situated in place; it is where their language and other ways of knowing are grounded. Brenda and Joyce show us how they created an educative space that reestablishes a connection to their identity and cultural heritage, grounded in Indigenous philosophies (Kovach, 2009; Simpson et al., 2012; Simpson, 2014; Haig-Brown & Hodson, 2009). Narratively inquiring into Brenda and Joyce's experiences allowed us to understand how deeply rooted their experiences were in social and community contexts, in the agency of place (Larsen & Johnson, 2017).

Brenda and Joyce were able to promote diversity in students' ways of learning because they engaged with an out-of-doors landscape. This understanding supported the literature around land-based education and Indigenous ways of knowing. Even though Indigenous groups and their worldviews are diverse and cannot be addressed homogenously, there nonetheless remains a strong significance across Indigenous knowledge systems on the holistic connection with land (Hart, 2010; Norman et al., 2018; Wildcat, 2017). Connections made through land are the basis for Indigenous knowledge systems, which were said to also be "generated and regenerated continually through embodied practice on land and within each

family, community generation of people" (Simpson, 2014, p. 7). Indigenous pedagogies are based on several features that are distinct to mainstream pedagogies. According to Blackfoot researcher Little Bear (2009), these features include "styles, manner of delivery, materials utilized, and the teacher's cultural background" (p. 19). Indigenous pedagogies are also concerned for "community/collective well-being, experiential learning, and holistic learning" (Metallic, 2017, p. 36). By valuing Indigenous pedagogies, Battiste (2013) argues that the individual is thus encouraged to "learn independently by observing, listening, and participating with a minimum of intervention or instruction" (p. 15). From stories that both Brenda and Joyce shared with me, and with observations of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, it becomes clear that this program fosters other ways of learning, moving away from the rigid indoor colonial school structures.

How Joyce and Brenda learned during their childhood, their personal knowledge landscape, continues to influence the ways they teach and live. Learning from experiences, where both teachers and students find themselves in a collaborative search for knowledge, is what is happening in Nipugtugewei Kindergarten. Recognizing the importance of Joyce and Brenda's personal practical knowledge provided insights into their stories to live by as they negotiate who they are on the professional knowledge landscape. Being able to draw on their personal knowledge landscape, including their practices and knowledge of culture, language and place has shaped their personal practical knowledge and, in turn, helps them pay particular attention to the individuality and diversity of their students' lives. They live in relational ways with students and, as a result, are sustained in their teaching. This has reinforced their understanding that their personal practical knowledge is also imbued with a sense of responsibility to community. Joyce and Brenda have found a teaching landscape of sustenance; it is critical to understand that the out-of-doors is not just another classroom space for Joyce and Brenda. It indeed is a place that values lived experiences, allows space for their personal practical knowledge, and is a place that holds their commitment and responsibility to community.

Turning Towards Implications

Brenda and Joyce raised many wonders for us. We wonder: how do we design curricula that enable teachers to bring forward their personal practical knowledge into their professional knowledge landscape? Working with narrative conceptions of knowledge, we see the importance of encouraging preservice teachers and teachers to inquire into the knowledge they live and embody over time, paying close attention to their stories to live by. We understand the importance of creating spaces that allow teachers to negotiate their personal practical knowledge and their stories to live by alongside their professional knowledge landscape.

Brenda and Joyce have helped us to understand the importance of creating spaces that allow teachers to narratively inquire into their stories to live by, that is, who they are and are becoming (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2019; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2010; Estola et al., 2014; Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Uitto et al., 2018). We wonder how we might attend to the personal practical knowledge in teacher education programs. As teacher educators, how do we assist preservice teachers to become attuned to their stories to live by? Can we sustain learners, teachers, and the education system as a whole, when teachers

become mindful of their personal practical knowledge in their professional knowledge landscape? Brenda and Joyce have found the out-of-doors as a place that works for them. By allowing them to present their personal knowledge landscape and their stories to live by, we began to see stories of sustenance and power.

As we travel backwards to the story at the beginning of this paper, Nipugtugewei Kindergarten allowed children to find their language. "It becomes all the more important that they tap the full range of human intelligence" as Greene (1995, p. 57) believed. Part of the role of the educator is to enable students "to have a number of languages to hand, and not verbal or mathematical languages alone. Some children may find articulation through imagery; others, through body movements; still others, through musical sound" (p. 57). By being out-of-doors, Joyce and Brenda supported children to find a *language* they can use. As seen in one of the shared stories: He [the boy in the story shared] can interpret what he sees and experiences; he can question; he can imagine. As Greene (1995) articulates: "[t]o call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise" (p. 19). Greene (1995) draws me to imagine the stories to live by of teachers and inquirers working alongside Nipugtugewei Kindergarten, conceptualizing our co-composed and renewed stories as *otherwise*. Nipugtugewei Kindergarten is Joyce, Brenda, the students, and the community's venue to move beyond the curricular content, the narrow assessments guidelines, and the prescribed timelines. "To understand how children themselves reach out for meanings, go beyond conventional limits (once the doors are ajar), seek coherence and explanations," as Greene (1995) noted, "is to be better able to provoke and release rather than to impose and control" (p. 57). Metaphorically and practically, the teachers of Nipugtugewei Kindergarten have found ways to resist this pressure, by traveling in-and-out of different knowledge landscapes, and imagining their future stories of how education, learning, and teaching could be *otherwise* (Greene, 1995).

Conclusion

By living alongside Joyce and Brenda, it became evident that there is importance to attending to individuals' stories to live by and their personal practical knowledge. We began to understand that by inquiring into their stories to live by, Brenda and Joyce found educative spaces within school which were metaphorically and literally out-of-doors. These educative spaces, for them, were connected to community and relational responsibility, to language, to culture, all of which are rooted in land. This narrative inquiry leads to many future directions for teachers, future teachers, and teacher educators. In our work, we see the importance of imagining different ways of engaging preservice teachers in thinking about their own personal practical knowledge and the spaces and places, knowledge landscapes, that might sustain their unique personal, practical, and professional knowledge—to conceptualize what could be *otherwise* (Clandinin, 2013; Greene, 1995)

Notes

1. Mi'gmaw is an Eastern Algonquian language spoken by nearly 11,000 people in Canada and the United States.

2. Out-of-doors is a term used in this paper to describe a place in the absence of metaphorical walls, somewhere with infinite possibilities, without restraint and pressure. We define outdoor in the literal sense, being in nature, on land. We decided to use the term out-of-doors to represent the participants' quotes as a way to describe this metaphorical space and place.

3. All italicized text are words spoken by participants, which were recorded between September 2018 and August 2020, or field notes written by the first author. The REB 2 reviewed and approved this project by delegated review in accordance with the requirements of the McGill University Policy on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Human Participants and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (REB File #: 152-0919).

4. "I" refers to the first author, who undertook this study as a graduate student at McGill University in the Faculty of Education. Author 1 was a student teacher in Listuguj First Nation when she met Joyce and Brenda in their Nipugtugewei Kindergarten program. Author 2 and Author 3 were part of the committee overseeing this study. All three authors see ourselves as allies of Indigenous peoples. We have a long-term commitment to Indigenous communities and have worked with different Indigenous groups for an extensive amount of time.

5. Listuguj First Nation is in Gespe'gewa'gi (the Last Land), the seventh and largest district of Mi'gma'gi. Gespe'gewa'gi has been Mi'gmaq and Listugujewaq traditional territory since time immemorial. It includes what is now known as the Gaspé Peninsula, parts of mainland Quebec and Maine, and northeastern New Brunswick.

6. Historically, Indian Day Schools were built by the Federal Government of Canada in order to control First Nations, Inuit, and Métis education. Children who attended Indian Day Schools, as its name implies, were permitted to retain their cultural identity through daily contact with their family and community. However, these Day Schools were built to suppress Indigenous languages and culture. The forced Indian Day School in Listuguj opened its establishment before 1864, a school operated by Catholic priests and nuns.

7. Found poetry was used by taking words from Joyce and Brenda to reframe them to be evocative and make their stories more accessible to diverse audiences (Butler-Kisber, 2010).

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By Way of the Heart:
Cultivating Empathy Through Narrative Imagination

Dany Dias

Abstract

When trying to promote empathy, it is not sufficient to merely learn about other people and cultures if we seek to understand them better (Case, 1993). As a language arts teacher and researcher, the author sought to explore the potential for multicultural literature to expand adolescent learners' worldviews and shape their perceptions as global citizens through classroom inquiry. This doctoral research features the case study of her Grade 8 class. Findings revealed that through narrative imagination (Nussbaum, 1997), learners' experiences led to emerging themes of empathy, insight, and agency. This article focuses on the most prominent of these themes: empathy.

The Power of Story

Stories are read, told, and heard. They are inhabited by curious and imaginative souls who seek to breathe life into them with their hearts and minds. Stories reside in a question, a dialogue, a response, or a sigh. They are shared with intention, determination, courage, and a vulnerability that allows them to live on. Stories live on the pages of a chapter book, in the illustrations of a picturebook, and everywhere in between. They shout injustice just as they whisper the promise of hope. Most of all, stories have allowed my students and me to live a unique experience abounding in growth and understanding as humans.

During the 2019-2020 school year, I conducted a qualitative teacher research project (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) with my Grade 8, English as a Second Language (ESL) class. Part of my doctoral work (Dias, 2021), this case study (Dyson & Genishi, 2005) featured a yearlong exploration of teaching and learning with multicultural literature. As both a teacher and researcher, I sought to examine how using multicultural literature in the classroom might expand adolescent learners' worldviews and shape their perceptions as global citizens. Nine novels, six picturebooks, dialogue journals, discussions and debates, portfolios brimming with poems, songs, research, and various artwork—all contributed to expanding these adolescent learners' perception of self, Other, and the world. Located in a mostly White, Francophone rural community, my ESL class provided a convenience sample (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) from which 12 participants (all names are pseudonyms) consented to engage in the study. Because teacher research is not an add-on activity, the whole class participated in everyday teaching and learning activities. This paper recounts participants' individual and collective journeys of learning through narrative imagination.

The First Lens

Findings from this study were derived from multiple data sources, including participants' end-of-year reflective questionnaires and portfolios containing dialogue journal entries, responses from discussion boards, artwork, and various multimodal productions. I also drew upon my teacher journal as a supportive data source. After analyzing the data using a *constant comparative method* (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I found myself contemplating my study's findings from three viewpoints, or three lenses: 1) a focus on the classroom, 2) a focus on my perspective as teacher, and 3) a closer look at three participant portraits. The first lens considers data in the context of the classroom as a whole and contextualizes emerging themes in relation to learners' experiences as they read and interacted with the books. Within this lens, three themes emerged: empathy, insight, and agency. In this article, I focus on findings from the first lens and the most prominent of its themes—empathy.

Cultivating Humanity Through Narrative Imagination

Martha Nussbaum (1997) views cultivating humanity as an urgent matter and argues that as citizens of the world, we must develop certain abilities to achieve this. One of these abilities posits that, "citizens cannot think well on the basis of factual knowledge alone" (Nussbaum, 1997, p. 10). According to Nussbaum, narrative imagination is

> the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have. (pp. 10–11)

Narrative imagination enriches our perspective of humanity and prepares us to confront moral dilemmas, which are brought to life in literature (Nussbaum, 1997). Because my teacher inquiry aimed to explore multicultural literature in our language arts class, storytelling became a powerful vehicle to promote narrative imagination. As I invited students to interact with the narratives in our multicultural books, they were poised to experience a literary imagining that draws "intense concern with the fate of characters" (p. 90).

Nussbaum (1997) suggests that when children participate in narrative imagination, they develop compassion, defined as "the recognition that another person, . . . has suffered some significant pain or misfortune in a way for which that person is not, or not fully, to blame" (pp. 90–91). This, in turn, requires the complex moral ability to imagine what it is like to be in that person's shoes; in other words, to empathize. Nussbaum asserts that novels foster the development of imaginative thinking and feeling about others. I recognized the salient role of literature in cultivating such abilities in our classroom.

The Emerging Theme of Empathy

Throughout my inquiry, I remained attentive to what the data might uncover. In the analysis stage, I sought to prioritize the data for its relevance and prominence (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), and one of the main themes that emerged was empathy. This article features participants' testimonials, which

reveal how they strove to examine their assumptions about cultural differences through multicultural literature. The theme of empathy revealed three emergent subthemes (see Table 1).

Table 1

First Lens, Emerging Theme of Empathy

Developing Critical Awareness: The Value of Empathy	• Learning About the World in Authentic and Credible Ways • Examining Assumptions and Biases • Acquiring a New Lens
Engaging in Perspective-Taking: The Power of Empathy	• Perceiving Others Differently • Connecting With Characters • Cultivating Compassion
Homo Empathicus: The Nature of Empathy	

Developing Critical Awareness: The Value of Empathy

As students delved into each novel, I observed how their curiosity turned into a growing sense of awareness, which led to a desire to know more. From the summertime adventures of Arturo, a spirited 13-year-old who loves his Cuban American family (*The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*, Cartaya, 2017), to the journey of Parvana, a courageous Afghani girl struggling for survival (*The Breadwinner* series, Ellis, 2000/2015a; 2002/2015b), to the tragedy of Jerome, a Black teenager killed by a White police officer (*Ghost Boys*, Rhodes, 2018)—each of these characters and their stories, among others, left an imprint on readers. They noticed early on that their knowledge of the world and others could be expanded by interacting with these novels. In the year-end reflective questionnaire, "Kate" shared, "The books helped me understand the world is more than just our little town here and there is a lot more to learn about. It changed the way I see certain things and people." Students acknowledged the impact of the novels on their worldviews and responded to this new way of seeing the world by opening their minds to cultural differences and circumstances, at times unfamiliar to them.

Learning About the World in Authentic and Credible Ways

Reading books with greater representation and diversity opened the door for students to learn about different cultures, historical contexts, as well as global issues. Some of the topics prompted deep reflection and thought-provoking conversations around social justice. As readers encountered concepts such as gentrification, poverty, gender inequality, the effects of war on children, discrimination, prejudice, police brutality, racism, and so on, I noticed that the outcome went beyond expanding students' knowledge base. They listened attentively, asked many questions, shared their wonderings and their reactions intently, and responded humbly. "Jessie" wrote:

> Reading the multicultural novels, I began to better understand the state of the world and the states that other people live in. I am now more aware than ever of the inequity of our world. The inequity that affects people daily, relentlessly, and unfairly.

"Amber" explained why she enjoyed reading *The Breadwinner* series:

> I also love this book cause it shows what is going on in Afghanistan without just being facts thrown at us or being just not developed stories, it's more about great stories with beautiful characters and we are learning at the same time about them and their cultures and what they're going through to survive.

Although students expressed emotions like sadness, frustration, and guilt after engaging with the books, they also asserted their eagerness to gain authentic and credible information. For example, as I read aloud the introductory sentence from *Parvana's Journey* (Ellis, 2002/2015), the sequel to *The Breadwinner* (Ellis, 2000/2015), students gasped when they found out Parvana was burying her father. I noted how "emotions were running high among students—many disappointed that Father died so soon—even as they had made predictions during their book walk that Father would find the family with her" (Teacher Journal, January 16, 2020). "Phoebe" commented: "I love how Deborah Ellis wasn't shy about describing how brutally challenging, difficult and miserable these children had to live through." By immersing themselves in the stories and lives of the characters, students recognized their reading experience as transformative, and they began to see the world in new ways. Rather than learning only with facts, they were being taught through both their minds and their hearts (Bieger, 1995; Rasinski & Padak, 1990).

Jessie became so enthralled with the story of Parvana that she decided to research Ellis' background and intentions in writing the series for young readers. After learning more about the Canadian author, Jessie shared:

> I admire Deborah Ellis because she portrayed an accurate and realistic depiction of what being a kid in Afghanistan is actually like. She didn't use these characters as a way to pity and dehumanize them but as a way to educate, show and teach people. She didn't put words in the mouth of real kids but rather she listened to them. I know I'm getting off topic, but I think that just makes the story a hundred times better. Deborah Ellis travelled to places like Afghanistan. She was willing to go learn, listen and help . . . learning about the world is so important to me and I am very thankful to authors like Deborah Ellis. Parvana somehow felt real to me. As if she is out there, somewhere, and real.

Learners also mentioned authenticity as a key characteristic of the books and authors. While reading our first novel, *The Epic Fail of Arturo Zamora*, "Andrew" appreciated the way the author focused on family as a main theme. Despite the harshness of life events, like death or illness, students preferred reading stories depicting realistic human situations which they themselves may have lived and expect people to live. Andrew explained that, "sometimes people die or become sick because this happens for everybody, but we got to pass over it." Jessie was particularly taken with *A Bird on Water Street* (Dulemba, 2014), the story of Jack Hicks, a boy living in a small, Appalachian mining town, seeking to remain true to himself as his family and community endure economic hardships, and an environmental landscape ravaged by decades of pollution. Upon finishing the book, Jessie wrote:

> They all experience and live life differently. They all have different beliefs and views and goals. This diversity affects the story by giving it a sense of authenticity . . . That's also why I have such a deep sense of respect for the characters (and their author). They aren't just blank pieces of paper, they're all complex and lively . . . This book makes me think a lot, it's truly eye-opening.

The above examples demonstrate how learners recognized, appreciated, and respected authors' decisions to address social justice struggles in their books by depicting genuine characters and situations, and rendering them credible within a historical context. They learned about the world in which they live in deeper, meaningful ways by developing empathic awareness.

Examining Assumptions and Biases

Just as students appreciated how multicultural books address tough topics in authentic and credible ways, those we read urged them to examine their own assumptions and personal biases. Jessie disclosed,

> The books were sort of a revelation, they gave me a new and improved understanding of what I've never experienced, or even seen, for myself . . . I was blinded by my own surroundings for so long and *The Breadwinner* series made me see what I couldn't before.

Throughout this journey of self-reflection, students, like Jessie, came to realize that learning entails risk, and may even require them to "give up a former condition in favour of a new way of seeing things" (Boostrom, 1998, p. 399).

In the end-of-year survey, students indicated how the entertaining, yet informative, aspect of our books stood out to them. Phoebe indicated that books she usually read were ones in which she could escape. Realizing the stark reality of ongoing issues like racism, gender inequality, and poverty, Phoebe acknowledged how the multicultural books we read "didn't let you escape, they let you come in if that makes sense. Show you what the world really is." Phoebe, Jessie, "Timothy", and "Shane" each explained how the books "opened their eyes" to new cultures, issues, and worldviews. Taking a closer look at the differences in the lived experiences of others in the world, albeit through fictitious characters, created sobering moments in our classroom.

Our novel study of *Ghost Boys* presented opportunities for readers to consider the topic of racism. An initial read aloud of the afterword, which introduced the concepts of conscious and unconscious racism (Rhodes, 2018, p. 205), prompted a discussion around these terms. I reflected: "students are listening attentively and engaged already at this early stage . . . Many have ideas about racism" (Teacher Journal, March 6, 2020). Some students were quick to report that they had never engaged in racism, consciously or unconsciously. It seemed others were reluctant to avow or disavow in front of the others, and I reminded everyone about their choice and right to privacy as we tackled these complex issues in a mutually agreed upon, safe, and respectful environment. We defined and discussed other terms such as prejudice, oppression, privilege, discrimination, bias, diversity, and ostracism. Students pondered these concepts and captured their thoughts in their journals. "Vincent" shared: "I am able to be prejudice [sic] sometimes but I realize it only when it is too late sometimes." Andrew speculated that "[a]fter reading our books . . . we know so little about what's happening in the world around us. A lot of times, we don't even realize that we are being racist."

In preparing for *Ghost Boys*, we talked about possible challenges readers may face, such as reconciling the perception of ourselves to our words and actions. In this study, *Ghost Boys* was instrumental in helping learners consider their attitudes, assumptions, and values. Engaging with multicultural literature prompted students to make discoveries about their current perspective. After reading *It Ain't So Awful, Falafel!* (Dumas, 2017), "Carter" wrote:

> A quote that really made me think was 'My dad says the dogs and cats in America are luckier than most people in the world.' I had never thought of it like that when I read the quote, I thought about it for a while, something I hadn't done for any other quote in the entire book. It is crazy to me that some pets have more rights than people.

According to Miall (2006), the power of stories can help students understand the social world in new ways by offering alternative frameworks to understand and feel about the world differently. In this case, heightened curiosity, and an appetite to know more about the world, prompted learners to self-reflect and weigh in on possible new lenses with which to see the world.

Acquiring a New Lens

Every participant indicated that they had gained some form of new awareness, whether through a sudden realization, or progressive change in their perception. "Esther" discovered that the world in which she lives is "not what it seems" and "Brooke" stated how it was "not fair for everyone." Students' responses supported that engaging with multicultural literature not only provided an opportunity to foster awareness, but also to instigate action upon the world (Morrell & Morrell, 2012; Newstreet et al., 2018)—another theme emerging from this research. Students described the repositioning of viewpoints as an unsettling learning process, which they welcomed. Many ascertained that they had not been granted occasions in their educational journey to learn about a more truthful version of the world. Amber appreciated being asked about her worldview and shared:

> I discovered that my worldview was through 'rose-coloured glasses'! In fact, after learning from all the books, I felt like I didn't know the world at all, like my version of the world until now had been different—not living on the same planet.

Amber's discovery was critical in the way she viewed her own education, regarding her reading journey as impactful, not only as a student, but as a teenage girl. For Jessie, being taught about the consequences of war on people evoked a deep learning experience:

> I always knew war was a prominent issue in the world but reading about how it truly affects people—children—spoke to me differently. Maybe that's because I was always given the watered-down version of things, or maybe it's because I wasn't properly informed and educated on the matter. Whatever the reason, *The Breadwinner* series taught me the most. You learn a lot from books that are set in environments different to your own. There's an element of shock that comes with it; an element of shock that everyone should experience, mind you.

In *Teaching for Hope*, Werner (2016) argues that teachers can strengthen young people's belief in their future by addressing global topics with care, rather than avoiding them. Jessie understood her learning

with the books to be a disruptive process through which she believes everyone should go if they are to empathize.

In their own words, students affirmed that acquiring a new lens with which to see the world was an exercise in reflexivity, responsibility, assertiveness, and the hope of change. Through reading multicultural literature, learners developed awareness and new ways of seeing that contributed to a flourishing sense of empathy.

Engaging in Perspective-Taking: The Power of Empathy

As students participated in the multicultural book studies, they grew more attentive to what the act of perspective-taking would teach them. In the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960/2010), the protagonist, Atticus Finch, claims that "you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it" (p. 39). As humans, it can be difficult to change our mindsets and attitudes. Jessie divulged that because of the multiple perspectives offered in the novels, she "could see how each character was affected by their surroundings and how the events made them feel," and by looking at a situation from different points of view, "it was easier for us readers to put ourselves in others' shoes." Jessie's thoughts corresponded with Emery's (1996) belief that students might gain a better understanding of the human condition, be moved by the characters' experiences, and become more empathic. While empathy was present to begin with, the study revealed how perspective-taking became instrumental to students' experiences. Their sense of empathy matured as they interacted with the stories, the characters, and each other.

Perceiving Others Differently

As students examined assumptions about cultural differences, I noticed how, like Atticus Finch, some slipped into characters' skins and transported themselves into a powerful moment. Many students expressed their thoughts unprompted, in their journals, or in group conversations. In a written dialogue with her classmate, Brooke shared her opinion about an injustice encountered in *The Breadwinner*:

> Something I've always wondered about is why the Taliban have to beat up women when they go outside alone . . . If only the Taliban would put themselves in the girls' position and imagine how they would feel if women beat them up and men couldn't go outside without a woman.

Amber imagined herself in another time, place, and position when she witnessed the cruelty in *Stella by Starlight* (Draper, 2015). In this story about Stella, a young African American girl growing up in the 1930s segregated South, the right to vote is not viewed as a privilege for all. When Stella rides into town with her father and his friends seeking to register their vote, she witnesses the blatant inequality and disrespect dispensed by the White townsmen. Despite the mistreatment, her father and companions stand together, and bravely exercise their right to vote. Surprised by the story's historical context and its crude racism, Amber internalized the characters' experience by mirroring how they reacted (Oatley, 2011),

> The thing that surprised me the most so far, is the way that they treat black people and how the Ku Klux Klan operate. Like how rude can they be to other people. Like when they went to go

> vote, they made Stella's father and the priest pay for voting when white people didn't even have to pay or to take the test before. Plus they say it right to their face that the reason that all of this is happening is because they're black. Honestly, imagine if like people told this to you and how shocked you would be? Like if I tried to go vote which is one of our rights and people tried to stop me from doing that, I would have done the same thing as them.

About midway through *Ghost Boys*, students contemplated characters' perspectives as they faced different consequences. To contextualize, Jerome is the protagonist, a Black boy who is shot by a White police officer, Officer Moore. From his perspective as "Dead" and "Alive," we read accounts of the story as he moves back and forth from one state to the other. In his ghost state, Jerome struggles to understand his death and its devastating consequences on his family. In contrast, the White officer defends his actions during a preliminary hearing and admits that he feared for his life when he shot the boy. Witnessing this allegation, Jerome asks, "When truth's a feeling, can it be both? Both true and untrue?" (Rhodes, 2018, p. 132). Phoebe explained:

> When truth is a feeling, it can be both, true and untrue. It always is. Because there is always someone somewhere that is gonna say that your truth is wrong and theirs is right. A person will choose whether the feeling regarding the truth is true or untrue based on their perspective.

Phoebe's assuredness was palpable as she pointed to a decisive factor—one's perspective. Students wrestled with this concept and juggled with their understanding of it, especially as it pertained to absolutes, like truth versus untruth, and right versus wrong. Whether writing in their dialogue journals, debating with their peers in class, or reflecting on their own beliefs and assumptions, learners were grappling with the mechanics of perspective-taking.

Readers realized that the aspect of positionality played a crucial role in how they read the story. It became second nature for them to adopt characters' viewpoints and consider the story through these multiple filters as it unfolded. Digging deeper to understand human qualities embedded in stories (Emery, 1996), learners began to infer from characters' actions what their motivations might be. Timothy wrote,

> The officer that killed Jerome let his personal opinions influence how he saw the situation. It made the officer think that Jerome was dangerous when in reality Jerome just had a toy. This is the same sort of situation with the others [ghost boys], the person that killed them let their biases get the better of them and that clouded their judgment.

Students discovered that positionality was not the only aspect that could shape someone's perspective. Reading the text critically also means paying attention to the voices that might have been silenced (Harste et al., 2000), as well as questioning whose voices are missing (Luke & Freebody, 1997). Timothy's entry illustrates his suspicion that bias and clouded judgment were influential in the deaths of Jerome, Emmett Till, and the other ghost boys roaming about—a thought that was echoed by Phoebe:

> A person's perspective is how they view a certain thing or situation. They use previous knowledge and experiences to choose on what 'side' they are on. But some people also let their emotions cloud their judgement, which can interfere with the actual perspective.

Beyond improving social skills and developing empathy, reading stories creates simulated experiences which can bring readers to connect characters' lives with human character in general (Oatley, 2011).

Could perspective-taking, coupled with curiosity, help us envision a more understanding society? As learners grew to understand throughout their reading journey, perspective-taking becomes a fundamental skill to acquire for building empathy (Hodges et al., 2018).

Connecting With Characters

When students participated in perspective-taking, the effects went beyond developing an ability to perceive others differently. Students emotionally connected with many of the characters, saw themselves in them, and used them as role models (Bruner, 1986). Amber described how she bonded with Parvana in *The Breadwinner* series: "I felt like we could be friends, that we connected on some level." In the same series, Brooke identified with the character of Leila, seeing herself reflected in her:

> My least favorite part was when Leila died because she was like a little sister to Parvana. She was an important character in the book, and also one of my favorite characters because of her personality. She kinda reminds me of myself.

In narrative worlds such as Parvana's, students became deeply affected by conflicts portrayed, reacted to characters' relationships, and found themselves feeling genuine emotions (Oatley, 1995). After young Leila is killed by a landmine, Amber reflected,

> I found that it's very sad how Leila died, and I find it very sad how children die this way and actually have to face these struggles . . . When in the book Leila passed away, it was something that really marked me, and I almost cried cause I don't know why but she really sticked [sic] out for me and reminded me of my little cousin that I love more than the whole entire world.

Through Leila, Parvana, Asif, and other characters in Ellis' novels, students grappled with foreign concepts like war and its devastating consequences on children especially. Emotions became a prominent attribute in students' journey with multicultural literature as they came to understand characters in the novels to be extensions of real human subjects. Although the concept of a character is "an extraordinarily elusive idea" (Bruner, 1986, p. 37), they yearned to connect with them, make meaning of their circumstances, and even feel hope for them. Jessie admitted growing attached to the characters:

> I want to know what happens next. I want to know Shauzia's story and what has happened to her. Most importantly I want to know if all the characters will be okay. I guess it's kind of silly since chances are, none of them actually exist. At least, if I knew these fictional kids were okay, it would give me hope for all the real ones.

Like Wilhelm (2016), I noticed that readers consciously connected with characters by bringing their own lives to the literature, which enabled them to "draw comparisons from the literary experience to their own lives" (p. 114). Phoebe wished she could talk to Henry, the Black medic in *Allies* (Gratz, 2019). Moved by this character's story, set amid events of the Normandy landings during World War II, she noted how "people still fight, people still judge, people still discriminate. I'd tell him that I'm proud of him to want to save lives, even when it was hard for him to maybe even save his." Jessie yearned to understand Officer Moore's (*Ghost Boys*) mind and the way he sees the world because "it would give insight on how many real people, who have done things similar as him, see it." As I watched my students

engage with characters in the stories, I observed what Oatley (1999) calls a simulated social experience, both cognitively and emotionally. Jessie described her experience in the year-end survey:

> Because I could see myself in some of the characters of the books we read, I was able to use them as role models. I could relate to some of them. Even if our situations were different in most ways, we still had similarities. And when a character you can see yourself in succeeds or finds what they were looking for, it makes you feel like the same is possible for you.

Monobe and Son (2014) suggest that students are inclined to critically view the world once they connect personally to characters' lives, and vicariously experience others' emotions by reading literature, participating in discussions, and engaging in other pedagogical activities that deepen their understanding of global matters. Participants' responses revealed that they were not left unscathed by child characters' unjust environments, nor were they left uninspired by their constant courage and determination.

Amber, Brooke, Jessie, and Phoebe's responses testify to Robinson's (2013) belief that learners need to engage with literature depicting human experiences and emotions that "provide opportunities for catharsis and empathy" (p. 43). The intimate connections with characters, and their lasting impression on readers, is a testament to the power of literature in the development of empathic responses.

Cultivating Compassion

Students imagined conversations with their beloved characters that included messages of concern, encouragement, hope, and compassion. As they created artwork, poems, and wrote letters to them, they developed relationships with characters and became keenly invested in their fictional lives. These relationships moved beyond the act of perspective-taking, toward developing compassion through imagination. Brooke expressed her gratitude to Stella (*Stella by Starlight*): "I find that Stella has taught me more than I already knew. She changed my point of view on the world and the people who live in it. And I thank her for that." The powerful impact of the characters on my students left an impression on me. I noted:

> There is something powerful about a teenager expressing worry, sadness, and other feelings of being "unsettled" about fictitious characters in a book. The character is not real, and they are aware of this, yet their emotional reactions are! They are reacting as if the people were alive and real. I think they grasp the potential of them being real, especially the children characters. Also, based on many of their comments, they comprehend the truth about the characters' representation of real people, living in such circumstances even today. (Teacher Journal, March 8, 2020)

Like Nussbaum (1995), I was cognizant of the narrative imagination that occurred as we engaged with literature because of "an ethical stance that asks us to concern ourselves with the good of other people whose lives are distant from our own" (p. xvi, preface). Indeed, when students were prompted to imagine themselves inviting a favorite character to their house for one day, they responded without hesitation. Kate picked Jerome, for whom she had many questions:

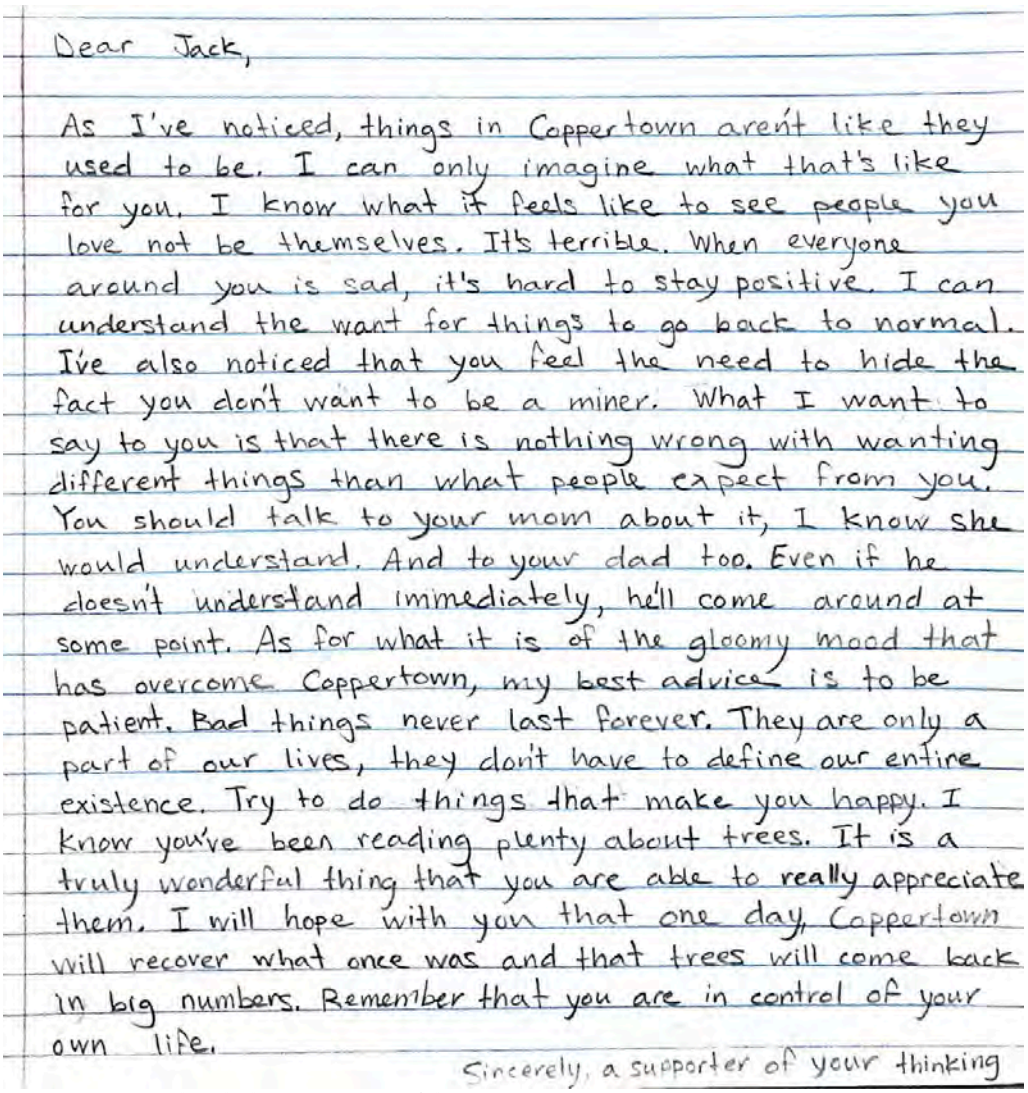
> What was your first thought of being shot? Did you immediately think it was because of your skin colour? Were you surprised when you realize [sic] that after death you become a ghost?. . . I would ask him questions like that but, the biggest question I would ask him before he left would be: How can I, a white person, help stop racism?

Throughout the entire multicultural book adventure, Kate grew to accept that sometimes, questions remain unanswered. According to Bruner (1986), narrative as a distinctive mode of thought deals with possibility rather than certainty. As such, learners explored their conceptions of human nature, and within this subjunctive reality of storytelling, grappled with the way characters' intentions collide with reality (Bruner, 1986).

Gerrig (1993) refers to the way stories can draw in and enthrall their readers as *narrative engagement*. When this phenomenon occurs, readers' thoughts and emotions move beyond solely entertaining to affecting them with actual, durable consequences (Mar et al., 2006). For instance, students were invited to write a piece of advice to a character of their choice. Kate's message to Esteban (*Harbor Me,* Woodson, 2018), a young Dominican boy whose father is detained by an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agent, illustrates this:

> Dear Esteban, I don't know what it's like when someone takes your Papi from you and you don't know where he is, but it must be hard. Sometimes you just have to try hoping for the best and ignore the worst. I'm not [Dominican] or Black and I don't have the problem of walking down the street and everyone assuming I'm a bad person, but I do want to apologize. What white people do and think of people of colour is wrong and I wish I could change the way some think, but I can't. If I could give you some piece of advice it would be to always look on the bright side of things and appreciate the people around you who respect you like if you're no different.

While Kate's advice to Esteban focused on encouragement, Jessie's letter to Jack reflected a more personal account as she confided knowing how he feels. Even if circumstances in characters' stories are very different from the learners' environment, their lived experiences may be akin to each other. Jessie's words demonstrate empathy toward Jack (see Figure 1).



Dear Jack,

As I've noticed, things in Coppertown aren't like they used to be. I can only imagine what that's like for you. I know what it feels like to see people you love not be themselves. It's terrible. When everyone around you is sad, it's hard to stay positive. I can understand the want for things to go back to normal. I've also noticed that you feel the need to hide the fact you don't want to be a miner. What I want to say to you is that there is nothing wrong with wanting different things than what people expect from you. You should talk to your mom about it, I know she would understand. And to your dad too. Even if he doesn't understand immediately, he'll come around at some point. As for what it is of the gloomy mood that has overcome Coppertown, my best advice is to be patient. Bad things never last forever. They are only a part of our lives, they don't have to define our entire existence. Try to do things that make you happy. I know you've been reading plenty about trees. It is a truly wonderful thing that you are able to really appreciate them. I will hope with you that one day, Coppertown will recover what once was and that trees will come back in big numbers. Remember that you are in control of your own life.

Sincerely, a supporter of your thinking

Note. Image used with the permission of the participant.

Fig. 1: Jessie's Letter to Jack Hicks (Dialogue Journal, May 2020).

During my inquiry, I mindfully attended to manifestations of compassion and empathy as I guided my students along our multicultural journey. Through a narrative imagination, I observed learners forge a deeper understanding of our common humanity, working to dismantle the notion of *us* versus *them*, and replacing it with a *we* perspective (Monobe & Son, 2014).

***Homo Empathicus*: The Nature of Empathy**

The notion of empathy is valuable and powerful. This theme was manifested as elemental by learners, and each of their experiences with multicultural literature had been an empowering one. Jessie ascribed her learning about strength and courage to the characters in *Parvana's Journey*, noting that:

> All these kids were being couragous [sic] and strong. At the beggining [sic] of the book, when Deborah Ellis dedicates her novel to 'the children we force to be braver than they should have

> to be', it really goes to show how being brave can sometimes be harmful . . . I admire every kid who has to feel like they have to be an adult. This novel really put that into perspective for me. It will make me remember to be strong, just like all it's [sic] wonderful characters.

Kate shared how multicultural novels taught her to imagine a better world:

> Reading books is a great way to change our perspective, in a good way, of the world we have today and make us imagine how different our society could be. All the books we read reflect on something, either a good thing or a thing we can change.

Through their journey in narrative landscapes, students attributed to others, and recognized in themselves, that which makes us human: our proneness to hope, distress, courage, perseverance, and fairness (Nussbaum, 1997). They tapped into their better selves, or what social theorist Jeremy Rifkin (2010) refers to as "homo empathicus—wired for empathy" (p. 42). When we engage with novels, "empathy, a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect, can be provoked by witnessing another's emotional state, by hearing about another's condition, or even by reading" (Keen, 2006, p. 208). Although the notion of empathy is not new, Krznaric (2014) suggests that one of the reasons it has resurfaced in the last decade may derive from neuroscience research, which shows evidence that human beings' empathic natures are just as strong as their selfish ones. As we seek to educate students to become better humans, could empathy be the highest form of critical thinking "that doesn't just read the words on a page but rather truly sees, hears, and acts upon a world beyond ourselves" (Schneider, 2020)?

Conclusion

During a keynote address, Deborah Ellis alluded to the idea of creating a day before, reminding the audience about the power of our best selves and the possibility of making a difference before it is too late. Praising good children's literature as a powerful vehicle to achieve a more sustainable future, the author hoped her own books would allow children who read them to "carry the compassion they hopefully learn from them into their adult lives and their adult decision-making—whether to be kind or to lash out, whether to give a helping hand or let their government drop a bomb" (Ellis, 2018). Correspondingly, Jewell Parker Rhodes believes that literature can ignite conversations about the world's most pressing social justice issues, such as race, and poverty, among others. The author confesses that the pandemic has crystallized their need to write stories in which they hope to remind readers of our common humanity (Terrill, 2020).

As I think back to the intricate process by which my students "[immersed] . . . in a new consciousness" (Krznaric, 2011, Question 3), I witnessed how they began to see the world differently. Their journey corroborated the argument that literature supports building empathy (Mar et al., 2006). First, they examined empathy and discovered its value through their enhanced critical awareness. Second, they cultivated empathy and became empowered in the act of perspective-taking. Last, they showcased empathy, and endeavored to cherish the stories and characters which helped them acquire new ideas about the world. If "empathy is at the heart of storytelling itself" (Krznaric, 2014, p. 150), then my students experienced it firsthand through the stories they read, as much as in the ones they told.

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Finding Our Co-: Witness Blanket as Co-curricular Making for Local Indigenous and Settler Relations

Jody Dlouhy-Nelson and Kelly Hanson

Abstract

This paper reveals the journey of two settler-researcher-educators supporting learning in preparation for Carey Newman's Witness Blanket Art Exhibit. Invited to create curriculum for students and educators of K-12 who would visit the exhibit, the authors describe co-curricular making as a living, re-generative, re-cursive experience. The learning alongside diverse perspectives of educators and community partners in circle—including Syilx Okanagan, School District, Art Gallery, Museum, and University—led to reconsidered understandings of co-curricular making. Relational commitments that invite co-curricular engagement with the Witness Blanket foreground Syilx Knowledge toward resisting colonial ways, and supporting tmixʷ, the life forces of Syilx Okanagan Territory.

Background

Together we acknowledge that Syilx land, the unceded territory of the Syilx Okanagan Nation, holds up the experiences that we share. It was on Syilx land that we came together in 2021 through a research project involving multiple community partners. The project, entitled *Co-Curricular Making: Honouring Indigenous Connections to Land, Culture and the Relational Self,* is a five-year project and in Year One, over 100 local educators came together to engage in local Syilx teachings through four land, language and culture-based experiences, complemented by reflection sessions and a rich foundation of oral and visual resources (Okanagan School of Education [OSE], 2022B). In this paper, we tell the story of our unique journey as co-curricular makers for a specific thread of the journey which relates to a significant art installation: the Witness Blanket was created by Carey Newman (Newman & Hudson, 2019) to commemorate the Indian Residential School children, both those who survived the taking of their childhood, and those whose lives were taken in childhood.

Land Acknowledgment: Land First

> *We respectfully acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Syilx (Okanagan) Peoples.*
> *kʷu ɬə cu̓ləl̓uʔs iʔ l təmxʷulaʔxʷs iʔ syilx tali əc haʔ stim aɬiʔ əc mistim*
> *axaʔ iʔ təmxʷulaʔxʷselx lut pənkin' kl swit tə xʷic̓mselx*

This formal land acknowledgment, in English and nsyilxcən, with the translation attributed to Syilx Elder Richard Armstrong, carries significance in its fulfilling of a committed relationship between the University

of British Columbia Okanagan and the people of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. We, the authors, Settlers Kelly and Jody, are learning to express our own land acknowledgment as part of our personal praxis. A personal expression of what we appreciate in the land (Syilx Elder Barnes, 2021, personal communication) is connected to the ongoing learning and sense-making we share in this account from our perspectives as settler-educators. This learning is always in the making as we return to our land acknowledgments each time we gather. The reflections become our intent—the internal thoughts influence our actions over time. This is how we change. Learning is a transformative act.

Jody: *As a person of Central-European and Anglo-European settler-colonizer ancestry, I have the gift of living my life on the unsold lands of the Syilx Okanagan People, who have walked these lands of the Interior Salish Plateau for at least 10,000 years (Armstrong, 2009; Sam, 2008; Cohen, 1998). A longtime educator, I am fortunate to work closely as a doctoral candidate-graduate research assistant with Syilx People who carry traditional teachings about this land, water, and all the interconnected life forces. While I cannot go back in time, I can learn and work with educators who, when empowered, have the capacity to instill these learnings in the students of today and future toward healing the damage to Mother Earth resulting from violent, colonized ways over time.*

Kelly: *I was born in Southern Ontario on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territory. Over a decade ago, I settled on unceded Syilx Territory and this is where I live and learn today. I am an uninvited person on Syilx Land. In my current role as a K-12 consulting educator, I have the opportunity to learn with many different teachers and students across our school district and we share the hope that together we can live truth and reconciliation in our schools. I hold responsibility, hope, uncertainty, and humility in mind and heart as I set the intention to be part of an improved ethic of relationality with the land.*

We un-script our land acknowledgments. We are committed to being and acting in relation with Syilx people on Syilx terms, acknowledging that their land/water right is central to working towards reconciliation. We are learning that land relationships must come first in our learning. We say these words aloud before we write them.

Throughout the paper, the dialogue, noted in italics, is the authors' exchange of reflective and reflexive thoughts as we engage with the complex agential experiences of our co-curricular making journey as lead curriculum planners working toward the introduction of K-12 learners to an art exhibit of *The Witness Blanket* (Newman & Hudson, 2019). We invite you, our readers, to imagine our italicized words as being spoken. Moreover, we invite you into our circle as you "hear" our land acknowledgments, our commitments, our struggles. We hope that you might embrace the opportunity to consider your own land relationships. It is a weighty responsibility to reflect, and engage in one's own settler land-acknowledgement-as-praxis. If your worldview is Indigenous, please bear with us on this meaning-seeking journey.

We speak these thoughts aloud and we wonder how they change as we write them down. Our settler-writing pedagogy is inspired by the oral traditions of the Syilx. In it, we foreground transformation, as we have been taught (Cohen & Chambers, 2021; Cohen, 2010). We take care to announce ourselves as settler-speaker-writers knowing that every word, every image, every thought holds a worldview and an

identity, in a place and time. We are aware that every word and image is not our own, but the result of our co-creating and co-curricular making (Macintyre Latta, 2012; 2018; 2023; Pinar, 2011). We are trying to make visible the webs of knowledge building we engage in over time, and we wonder how to attend to the intricacies of respect and reverence for oral traditions and storytelling. For the Syilx, knowledge is built through the practice of captikʷɬ—the oral stories which convey traditional ecological and environmental wisdom—and the captikʷɬ *are* the People (Armstrong, 2009). They are what enabled the People to maintain their knowledge and traditions even through European contact since the late 1800s. And we have been gifted access to all of this Knowledge. How we handle this extraordinary gift determines how we go forward.

Co-creating Curriculum for the Coming of The Witness Blanket

When the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) announced that they were looking for proposals for commemoration projects, Indigenous artist Carey Newman submitted a proposal and designed a piece; Newman wanted to tell the whole story of Residential Schools in Canada. This proposal became the travelling Witness Blanket (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2022) and, with it, an opportunity that inspired an important journey for us—in the beautiful place of the Syilx Okanagan Nation. With an invitation to support the Kelowna Art Gallery's hosting of the Witness Blanket, a collaborative working group emerged by design, through the Co-curricular Making Project (OSE, 2022A). These folks held Syilx, Indigenous, School District, Art Gallery, Museum, and University roles and perspectives and shared common relational commitments. The group wondered how the Witness Blanket exhibit on Syilx land might offer all involved the opportunity to better understand stories of place and community through a Syilx Okanagan lens. What pieces of ourselves would we and our students uncover? What might we make in preparation . . . in response? These questions were the beginnings of our co-curricular endeavors.

A year before the Witness Blanket would be exhibited at the Kelowna Art Gallery, an exhibition years in the making in partnership with Central Okanagan Public Schools, we (Jody and Kelly) were invited to take the lead in creating some kind of curriculum support that would "deepen the learning for our students, educators, and community members" (Deputy Superintendent T. Beaudry, personal communication, April, 2021), and set the conditions for educators to learn from "witnessing the students' experience of this understanding" (T. Beaudry, personal communication, May, 2021).

Kelly: *I remember responding to the invitation with excitement and also wondering about the nature of this curricular design opportunity. I expressed my belief and practice that curriculum is a living process that involves ongoing experiences and reflection. It is also a community process that is situated, relational, and involves a kind of self/world making that is recursive and is always changing. We were not seeking a curricular plan that might predetermine and constrict what is possible for teachers and students in their learning journeys.*

Jody: *I accepted the gift of this invitation knowing I could not be part of an effort that was intended to deliver a fixed set of goals or outcomes with a series of linear steps to achieve that, disguised as a bundle—a term used by some Indigenous People with various connotations—but in this context for some, a clone of a rubric. Aligning with Kelly's view of curriculum-as-lived (Aoki et al., 2004), and co-meaning-making as ongoing and vital to learning (Macintyre Latta, 2012; 2018; 2022), I sought ideas to support multiple entry points into a sphere of reciprocal learning, in which Indigenous voices of wisdom and a rich collection of resources could be found.*

Ignited by the gift and committed to the responsibility to support Witness Blanket learning through our lens of curriculum-as-living deeply in need of relationships, we believed that our role was to witness and participate in bringing together community to join in a process of co-curricular making. We would document the hopes of this group in ways that might inform learning in classrooms. Carey Newman described his process for creating the Witness Blanket as moving into an unknown space. He did not know how the pieces and stories that he and his team collected would come together and describes that, "rather than making a different version of something that I had seen before, I needed to come up with a completely original idea" (Newman & Hudson, 2019, p. 6). Our process would be the same.

Methodology-as-Relationships: Syilx/Settler Pedagogy Circle, Gathering the Bits

To share our experiences, we speak from our Settler I's and we draw upon the form and function of storytelling as a research methodology (Archibald Q'um Q'um Xiiem et al., 2019). We seek ways to create and share stories that can move toward a decolonizing way of learning (Archibald, 2019; Davidson, 2019). For example, our attending to the importance of orality and oraliture (Armstrong, 2009) makes room for embracing a local way of knowing and being, and thus influences our pedagogies as teacher educators, positioning relationality at the center of the research process (Archibald, 2008; Cohen, 2010; Macintyre Latta, 2022). Syilx perspective elicited our concern about our positions as story-maker through modes of writing. Our research process challenged us to move away from the danger of a single mode of communication, toward our own incomplete and ever-evolving stories. The methodologies we attempt to live move us toward ecological ways of knowing and understanding by reflecting Syilx place-based perspectives of story without appropriating them.

Our methodology lives within our relationships with our partners. As we engage in the dialogues of what we call the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle—a space to talk frankly and openly about curriculum/pedagogy decisions—our perspectives are re-created. In these conversations there is a sustained focus upon foregrounding the Syilx voice and the environmental ethic that is embedded in Syilx pedagogy through the captikʷɬ (Armstrong, 2009).

The captikʷɬ have served as the means by which teachings of sustainability and how to live with and for each other have been taught across the generations (Armstrong, 2009). We prioritize *process and protocol*, which aligns with enowkinwixw, the Syilx concept for governance and decision making (Armstrong, 2009). We explore ways to describe and acknowledge our relationship to the land. We are drawn to Coyote and Eagle of Syilx captikʷɬ. When Coyote tries to be Eagle, he dives off a cliff and breaks into many pieces. Fox gathers the bits of Coyote, jumps over Coyote four times, and Coyote comes back

to life (Cohen, in Cohen & Chambers, 2017, p. 3). This experience of drawing together pieces and breathing life back into them informs our collaborative sensemaking and helps us express our curiosity and anticipation regarding what we might make with these pieces that support regenerating life, uplifted by Syilx knowledge across our schools and community. Further, how are we transforming our actions and ways of being to support the educators we engage with?

For 18 months, we found ourselves deeply entangled in questions and practices of living our Witness Blanket experiences with the group that came to be known as the Syilx and Setter Pedagogy circle. It was a title that would hold up local perspectives as primary and we were committed to the idea that all curricular makings evolve through the lens of the Syilx. Foregrounding the Syilx Voice.

The first identifying name we had for ourselves was Syilx Pedagogy Circle, a name that we came to understand hid our own identities in problematic ways. The group did not want us to take on a hybrid Syilx-Settler voice. We were Settlers and we needed to name our stance at all times as we traverse(d) a never-ending process of unsettling our settler selves (Regan, 2010) to understand more deeply. Being aware that an "Anglo-Eurocentric" lens (Luke, 2014) is the view in which many settlers were raised, means understanding that settlers do not have the readiness to view the world through an Indigenous lens. It takes immeasurable time in recursivity to nurture these understandings.

Kelly: *At first, I thought we could translate our experiences together in a way that would represent the shared experience of each of us in the circle. Writing in this way felt safe and known to me. I thought we could offer our writing as a kind of service to the group—a record of all of our learning for further reflection. I see that I was limited in this thinking. It was a clumsy, and possibly hurtful, assumption that Jody and I could take a lead as collective story tellers so quickly and through writing. I was assuming a "co-" when there was not one.*

Ways of being and thinking that come from the Syilx Knowledge system are conveyed to us over and over again in Syilx Community voices. We understand—at the very least—that entering a space in-between, an "ethical space of engagement" (Ermine, 1995; Poole, 1972) is a space of relationships. We work to broaden our understanding of our role and our perspective in allowing the complex and relational Syilx Knowledge system its agential space, and then seeking approaches to apply the learning we are gifted in our practice, without removing it from its wholeness, its roots, its intents and above all, without claiming these ideas as our own.

Within the forming relationships, we experienced an intangible sense of purpose. The tensions and grief and fragmentations that were part of our Settler identities signified that we needed community and shared lived experiences. We wondered how to make this kind of opportunity accessible to our greater community—to the students that we had committed to designing curricular invitations for. Within this context, and our conception of curriculum as a living, relational, community-building experience, we moved to consider how and what technologies might support us to make visible the ways that we engage in an open-ended dialogue that is generative, and in a state of perpetual change.

Co-creating a Digital Story With An Invitation

What emerged over time was a co-curricular invitation to learn from our Circle conversations through a webpage. The webpage (OSE, 2022B) is a space which highlights a sustained focus on the Syilx voice and the environmental ethic that is embedded in Syilx pedagogy. This pedagogy, contained within the captikʷɬ, has served over generations as the means by which teachings of sustainability and how to live with and, for each other, are taught (Armstrong, 2009). Currently, the learning on the webpage begins with two video provocations offered by Syilx Elders and Scholars. These teachings/provocations are followed by six agreements which are essential to living our methodology in a good way, and which emerged from our conversations within the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle.

Jody: *Over time engaging within the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle, I realized a new view was opening up for me; not a unidimensional snapshot of a moment in human time, but a living, breathing, multi-faceted moving view imbued with a past, a present, and a future. Our responsibility was to support the respectful "mobilizing" of the rich and complex ways of knowing and being, and the Residential School experience of the Syilx. As non-Indigenous educators, this is the Local work we are to embrace as we take up our responsibility in Truth & Reconciliation. We listened, and listened, and listened some more. Embedded in each Circle, in the Syilx captikʷɬ and in the oral teachings, are principles of understanding which compelled us to step up.*

How Food was Given (Kou-Skelowh, 2009) is at the heart of the agreements. When we began to build the webpage, envisioned as a portal into the living knowledge of the Syilx, Syilx Knowledge Keepers and Elders guided its shape. For example, the suggestion that it look and feel more "circular" and that this could be done through How Food was Given (Cohen, personal communication, 2021), led to the natural connections between the recursive teaching "agreements"—the operative tenets for living which surface and recur in oral teachings again and again—and the Four Food Chiefs in their role in the greater environmental pedagogy and wisdom of the Syilx (Armstrong, 2009). The decision of the Syilx People to share their learnings— a hugely generous act—means for local educators the opportunity to centralize Syilx voice and perspective in every classroom where the Witness Blanket would be taught, and perhaps hold space in the future. The "co-" of co-curricular making comes with considerable responsibility and reciprocity, something which requires knowing how to act. The recursive oral teachings of the Elders and the Knowledge Keepers have an unequivocal nature and, in the agreements, which express the values of relationship to land/water, culture, and ancestral knowledge, settler-educators are invited to seek deeper understanding (OSE, 2022B).

We think of each agreement as a gift and provocation from Syilx Knowledge. Further, each of the agreements is contained within a kind of "portal," offering a view inside an operative tenet for being, and alongside that, the Food Chief that helps us "embed" that in our memory—in the way Elder Pamela (Barnes, personal communication, 2022) teaches us about Syilx pedagogy and the purpose of captikʷɬ.

The webpage was one way to move away from the primacy of writing (OSE, 2022B). The Syilx voice is presented wherever possible in oral format, with the intent to preserve and emphasize oral teaching as a way of learning, for oral teachings put into writing lose that which contributes to meaning: expression,

emphasis, body language, sound (Elder P. Barnes, personal communication, 2021). Further, the original webpage structure evolved from linear to more circular to convey the Syilx Way of Being, with multiple and recursive entry points, signaling a less colonial approach.

On the webpage, Cohen (OSE, 2022) provides insight into this approach which holds relevance for the transformative processes required of non-Indigenous educators who support their students' learning. Cohen draws links between Newman and Hudson's (2019) "Picking up the Pieces" and the Syilx gathering of the bits in Eagle and Coyote, with the processes described as opening up pathways to inner and collective transformations. These collective transformations through multimodes of knowing are at the heart of co-curricular making.

Once the collective website was created, we shared the agreements with community partners, educators across the local school district, and the research team of the partnership grant, with an invitation to continue this learning though an online webinar. All were welcomed through conversation to discover how educators might prepare themselves to learn alongside their students, while witnessing the Witness Blanket together on Syilx land. Together, we began to take up bits of knowledge and wisdom from the webpage, supporting each other to build a web of understanding that supports transformative action (Cohen, 2010).

Finding the Co-Curricular Makings Through Our Experiences

In what follows we reveal some important intersections between curriculum, community, and autobiography in navigating what we see as the terrain of the co-curricular. This space holds tensions, destabilizations, lingering questions from our experiences within a framework of lived curriculum and our experimental settler-writer lived methodology.

As described, the co-curricular making that we seek alongside prospective educators and students through the Witness Blanket is neither fixed nor predetermined: it is living, re-generative, re-cursive, and relational. Here, we reflect on the co-curricular emergent tensions across our ideas, identities, and ways of being. Within the co-curricular experiences there are not only intersections, but also collisions from which new ethical relationships are possible. We wonder whether the tensions are in any way like those tensions Mourning Dove explored as she used her understanding of the Okanagan (Syilx) oral story in the novel *Cogewea* as

> one way she stood 'between' two cultures, not only by combining two forms, but also by using a captikʷɬ lens as a method of reflecting upon and speaking to societal issues. The novel conveys her view of those times through the way she chose to explore tensions confronting the new generation of Syilx in cultural transition after settlement and the divergent choices before them. (Armstrong, 2021, p. 21)

Jody: *I check in with myself continuously on the ethics of the work we do. In my mind, I believe that I understand the difference between being a colonizer and being an anti-colonizer. But my belief that I act to transform, with ethical reverence to local Syilx Ways of being with the land, with informed deeper understanding and compassion, does not make it so. My believing it does not mean that the people with*

whom I dialogue (in the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle) and collaborate see it that way. My ways of speaking, my entrenched patterns of needing to speak and to steer conversations, the emergent academic discourse in my expressions are all likely to be nothing but monstrous colonial flags in Circle. In this notion, there is ongoing tension in my heart, and I have to figure it out.

Stumbling toward possibilities of supporting individuals' co-curricular processes in ways that are ethical, we ask ourselves again and again:

> What/who/where is the co-curriculum?
> What processes might grow our imagination and help us re-story our individual and collective selves?
> What assumptions and practices might we let go of in this process of becoming a co-?

In the tensions of building knowledge through the Pedagogy Circle, we stumbled into a new sense of the "co-". We name these reflexive turns here in service of those who also hope for the greatest possibilities for the "co-".

Co- Is Multimodal

We began our experience assuming shared interest and commitment to co-curricular making. However, in *writing* the hopes and pedagogical teachings of the Circle from a collective perspective, members of the Circle began to feel uncomfortable and unheard. Over time, we learned that Syilx land/water needs to be the beginning of all learning and that if land is not at the center, Indigenous perspectives would feel invisible. As Settlers, we do not speak the language of the land/water, and as we learned about and experienced Syilx ways of knowing the land, we continued to be reshaped and strengthened by new relationships. Yet, we continued to stumble as we continued to prioritize writing as our mode of sense-making and communication. Through tensions with the process of co-writing—we really hoped that we could engage in a collective write with our Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle partners—we began to develop a deeper self-reflexivity to honor this knowledge, without the violence of appropriation, in a way that contributes to our own capacity to be settler-educators in this Place. It took gentle, patient, candid Matriarchal Syilx Voices to help us confront our misplaced desire to write from all of our perspectives. (Barnes & Lecoy, 2021). We understood that we could only write for ourselves, as settler-speaker-writers.

Through the lived experience of sharing and learning together, we are connected through different modes of communication. In the Pedagogy Circle, dialogue was primary and we lived our conversations through words, gestures, pauses, tone. Sharing our interpretations of collective, co-forming ideas in circle ignites new possibilities in ourselves, including the possibility for misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

Language, agreements, ways of being, and telling stories emerge in the "co-". We experienced a creative culture. In many ways the co- is quite natural. To dream in spiral together according to Syilx Knowledge (Cohen, 2010, p. xiv), we must be thoughtful, mindful, and responsible for our creations.

We have experienced that no-one will experience the Circle in the same way. However, if one journeys around the circle—if one theorizes—in deep and thoughtful ways, one will begin to see or understand something that was previously hidden (Styres, 2017, p. 31). Transformative power is found in welcoming multiple perspectives, with genuine and considered attention to what is meant by what is said. This is the power of enowkinwixw (Armstrong, 2009). Educators and their students need to be able to articulate why, how, and what they are orienting their learning toward. However, with the embodiment of these ways of being within lived practices occurring within a colonized landscape, and in the context of a history that is continuously being written into the truth, we are left with many questions about the unlearning process.

Knowing that biodiversity is key to life (Cohen, 2010) and that Syilx Knowledge contains the wisdom of the life forces,

> tmixʷ ~ There are thousands and millions, and trillions of things that are surrounding us, and continuously regenerating themselves —Jeannette Armstrong, 2021

we embrace a curriculum that explores and illuminates multiplicities of experience so that it can be seen more clearly, understood more fully (Macintyre Latta, 2023). In this view, student and teacher agency can be deepened. With that, perhaps the needed unlearning is brought forth through the ongoing contesting of shared and individual experiences within webs of relationships characterized by healthy, dynamic tensions (Cohen, 2010). We recognize that we need to expand and broaden our circle to continuously encounter ways that contribute to making multiple interpretations visible, which, taken as a whole, inform our ongoing meaning-making (Macintyre Latta, 2023).

Co- Is Multisensory

The Witness Blanket exhibit (Canadian Museum for Human Rights, 2022), and our thinking about it, was a recursive sense-making practice, resulting in embodied understandings emerging from provoked feelings and physical encounters.

Kelly: *The first time I saw the witness blanket exhibit was with my three-year-old daughter. She was drawn to the open door that is in the middle of the piece. "Where does the door go?", "May I walk through?" There was both wonder and serious attention on her face as she walked through the door. How did her physical movement, coupled with her question, become her embodied experience? Walking through the door created a memory that she can still recall and her question of where does the door lead to lingers with me.*

Co- Is in Need of Trust: The Ethics of Co-

We learned that all in the Circle are present for a reason and that the arrival of each of us is meant to be (Syilx Elder R. Caldwell, 2021, personal communication). In this way, everything we need is at hand—the people, the water, the land. What the agreements based on the captikʷɬ offered us were ethical protocols on ways of being. Yet, as has been articulated often through our reflections, settler worldviews are a barrier for tuning into the movement of informed action. Any settler lack-of-attunement created a

kind of gap between us as Settlers and the needed beings (human and more-than-human) in the ethical space of engagement. As we learned to be more attentive, we learned to be attuned to moments, more careful with our thinking, more respectful and more mindful, we began to embody different kinds of actions.

Jody: *Assumptions are a barrier I need to continuously overcome. I think it is about being stuck in a worldview. I hold a belief that I am acting through care and kindness. Four decades of experience as an educator-leader result in a near unshakeable self-trust, and by extension, I am accustomed to my perception of my being trusted by people in the particular space I know as education. Now, I understand I have been settler-naïve. Yes, Kelly, that sacred belief we share in students as capable meaning-makers is at the core of who we are as educators. And we have come up against an important resistance signal: students in the colonial classroom are meaning-makers . . . gathered into the proverbial aprons of their educators. We can talk all we want about inquiry-based learning and meaning-making, but if trust isn't established in our capacity to first set the conditions that will allow those students to make meaning of the Canadian travesty that includes the Indian Residential Schools, then we cannot earn a place in the interconnected web of the Syilx and Settler Pedagogy Circle, so in need of trust for the relationship threads to strengthen.*

While Dion (2007) offers that educators can embrace a stance of ethical learning through curriculum, Hare (2022) specifies that there must be a focus on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations, 2007; 2022). This stance requires foregrounding Indigenous Rights within a reimagining of practices such as circle gathering, storytelling, remembering, witnessing, and reflecting to raise awareness of the ways in which the identities of all people in Canada have been shaped by the colonial nature of education (Battiste & Bouvier, 2013). It must understand the power of perspective in the ethical space of engagement, alongside a capacity to set one's own perspective on hold to listen intently to articulations of diverse perspectives.

Conclusion: Continuing the Circle as a Shared Space for Learning

There is no doubt that settler colonialism that began in the Okanagan in the 1800s has had a near devastating impact on Syilx culture and community and that our Settler ways of living in the Okanagan continue to uphold this legacy in ways that are both visible and invisible to us (Cohen & Chambers, 2021). Yet, Jeanette Armstrong (2021), referencing writing and relations established over the time period of 1870-1960, offers that the intersection of the lives of Syilx and Settler women offer important accounts: "Indigenous and non-Indigenous women interacted, adapted, and accommodated each other in various ways, developing friendships, respect, understanding and collaboration. What kinds of relationships were possible, permitted, made inroads or traversed boundaries?" (p. vii)

We feel a kinship with the history of these relationships and with the question of the kinds of relationships that are possible and permitted. We hope that we have made visible an account of the relationships that we lived through the experience of creating curricular conditions to support K-12 students to learn alongside the Witness Blanket. Our understanding that co-curriculum-making as relationship-making is

the essence of this sense-making. As the essence of our inquiry, relationship-making takes us deeper into our shared learning. We pick up the pieces as we err, breathe life into the gathered bits, make inroads, and traverse boundaries.

In March of 2022, the co-curricular resources webpage (OSE, 2022B) was made accessible to all educators. This virtual space of provocation and documentation is taking shape and offers an open invitation to whoever might be interested when they are ready. This shared space is a source of ongoing reflection as we continue to grapple with what and how we share with each other in ways that continue to make visible Syilx voice, the water, the land. We ask what kinds of documentation we might co-create that will mirror all we are learning together and leave space for all that we still do not know. Will this work represent acts of reconciliation or something else entirely? Syilx Scholar Pauline Terbasket reminds us,

> We are all colonized here. We cannot avoid the triggers—we have to face them together. Following the [Tk̓emlúps] discovery, I have thought much . . . How are we going to address this with our children? What are they seeing, feeling when they see teddy bears and toddler shoes at the memorial? How do we have that conversation? Context, preparation, framing. All of this will be so important . . . This is huge, transformative work. It won't be perfect. It won't be right. Some will consider it wrong. We ask ourselves what kind of ancestor do I want to be for the seven generations? (P. Terbasket, 2021, Sept, personal communication)

Understanding that, "education is a process by which a culture expresses its reality and values, processes its culture, and transmits it to each generation" (Battiste & Bouvier, 2013), we acknowledge that the colonial curriculum is alive within our identities. In order to unsettle this hold of colonization on our minds and in our spirits, we document the critical and creative journey through our own stories and voices, for as White settler-colonizers, we have much to learn about establishing an ethics of relationality (Donald, 2016) through our support role in putting tmixʷ at the center of all learning.

For Future Generations

Kelly: *My belief is that students are capable, important meaning makers who hold their own theories, life histories, and emotions. I hold that belief up as I ask: What is the impact of bias, and privilege within an ecology of knowledge-building? This question is born from my evolving understanding of the co. It is one I ask myself.*

Witnessing the agreements in action—in classrooms—evoked a sense that the agreements offer a promising support of co-curricular makings. We saw the Witness Blanket art exhibit provoke student thinking most powerfully when land-centered exploration across all seasons and ongoing experiences of Syilx storyways was embedded and foundational in the learning environments. When we share the details of this specific part of our experiences, we partner with students and the students inspire and move thinking in life-giving ways beyond the scope of this paper.

We have many questions and tentatively offer this invitation as we seek transformation—in the spirit of Sn̓k̓lip, Coyote, of Syilx Okanagan storyways pedagogy— for ourselves and our educational community in how we live our efforts toward Truth and Reconciliation. Our experiences within the Syilx/Settler

Pedagogy Circle and within our settler-writing pedagogy have immersed us in the primacy of transformation in our efforts, as articulated by Syilx Elders, Scholars, and Knowledge Keepers. We seek transformation in hearts and minds that might hold much promise for re-generative action. We seek sustained change that recognizes the whole of the colonial story and begins—again and again—to strengthen relationships and responsibility through praxis that is grounded in reconciliation as defined by Syilx community—we seek further attention to how we imagine the co-curricular for future generations.

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Collaboration Beyond Words: Using Poetic Collage to Cultivate Community With Students and Colleagues

Candance Doerr-Stevens, Teresa Layden, and Stephen Goss

Abstract

In this article, we illustrate the experience of three literacy educators who harnessed online, collaborative platforms to cultivate community within their classrooms and with their colleagues. Through the use of creative practices including digital poetry, selfie collage, and curriculum sharing through video conferencing, the authors invited their students and professional peers to reflect on their perspectives and experiences related to social issues through the use of multimodal and media resources for composing. This article includes examples of creations from this context, including mentor text work, as well as implications for creativity and collaboration with students and colleagues.

Collaboration Beyond Words: Using Poetic Collage to Cultivate Community With Students and Colleagues

> Arts experiences, aesthetic experiences are intrinsically valuable … No encounters can release imagination in the way engagement with works of art of aesthetic enactments can release it. Imagination, as is well known, is the capacity that enables us to move through the barriers of the taken-for-granted and summon up alternative possibilities for living, for being in the world. (Greene, 1994, p. 18)

> Though most principals, superintendents and teachers have a desire to do better and are working as hard as they can to provide a quality education to every student they serve, the road is rough and the going is slow. The lead villain in this frustrating drama is the loss of community in our schools and in society itself. If we want to rewrite the script to enable good schools to flourish, we need to rebuild community. Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort. (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. xi)

In the assertion prefaced above, the late educational philosopher, Maxine Greene, emphasizes the value of aesthetic experiences for engagement and criticality during a time of increased accountability measures being placed on teachers. Alongside Greene, school leadership scholar, Thomas Sergiovanni, urges educators to invest in each other and their immediate professional communities as steps leading toward professional wellness and democratic communities. Although written nearly three decades ago, calls for cultural practices that support creative problem solving, teacher livelihood, and democratic societies remain strong.

For Teresa Layden, a middle and high school English teacher for more than 20 years, intentional efforts toward arts-based learning and community building became the hallmarks of education and engagement during a time of remote teaching and learning due to recent global health crises. Although the socio-political challenges and global health concerns facing the teaching profession have led to many

educators retiring early or seeking other professional opportunities (cf. Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2022), Teresa leaned into her professional networks for support and curricular inspiration. Seeking increased student engagement, she launched new, multimedia projects with her students, replacing traditional research papers with multimodal inquiry and arts-based expressions to investigate issues of environmental concern.

Like any educator experimenting with new practices, Teresa had reservations about how the new projects would be received. *What would the students create? Would they feel comfortable taking risks with their research and writing? Would they share their work in the zoom classroom? Would they turn on their cameras?* Despite the uncertainties, Teresa launched the multimedia projects with a willingness to embrace transformation both within her practices and her students' approach to them. By integrating a call to imagination and intentional community into her methodology, Teresa was able to harness the capacity to "move through barriers" and envision new possibilities for being, living, and working in the world.

Teresa is not alone in her experience. Several educators are experimenting with curriculum and collegial collaboration to find innovative ways to cultivate restorative and sustainable teaching practices both in their classrooms and with colleagues from across the profession (cf. Bajaj & Tow, 2021; Baumber et al., 2021; Burns et al., 2018; Wolter, 2021). In this article, we illustrate the creative collaborations of educators, specifically the authors of this article—three educators in the field of English literary arts, as they harnessed arts-based learning and inquiry to revitalize their connections with their students and colleagues. Through the use of creative practices such as digital poetry, selfie-collage, and curriculum sharing through video conferencing, the authors were able to build spaces of creative collaboration that reached into and beyond the classroom.

Literature Review

Teacher Solidarity, Collective Inquiry, and Aesthetic Experience

Education as a profession is not unfamiliar with the hazards of teacher exhaustion and attrition. Such ailments have plagued the field of education for decades, leading many to leave the profession (Guin, 2004; Kraft & Papay, 2014, Learning Policy Institute, 2018; Pressley, 2021). Recent socio-political challenges and global health crises have intensified these issues for teachers in North America (cf. Sokal et al., 2020; Will, 2022). Despite these occupational challenges, a number of educators are experimenting with professional practices to cultivate restorative and sustainable teaching practices both in their classrooms and with colleagues from across the profession (cf. Bajaj & Tow, 2021; Cohen & Calderón, 2021). Similar to professional development models such as "collaborative professionalism," which promotes relationship building and collegial trust alongside focused applications of research-based teaching methods (cf. Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018a), these restorative educational practices center people and story alongside productivity as the ingredients of successful communities and collaborations (Wolter, 2021). In other words, deeper collaborations happen when the solidarity of the people involved, and the integrity of the methods used, are adequately addressed, leading to greater learning for both teachers and students (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018b).

Considered collectively, these people-oriented practices allow educators to connect with one another and their professional practice in empowering ways, a collegial stance some are calling "humanization" or "pedagogies of solidarity" (Camangian & Cariaga, 2021; Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012; Zembylas, 2013). Zembylas (2013) defines pedagogical solidarity as collaborative labor that goes beyond general consensus building toward actions grounded in empathy and that effectively "break patterns of subordination" (p. 516). In other words, acknowledging another's humanity involves more than showing up for a video call. It involves empathy-based listening, vulnerability, and constant interrogation and effort toward reducing injustice. Also exploring the critical potentials of solidarity, Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) presents three modes of pedagogical solidarity: relational, transitive, and creative. Relational and transitive modes focus on a group's capacity to revise professional cultures through collective action that happens both in relation to others as well as from within. Creative solidarity emphasizes the power of poetic modes to rearrange hierarchical relations. In short, through releasing our imaginations with multimodal, arts-based practices of communication and sharing, educators are able to challenge and rewrite taken-for-granted practices and dictates of the profession, in ways not possible with words alone.

For some educators, the restorative and sustaining benefits of professional solidarity are achieved through collective inquiry and reflection on their practice (cf. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), wherein educators connect through shared interest and inquiry into a topic. For others, it may be a collegial community focused around a common goal of writing or knowledge production (cf. Burns et al., 2018), or through close study and shared practice with emergent tools for digitally mediated collaboration (Husbye et al., 2019). In all these cases, educators are embracing new tools for inquiry and practices of communication in ways that extend a professional praxis beyond their classrooms and home institutions. Moreover, these practices engender an understanding of human interdependence in the pursuits of cultural change and professional wellness.

In other cases, professional solidarity may surface through shared, professional practices that embrace arts-based learning and other aesthetic experiences that step beyond print-only forms of communication. Research has long illustrated the benefits of arts-based learning for students both within the arts and across disciplines (c.f. DeHart, 2022; Marco & Zoss, 2019; Posner & Patoine, 2009; Pruitt et al., 2014). DeHart (2022), in particular, used visual and poetic arts to invite students into a multimodal inquiry around their learning and identities. Through composing comics and collage, students juxtaposed images with words to support deeper engagement with stereotypes presented in the fiction read for the course as well as stereotypes circulating in their daily lives.

Amply documented, yet less well known, are the many benefits of creative inquiry and arts-based learning for educators (Mackenzie, 2010; McCay & Gibbs, 2020; Sappa & Barabasch, 2020). McKay and Barton (2018), in particular, found that arts-based reflection for teachers in the form of rip collage and metaphoric writing promoted teacher resilience and well-being. As for remote teaching in particular, one group of educators employed walking-based methodologies paired with photo journaling and poetry writing to foster a restorative balance between teaching, parenting, and domestic work patterns during pandemic teaching (Sullivan et al., in press)

Considered together, both collective inquiry and the aesthetic experience of arts-based learning forge new spaces for creative collaboration within classrooms and among colleagues. These creative and collaborative experiences invite students and educators to redefine the cultures of their personal and work lives in ways that promote both professional solidarity and restorative practice. In the narrative to follow, we illustrate the creative collaboration of three educators.

Forging Pathways for Creative Collaboration

Before showcasing the creative collaborations fashioned by the authors and their students, it is important to briefly set the stage for how their professional paths came to cross. Candance and Steve met in-person at the 2019 annual meeting for their professional organization, National Council Teachers of English (NCTE). Sharing common interests in arts-based learning, technology integration, and the growing climate crisis, the two proposed a shared conference presentation for the fall of 2020 focusing on these three topics. Weeks after submitting their presentation proposal, schools across the globe shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic, forcing all three authors into remote teaching and learning circumstances that would shape their professions for years to come.

All three educators were required to teach from their homes through web-based video conferencing and online learning management systems such as Google Classroom and Canvas. For Candance and Steve, teacher educators at mid-sized universities in the American Midwest and South respectively, this meant moving in-person classes and supervising teacher field experiences online. For Teresa, teaching high school English in the American Southwest, this meant transitioning to a digital classroom.

Previous to remote teaching and learning, all three educators had been well versed in using online platforms for teaching and learning. With 60+ years of experience combined, they understood the need to create meaningful relationships with students, between students, and between students and ideas. Yet, previous to remote teaching and learning, the online space had always been an auxiliary space for deeper engagement and expanded access to learning, never a replacement for in-person learning. After an initial pivot for students and teachers, they settled into more consistent routines and began to consider how to reintegrate student-directed learning into their digital classrooms. Although a new normal of teaching and learning emerged, something critical to their professional practice was still missing. While they showed up daily for their students both online and in video calls, they felt isolated as professionals. Several questions of doubt arose: *Is this the best approach to teaching online? Are our students forming connections? Is there a better platform that I could use to deliver this content? Will students turn on their cameras? How long can I sustain this mode of teaching?*

For Candance and Steve, who were accepted to present at NCTE's national conference, which had now moved completely online, they had to rethink how they would engage their professional peers in a video, on-demand format. Instead of creating a didactic video presentation about poetry and climate change that might position their colleagues as passive recipients of information, they decided to create a video prompt that would invite their colleagues into an active, poetic inquiry. Similar to the "poetic encounters" designed by DeHart (2022, p. 129), which invited students to intentionally juxtapose images with words, the video prompt asked participants to compose a selfie-collage of themselves in relation to their local

outdoor settings. Through playful combining of self-portraits, images, and words, participants were prompted to artfully reflect on their relationships with the environment.

Drawing upon the collaborative potentials of shared composing spaces such as Padlet, Zoom, and Jamboard, Candance and Steve crafted a video writing prompt, combining selfie-inspired visual collage and poetry writing on issues related to the environment. Modeling this process of poetic inquiry, they composed their own selfie-collage poems and workshopped them online prior to creating their video writing prompt. See Figures 1 and 2.

Fig. 1: The Hawthorn has fallen.

In sum, Candance and Steve's NCTE 2020 presentation focused on humankind's desire to make its presence known in time and space by placing itself in stories such as cave drawings, painted portraits, or murals. To do this, they focused on the genres of poetry, selfie photography, and collage as a means for individuals to place themselves "in relation" to the settings that surround them and that underscore their narratives of habitat and Earth. After sharing their own selfie-collages, Candance and Steve invited their professional peers to likewise engage in narrating themselves, providing the following prompts and examples. See Table 1.

Table 1
Inviting Professional Peers to Compose Selfie-Collage from "Guerilla poetry: Reimagining the self and the selfie through environmental collage" (Goss & Doerr-Stevens, 2020)

Steps to composing your selfie-collage.

1) Take a series of five selfies in a setting you consider home
2) Gather additional images
3) Freewrite about the items you gathered
4) Using Google Jamboard, assemble your images and words
5) Share your selfie collage or mash-up using the hashtag: #selfiemashup

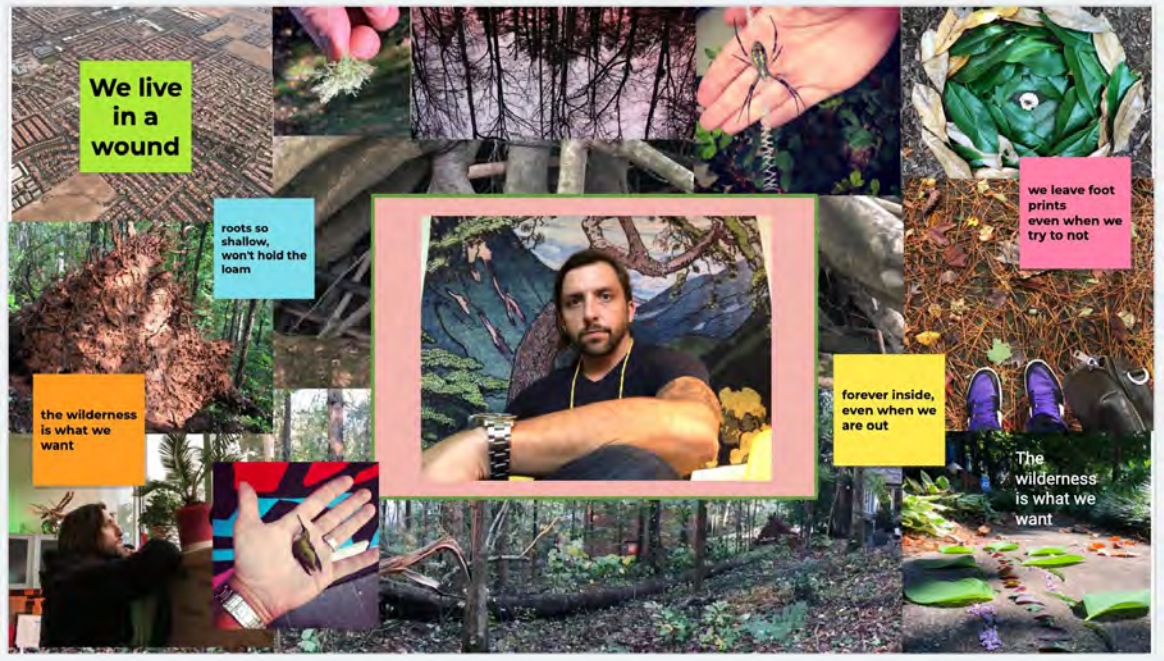

Fig. 2: We live in a wound.

Also seeking inspiration and collegiality, Teresa attended the annual meeting of NCTE 2020 online and viewed several "on demand" presentations hoping to rethink some of the learning opportunities that she had planned to implement into the remainder of the school year. After viewing 20 or more presentations, she reached what she called "a turning point." She viewed Candance and Steve's presentation titled, "Guerilla poetry: Reimagining the self and the selfie through environmental collage." Almost immediately, Teresa knew that she had found what she had been searching for—an inquiry-based, multimodal project that students could successfully carry out despite the limitations of remote teaching and learning. Given Teresa's ever-changing definition of text, she was immediately drawn to the presentation. As Teresa recalls,

> Once I viewed it, I knew their vision of the interplay between poetry and image was something I wanted to invite my students to participate in. Not only did the environmental collage dovetail with my ongoing desire to enrich my students' perspectives on the parameters of texts, but it spoke directly to the inherent compatibility of combining artforms to express meaning. It would not only help my students give voice to their conceptualization of this rhetorical relationship, but it would appeal to their sense of urgency toward sustainability issues. (personal communication, March 2022)

In short, Teresa was drawn to Candance and Steve's investment in teaching through multimodalities and their recognition of the insights that students can glean when the traditional parameters of text and storytelling are disrupted and reimagined. Shortly after the conference, Teresa reached out to Candance and Steve via email, asking if she could have access to the video prompt so that she could incorporate something similar into her own classroom. Candance and Steve immediately agreed and encouraged her to keep in touch and share the process.

Forging Forward Through Bringing it Back

Energized by the creative collaborations with colleagues online, the authors circled back to the idea of selfie-collage, thinking through how best to incorporate the creative composition into their classrooms and invite their students to partner with multimodality alongside their instructors.

Collaging Literacy Identity. Building on the creative boost experienced through creating their own selfie-collages alongside colleagues, Candance and Steve posed the invitation for selfie-collage to their own students and asked their students who were preparing to be English teachers to explore their relationships with books, reading, and writing through selfie-collage as a way to connect with young writers they were working with online. In an effort to manage space and focus, this article will only briefly describe Candance's implementation of selfie-collage with her students, in order to more fully illustrate the creative pathways that Teresa and her high school seniors traveled through collage.

For Candance, at her midwestern University, selfie-collage emerged as a way for teacher candidates, early in their preparation to become English teachers, to create a selfie-collage exploring their relationship to texts print-based and beyond. These selfie-collages would be used not only to introduce themselves to their classmates in their online course but also to introduce themselves to the middle school and high school writers that they would be working with as writing coaches.

Drawing upon Greene's (1995) call to awaken the imagination through creative aesthetic engagement and Prasad and The Lions BEd Group's (2021) use of collage for examining emerging professional identities, Candance hoped the multimodal invitation would create a new space for sharing personal perspectives as well as spur productive risk taking and discovery in online spaces. See Table 2.

Table 2

Selfie-Mash-Ups of Literacy Identity—Assignment Prompt

> Using Canva or Jamboard, compose a collage representing your literacy identity.
> This collage will be read/viewed by the student writers we work with this semester and their teachers. The collage should include images, doodles, quotes, etc., to depict aspects of your literacy identity. Questions to consider in your selfie-collage:
>
> - What experiences do you have with reading and writing, online and off?
> - What experiences do you have reading, writing, and helping other writers?
> - What details do you want writers to know about yourself?
> - Consider including a picture or selfie of yourself alongside your defining texts.

In this case, the selfie-collage was an invitation to the students to explore their own literacy narratives with their professional peers and begin positioning themselves as professionals in the field of education. The following prompt was provided to the undergraduate students.

Collaging Relationships to the Environment. For Teresa at Arizona School for the Arts, where she teaches a required yearlong course to seniors, the selfie-collage project, along with other multimodal projects, eventually replaced a traditional academic research paper. Driven by her desire for students to primarily engage in authentic, project-based learning that appeals to both their artistic sensibilities as well as their intellectual drive, Teresa has been increasingly offering an array of linear, as well as nonlinear, text driven experiences. Sparked by ongoing professional development and research, classroom experiences, and Candance and Steve's selfie-collage presentation, the evolution in Teresa's approach quickened during the pandemic and has since continued. For instance, as students read historical fiction and then wrote historical short stories, she encouraged them to add hyperlinks to period-specific music and artworks to enhance their story arcs. By strategically adjusting curricular activities, Teresa encouraged students to disrupt the disconnected nature of their online learning experience and form connections between the various elements of assignments including language, artforms, history, and culture—human artifacts that transcend space and time. Teresa continues to reshape assignments as she strives for students to integrate meaningful multimodal information and artforms into their work.

Needless to say, the students' response to the task of creating a poetry collage exceeded Teresa's expectations. Upon receiving the invitation to compose in this manner, students immediately began scrolling through their phones and strategically planning layouts of pictures and text. By transforming the idea of linear text into a dynamic interplay of images and language, the students were able to root their learning in a multimodal narrative of identity and reflection.

In reflecting on the experience herself, Teresa credits both collective inquiry and arts-based learning for re-engaging her students in the online learning space of remote teaching and learning.

> I'm really amazed and very proud of what they [my students] achieved. I'm glad that I was able to take Candance and Steve's ideas and adapt them to my students' curricular needs: without a doubt, Candance and Steve's work was the catalyst for deepening my students' motivation and learning experiences. As students exceeded every expectation of what I thought they'd do, I knew I was on the right path in terms of elevating multimodal text in the classroom. My experience with Candance and Steve also reinforced my commitment to interacting with other educators in ways that benefitted both my students and my professional development and instincts. (personal communication, August 2021)

In the example poetry collages featured below, Teresa's high school students illustrate an embracing of multiliteracies and non-mono-print literacies. In so doing, students had a variety of options for conveying their ideas and could align modalities to enhance meaning. See Figure 3.

Fig. 3: Instagram is reel, not real by Student A.

In Figure 3 above, Student A disrupts the linear arc of the traditional essay, which often starts with an explicit thesis followed by explication. Instead, Student A presents a circular visual framed by the repeated presentation of words, similar to a news crawl. These choices strategically combine several genres of media communications in ways that highlight the interplay of media and experience in our understandings of ourselves and the world. This multimodal narration also suggests a "calling out" of media narratives in order to insert Student A into the story under their own terms.

In a later rendition of the assignment in spring of 2021, Teresa encouraged her students to further drive the process of creating their collages and offered fewer requisites for what they could assemble. The initiating prompt—explore your relationship to nature through images and text—remained the same, but students were invited to construct their collages in ways that were most meaningful and representative of themselves. One of the few strategies students were asked to include was incorporating hyperlinks into their design. The written instructions drew directly from Candance and Steve's original invitation to compose poetry collage, yet were revised to attend to the specific values and needs of Teresa's students and context. See Table 3. The examples to follow exemplify the updated version of the assignment.

Table 3

Assignment Prompt for Second Rendition of Poetry Collage for High School Seniors at Arizona School for the Arts

1. Consider your relationship to the environment. What is your positionality to it?
2. Gather photos (i.e., selfies, new or old photos of yourself (which may include other people), Google images/photos, designs, original artwork) that speak to your relationship to the environment and arrange them in a manner that helps illustrate this relationship.
3. Include two or more of the following (through hyperlinks) that also help express this relationship—a published poem, a song, a dance piece, visual artwork, etc.
4. Add an original poem that aligns with your collage and is a response to the prompt.
5. Arrange your collage.

Fig. 4: Trapped in a concrete cage by student B.

In Figure 4, Student B created a physical college, rather than a digital one, and included flower petals and cut paper. In addition, they added hyperlinks to the pink- and blue-shaded boxes. These hyperlinks anchor to visuals rather than words and lead the viewer to different online sonic experiences including the sound of falling rain. Other students' hyperlinks accessed art songs, poems, TikTok, and visuals. See Figure 4.

Fig. 5: Capturing the essence of nature and myself in each frame by student C.

Ongoing Creative Inquiry for Professional Growth

In reflecting on our different iterations of digital poetry and selfie-collage that emerged over the past two years in both online and in-person settings, all three authors have been prompted to rethink their understandings of "texts" and how they circulate online. They have also been prompted to reflect on the collective and creative dimensions of literacy learning as it happens in and across learning communities. Indeed, poetry collage opens spaces for students to insert themselves into conversations happening online and off, drawing upon the multimodality of cultural resources they see as most important. This process also invited the three educators into a continual disruption of their own personal "best practices." Similar to Gaztambide-Fernández's (2012) claim that creative solidarity allows for a "rearrange[ment of] symbolic content and human exchanges" (p. 56), multimodal expression allowed their students to see themselves as creative agents within the online learning space.

What had worked prior to obligatory, remote learning was not sufficient for the teaching conditions that limited student and teacher interactions to grid and chat conversation. These constraints hindered the restorative potentials of community-based learning, prompting the authors to reinvent understandings of student engagement, creative collaboration, and the importance of community for teaching writing online. Furthermore, the constraints pushed the authors to lean into their professional networks for support and inspiration to move through and across barriers to professional growth. Teresa asserts this push and lean below.

> My strong beliefs about the need for students to be well-versed in reading and writing across modalities and genres has led to my adapting other ideas the three of us have shared during our numerous conversations. I'm indebted to their generosity of spirit and the collegial home I have found with them. (personal communication, March 2022)

Through the creative composing and sharing of poetry collage, the educators connected more deeply with their own relations to the concepts collaged, while also interweaving themselves with professional peers who were also in need of professional dialogue and creative solidarity through poetic modes of expression.

As professional development opportunities continue to migrate to online, hybrid spaces, leaders within the education profession must ask how collective inquiry and arts-based practices serve to build restorative relations in new professional spaces for both teachers and students. How do such practices invite the imagination while also positioning educators as active agents in their professional growth? For the authors, the professional relations established through creative practice not only enriched their connections to each other and issues of environmental crisis, but also built collegial relationships that continue to push the boundaries of what constitutes effective learning spaces. These questions underscore the need for professional spaces where educators can inspire one another and transform students' learning.

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Resisting Concepts as Starting Points in a High School Leadership Pathway Alongside Indigenous Youth

Michael Dubnewick, Sean Lessard, Tristan Hopper, and Brian Lewis

Abstract

This writing draws on an ongoing narrative inquiry with 10 Indigenous youth as they negotiated their lives within a high school leadership pathway. Our research demonstrates the need to resist starting in concepts as an intentional shift to being and becoming wakeful to storied lives on and off school landscapes. Three resonant threads are highlighted as we listened across the youths' lives. These threads are framed as pathways the youth asked us to consider in terms of reimagining schools as places of unfolding kinship, reimagining schools beyond notions of becoming responsible adults, and reimagining in-between spaces as landscapes that matter.

Pathways to Beginning: Overview

When we began this work, we held wonders of how Indigenous youth composed their identities and sustained their lives on and off school landscapes. For some on our research team, they had lived intimately alongside the Indigenous youth who became part of our research for several years prior as teachers within the high school (Brian Lewis, Tamara Ryba, Brett Kannenberg). For others on our research team, they had a historical and ongoing connection to the Growing Young Movers (GYM) after-school program and the youth since its inception over a decade ago (Sean Lessard and Brian Lewis) (Lewis, 2018). While some of us (Michael Dubnewick and Tristan Hopper) had only recently taken up appointments as professors at the University of Regina and had just begun to step into the midst of the high school landscape, GYM, and the lives of the Indigenous youth they eventually came to know. As a community engaged in research, we each came to this work wanting to better understand and attend to the experiences of the Indigenous youth who were part of the Leadership Pathway in ways where we could wonder less about how to fit the youth within the school landscape, and more towards how we could imagine the school landscape better fitting and attending to the lives of the youth. Given that the Leadership Pathway was intentionally created in ways to reimagine how schools could be structured to better support the lives of youth as they navigate school landscapes, our work and time alongside the youth allowed us to better understand the ongoing life-making of the youth as they navigated the Leadership Pathway.

Growing Young Movers (GYM) grew out of previous research with Indigenous youth (Lewis, 2018; Lessard, 2015; Lessard et al., 2015) and was designed to acknowledge and respect the innate leadership skills of Indigenous high school students while attending to aspects of employment and transitions. GYM began as an intergenerational after-school program where high school youth co-facilitate play-based programming for younger children. The location of GYM has shifted over the years and has worked with

numerous communities in a variety of ways. Currently, the GYM afterschool program occurs in an urban-located community high school in Regina. While previous GYM afterschool programming was not integrated within the curriculum, GYM after-school programming is now integrated within the high school curriculum as part of the Leadership Pathway. High school students within the Leadership Pathway are in grade-specific cohorts (grades 10, 11, and 12) during school hours and then transition to working as paid mentors for children from neighboring elementary schools within the GYM after-school program. The Leadership Pathway is the first of its kind in Saskatchewan in terms of integrating school-based education (i.e., credited curricula in areas of leadership, cultural arts, land-based education, outdoor education, and physical education) with employment through a nonprofit organization (i.e., GYM). While the partnership between GYM and the community high school provides opportunities to reimagine how schools can be structured to be more attentive and respectful towards the youths' ongoing life-making, we are also aware of bumping points that exist as these two landscapes become embedded and enmeshed.

Wakeful to Multiple Storied Landscapes: Locating How After-School Programs Are Embedded in Dominant Stories of School and Recreation

Since GYM's beginnings, those part of the nonprofit youth program have continuously framed and negotiated an everyday practice where Indigenous youth are known as knowledge holders (Lewis et al., 2022; Schaefer et al., 2017). As noted in their prior work, this framing of youth as knowledge holders often bumps against dominant institutional narratives of school that position youth as passive recipients who are in need of knowledge and/or fixing. Huber at al. (2011) theoretically conceptualized that youth negotiate two worlds of curriculum making, the familial curriculum-making world and the school or institutional curriculum-making world. What becomes troubling as youth navigate both worlds is how their knowledge is positioned and valued in each of these worlds. Lessard's (2015) work demonstrated how Indigenous youths' familial knowledge is often discounted as school/institutional curriculum takes precedence. While we were wakeful to how after-school programs have been conceptualized as an extension of the institutional curriculum-making worlds, we were also wakeful to how GYM, the Leadership Pathway, and the youth also negotiated their lives amidst dominant interventionist logics of programmed recreation and wellness.

Recently scholars, including Sharpe et al. (2022), have begun to show how dominant interventionist logics construct youth who have been labelled "at-risk" as docile bodies in-need of fixing, with after-school youth programming being positioned as an effective tool to change youth into healthy and ideal neoliberal citizens. This type of programming logic has been especially true for Indigenous youth, where sport and recreation programming have historically been, and continue to be, used as a form of colonial assimilation (Forsyth, 2013; Forsyth & Giles, 2013; Paraschak, 2013; Norman et al., 2018). One of the everyday sites in which this is most prevalent, and often least contested (given the feel-good nature), is wellness-based programming that focuses on leadership development.

Giles and colleagues' work over the last several years (Galipeau & Giles, 2014; Gartner-Manzon & Giles, 2016; Rose & Giles, 2007) critically analyzed how Alberta's Future Leaders Program (AFL), a summer

sport/recreation/arts program dedicated to Indigenous youth leadership development, lacked meaningful engagement with Indigenous approaches to leadership. While the intentions of AFL are to work with Indigenous communities, they noted that these programs function in a way that thrusts Euro-Canadian values and approaches of leadership upon Indigenous youth by outside experts looking to skill-up youth. In turn, this creates an environment where Indigenous youth are taught Euro-Canadian leadership skills to navigate their worlds. Their research demonstrated how programs like AFL do very little to shift our understanding of how the multitude of ways leadership can be composed in the lives of Indigenous youth and their communities. Further, such programs explicitly undermine Indigenous ways of knowing and the familial knowledge of youth by discounting their lived experiences and how they come to programs as knowledge holders.

Towards Thinking Narratively: Resisting Beginning With Concepts of Leadership as a Starting Point

As we came together as a research team, we began our work wakeful to how the dominant stories of school and the interventionist logics of recreation often positioned research with Indigenous youth from the starting point of aiming to demonstrate and/or deconstruct the effectiveness of innovative curriculum and program pathways. Within the context of the Leadership Pathway, GYM, and the community high school, those dominant plotlines of research would have positioned our starting point of inquiry beginning and ending within the concept of leadership. Beginning with concepts of leadership would have grounded our inquiry in questions about whether the Leadership Pathway was creating integrated links between curriculum content and practical leadership skills within the youth. As a community engaged in research, we felt these bumping points as we lived alongside the youth in concrete, everyday ways:

> Whenever I think of Wilt and those moments we got to know each other I am always transported to the first days and weeks in which our lives were introduced. Our knowing of each other began on the court as we shot hoops with children from the neighbouring elementary schools. On those days, as we dribbled, passed and shot, I was slowly introduced to who Wilt was and who he was becoming. I watched as groupings of children would excitedly form around Wilt each day with basketballs in hand. I watched as elbows went out wide, knees would bend, and with sudden propulsions of their bodies the children would fling balls into the air that ricocheted off backboards, grazed the baskets netting, and bounced towards the nearby exit doors. And in those moments, I also watched as Wilt retrieved stray shots, and gently bounced balls back. When moments presented, he would take his own shot. Confidently, the ball would arc and find its way into the netting. I watched as the little ones turned to Wilt. Wilt would slowly show them how to gather their feet, or dribble the ball—patiently beginning with two hands, then moving to one, before gathering his feet again to take a shot. I watched as they would mimic his movements. One dribble, feet scuffle, second dribble, feet scuffle, control with two hands. One dribble, feet scuffle, second dribble, feet scuffle, control with two hands. As shots bounced off rims and hit backboards collective gasps would ensue. When shots found their way into the hoop a collective roar would ensue, as if that basket made was more of a collective accomplishment than an individual achievement. (Michael, field text, 10/28/2020)

As we turn to Michael's condensed field texts from his early beginnings alongside Wilt, we are wakeful to how dominant plotlines could, and have shaped, our attentiveness to Wilt's ongoing life-making. It would be easy for us to begin with the concept(s) of leadership. For Michael, he often found himself

negotiating this plotline of beginning and returning to the concept(s) of leadership. Part of this ongoing negotiation was that was/is a dominant plotline of research. Another part of Michael's ongoing negotiation was how he was nested in communities where content and concepts framed people's coming together. This occurred through his position as an instructor and professor in university classrooms where he had previously taught leadership courses within an interdisciplinary leadership college during his doctorate and currently taught an introductory leadership course in his faculty. In both of these places, lives were framed around content and classrooms became places where Michael felt pressures to teach students theories, models, and practices of leadership (such as trait approach, leader member-exchange theory, servant leadership) that were often cited in introductory leadership texts (Northouse, 2022) over attending to the ongoing life-making in relation to concepts and content. As he engaged with these courses as an instructor, he often asked learners to explain leadership concepts, apply concepts to their own lived experiences or to examples in their broader social worlds. In many ways it could have been easy for Michael to continue these plotlines of beginning with concepts first and seeing or showing it through experience within the youth who were part of the Leadership Pathway. It would be easy to demonstrate how Wilt's approach to mentoring children exemplified a specific type of "personal power" discussed in leadership texts as "referent power" as children in the community often showed deep identification towards Wilt as a likeable role model. From this point as research team, we could further show how he developed these likeable, adored relationships and how that allowed Wilt to positively influence the children in the community towards a goal. Or we could discuss more pivotal approaches to leadership such as Blanchard's (1985) situational leadership model. The situational leadership model advocated that effective leadership requires that people adapt how directive or supportive they are depending on the needs (i.e., competency and commitments) of their followers. If we were to begin with the concept of situational leadership we would draw, and examine, how Wilt shifted his approach to leadership in relation to followers' competency and motivation. We could examine and show how he adapted as a leader from more directive to supportive depending on the needs of his followers and the situation (i.e., when being with children in GYM vs. when being on the high school basketball team). As we engaged in our research with the youth, we knew that if we lived the plotline of beginning and ending our research inquiry from the concept of leadership we would reduce their ongoing life-making to concepts of leadership. It is Caine and colleagues' (2022) writing that provides clarity on the need to resist starting with concepts in narrative inquiry:

> If we start with a concept, for example, identity or community or imagination or some other concept, the concept is unfolded, followed through to its complexities and, perhaps, to the ways the concept is lived in experience. It is the concept that provides the organizing frame. The concept is privileged, placed as the starting point for understanding experience. As narrative inquirers, our task is quite a different one. We cannot figure out the concept first and then see 'it' in experience. We start in the experience, at the outset seeing the messy interwoven threads, knowing each is important and needs to be addressed. But, as we pull one thread of an experience, we always know the rest of experience is present. (Caine et al., 2022, p. 2)

Stated another way, by starting with concepts researchers degrade the epistemic status of experience. By resisting concepts and attending to youths' stories, we may be able to reimagine school and after-school places as spaces that offer possibilities to become attentive to youth's diverse and unfolding lives in ways where their lives and learning are embedded (Clandinin, 2010).

Methodology

Narrative inquiry (as defined by Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) is a methodology that understands experience as a storied phenomenon and that people's storied experiences are embedded and negotiated within social, cultural, institutional, linguistic, and familial narratives. As Connelly and Clandinin wrote (2006):

> Arguments for the development and use of narrative inquiry came out of a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. Narrative inquiry as a methodology entails a view of the phenomenon. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study. (p. 477)

As a relational research methodology, narrative inquiry seeks to position the researcher(s) as part of the inquiry where researcher(s) and participant(s) live alongside one another over time. At the heart of all narrative inquiries is an attentiveness to developing collaborative processes that allow researchers and participants/communities to live in relationally ethical ways (Clandinin et al., 2018). As narrative inquirers our attention shifts towards our relationships between people, and the responsiveness that occurs in our encounters as lives come together over time. As Clandinin (2013) explained, "experience is seen as a narrative composition; that is, experience itself is an embodied narrative life composition. Narrative is not, as some would have it, merely an analytical or representational device" (p. 38). This attentiveness to experience as an embodied narrative life composition grounded our work. As a community committed to the methodological commitments of narrative inquiry, we were reminded of our responsibilities to being and becoming attentive the ongoing life-making we were part of as we developed relationships with each of the youth. Below we provide a more practical accounting of how we engaged in our process of living alongside 10 Indigenous youth who participated in GYM and the Leadership Pathway within the community high school context.

Engaging in Narrative Inquiry

Within this section, we outline how we engaged in a narrative inquiry with 10 Indigenous youth who were part of the Leadership Pathway. As an overview, our research engaged in the following processes: (a) inquiring into our own autobiographical beginnings, (b) developing an ongoing response community and living alongside youth, (c) writing, negotiating, and thinking across the narrative accounts. This process we discuss more below. Prior to this, we do feel there is a need to briefly provide some context. Our research began in spring 2020 and continued throughout the 2020/21 school year and into the 2021/22 school year. During this time 10 Indigenous youth participated in our research through in-person and virtual research conversations (depending on location of research team member and health procedures relating to COVID-19). It should be noted that while we write this work as "finished," for several on our research team (i.e., Michael Dubnewick, Tristan Hopper, Sean Lessard, and Brian Lewis) this research is ongoing and for others (i.e., Brett Kannenberg and Tamara Ryba) their commitments to

the youth are also ongoing within their roles as teachers, thus this writing is very much "for now" (Clandinin et al., 2018).

Autobiographical Beginnings

As we began imagining our research alongside the Indigenous youth, we were cautious of moving too quickly. Given that several members of our research team had previously engaged in narrative inquiries, we knew the importance of narrative beginnings, or autobiographical inquiries, as a way to locate ourselves and inquire into our own stories in relation to our research puzzle so we did not overlay or silence the lives of the youth (Dubnewick et al., 2018). As our research team gathered in the early stages of our work, we shared stories and experiences of navigating schools and our current involvements with/in schools, we inquired into our stories of leadership and our relation to programmed recreation, wellness and after-school activities. As our research team shared, we drew annals, or chronicles, of our lives. As we did, we learned of different stories of school, some rurally located, others urban. We inquired into and unpacked dominant stories of school that reduced the complexity that lived within schools to pre-prescribed knowledge and outcomes, and we discussed the tensions of living otherwise as educators as we each shared stories of negotiating school landscapes. We inquired into our own roles and how they youth may story us in certain ways (i.e., as teachers or as people/researchers from outside the community). We wondered how we could know ourselves differently and open possibilities to be known in the lives of youth differently as we (re)negotiated entry (Dubnewick et al., 2021).

An Ongoing Response Community and Living Alongside

As we collaboratively inquired into our narrative beginnings, we slowly developed a response community that we turned back to throughout the inquiry. While, we did not frame our response community during those early moments of our work as "spaces of appearance" as Caine et al. (2021) recently conceptualized. We now understand that within our response community we, at times, were asking each other to reveal ourselves to ourselves and to each other in ways that we could open possibilities to restory our relational responsibilities, not only individually but also within the worlds of the youth we lived alongside.

Given each of our locations and negotiations of who we were in the lives of the youth, we each negotiated relationships with the one to two youth. Over the course of the research project, our research team had four conversations with each of the 10 Indigenous youth who were part of the study and several on the research team lived alongside youth in the GYM after-school program on a weekly and/or daily basis. After each of these conversations we returned to our response community. Sometimes that meant meeting at the university, other times at the community high school, and other days at city parks as we walked, talked, video-called people in, and shared tentative written accounts. These were important gatherings as we continually turned to how we were thinking narratively and engaging in responsive ways with the youth as their life-making become more visible to us.

Writing, Negotiating, and Think Across the Narrative Accounts

As we lived alongside the youth in school and after-school places, engaged in research conversations, and discussed in our response community, we collectively moved towards writing narrative accounts for each of the Indigenous youth. Writing narrative accounts were a way for us to give an account, or a representation, of the unfolding of lives of both the youth as well as the research team as their lives become visible to each other. In narrative inquiry the writing of narrative accounts is a way to be accountable and responsible to those people we work with, in this case the Indigenous high school youth. As a community coming together in this work, individual narrative accounts also became a valuable process to ensure we were not reducing the diverse experiences and life-making of each of the youth to an essentialized, or singular account. In addition to writing these accounts, each researcher shared their accounts with the youth as a way to develop mutuality and ask if we listened and/or travelled (Lugones, 1987) well. Once these narrative accounts were written and negotiated, we came together to share across the accounts and inquire into possible resonant threads, which we discuss below.

Resonant Threads as We Lived Alongside Indigenous Youth in a Leadership Pathway

We want to reiterate this research aims to resist the plotline of storying our work as an evaluation of GYM and the Leadership Pathway as an effective intervention or innovative curricula approach that has the potential to skill-up youth and get through school. Rather, our interests and wonders sit in "thinking with" the stories youth shared with us, in ways that they prompted us to consider different stories for how we can imagine and structure schools in more sustaining ways. As Morris (2002) wrote:

> The concept of thinking with stories is meant to oppose and modify (not replace) the institutionalized Western practice of thinking about stories. Thinking about stories conceives of narrative as an object. Thinking with stories is a process in which we as thinkers do not so much work on narrative as of allowing narrative to work on us. (p. 196)

From this vantage, the resonant threads shared are less about creating neat and orderly themes across the narrative accounts and are more about providing threads for the reader to sense how the youths' lives shaped our personal and social stories of school. This led us to framing our resonant threads as pathways that the youth asked us to consider.

Thread to Reimagine Schools as Places of Unfolding Kinship

As shared in the introduction, GYM and the Leadership Pathway were conceptualized from prior research and community experience (Lessard, 2015; Lewis, 2018; Schaefer et al., 2017) with an intergenerational approach. For example, high school youth would be paid to mentor and co-facilitate the after-school GYM program for children from the surrounding elementary schools each day. Grade 12 high school youth would also mentor incoming grades 10 and 11 high school youth within the Leadership Pathway at the community high school. The youth also had mentors within GYM, like Brian or Knowledge Keeper Joseph Naytowhow. While the GYM program and Leadership Pathway was structured with this intent from the beginning, the value of understanding how these relational threads sustained youth as they

navigated the broader school landscape became clearer as we lived alongside the youth. To show what we mean, we turn to Maya's conversation with Michael:

"When I started working for GYM
I didn't have any role models and stuff.
I kind of didn't have that much hope for my future.
I was kind of down at the time when I started GYM.
And I was like…I didn't have any role models or guides.

When Brian started talking about being a role model to the kids
I thought about my childhood.
I was like—It would have been nice
And even things I'm going through at this moment
It would be nice to have a role model
Or somebody there just for support.
Or somebody that understands.
Or somebody that's just like—they don't have to ask me what's wrong,
They'll just be there when I need them.
It would be nice to have that.

I thought about the kids at GYM
I thought about the way I grew up
I was thinking it would be nice…
It probably means a lot to them when they have a role model
To look up to—who is there for them—
they can feel supported by and comfortable around.

So, I thought about that, and I was like:
'I want to be a good role model for them
I want to be somebody who positively influences the community'
It [GYM] has been a catalyst.

I hold connections to a high value just because it's really important to me now
I always wanted closer connections with my family.
Now when I experience a good connection,
I'll do anything to keep it safe.

GYM is like a sacred space
I wish I had that when I was younger."

(Michael, reconstructed research conversation,[1] 01/26/2021)

As Michael lived alongside Maya, it was clear that relationships mattered to how they sustained their ongoing life-making as they navigated different worlds. It mattered in deep and visceral ways for Maya. As Maya's words animate, those connections and relationships mattered in ways that she wanted to and would protect. While Maya knew of the importance of relationships in sustaining her ongoing life-making, she also draws our attention to how she imagines this being true for the children who were a part of GYM. As we read Maya's words again, we are pulled into those feelings of being there for each other. As we do, we consider how the GYM after-school program was a consistent space where intergenerational relationships sat at the heart of how the program was structured and how the youth

storied the program in their lives. In this way a sense of narrative coherence lived between the personal stories of Maya and the social stories of GYM. Another youth, Norval, succinctly stated, "kinship, I think is a better word" when naming his experience within GYM. It is Norval, Maya and the eight other youth that asked us to reimagine how we name and understand schools as places of unfolding kinship.

Thread to Reimagine Schools Beyond Notions of Becoming Responsible Adults:

Hearing each of the youths' complex lives made visible the layers of responsibility that the youth engaged with across multiple landscapes. As we listened to their experiences, and shared across the narrative accounts, we began to question the singular notion of schools as places to teach students how to become increasingly responsible adults. While we do not want to discount the value of becoming responsible, we did begin to wonder how that framing of school landscapes arrogantly perceived the lives of youth without attempting to travelling to the worlds of youth to understand how their living was full of continuous compositions of responsibility in ways that were silenced on school landscapes (Lugones, 1987). In many ways, lists of responsibility seemed to sit on the edges of the school landscape, silenced in favor of a different understanding of what it meant to be and become responsible (to curriculum).

A small list of silenced responsibilities

- *"I started looking after my siblings and little cousins at a young age"*
- *"I am up very early in the morning to make sure they are awake"*
- *"I have to make breakfast"*
- *"And get them to school"*
- *"Things are crazy at home right now"*
- *"I am their support…I just really try and take care of them"*
- *"I had to take on such a big responsibility of one kid, and then another, and then another, over time"*
- *"COVID's been tough—I tried doing my work at home, but that wasn't an option for me"*
- *"I care for the younger generations, because you never know. Because some kids could be going through stuff like how I was, or something."*
- *"Living within a survival mindset"*

(Assemblage of reconstructed field texts[2])

The words above represent only a small list of responsibilities that cut across the youths' lives. Paralleling Clandinin's (2010) research with youth who left school early, many of the youth we came to know shared how they balanced numerous and conflicting responsibilities. As the youth shifted between and across multiple worlds of responsibility, we began to wonder how schools responded in ways that allowed the youth to sustain their ongoing life-making outside of limited notions of responsibility. In listening to the youth, we began to hear stories of experience that shifted our understanding of how spaces of becoming and living playfully mattered within the youths' lives as several shared that they "had to grow up faster" and become responsible at a young age. As lived in the GYM after-school space each day and week, it was as if this space supported the becoming of being a different someone on the broader school and community landscape. As youth moved and played with children, it was shared with us that GYM was experienced as a "distraction from life," "to feel like a kid," or as a place to "release the stress during the games," or as another youth shared; "Whenever I play with the little kids, it's really fun, because they are there to play with you. I always enjoy seeing the kids, and I always feel like if I had a bad day at school or just a bad night, and I just forget about it and hang out with the kids. And sometimes I am sad, but I'm not usually sad at GYM anymore…I'm a total different person there [at GYM]" (Tamara, research conversation). As we think

with the many words the youth shared, we begin to consider the value of supporting threads on, and off, school landscapes for youth to be and become playful as children and youth.

Thread to Reimagine In-Between Spaces as Landscapes That Matter

In Murphy et al.'s (2012) research they show us the tensions experienced by children and their families as they negotiate familial curriculum-making worlds and school curriculum-making worlds. As they draw us into their stories of experience alongside a child and their mother, we feel those tensions of how familial curriculum-making worlds were and commonly are arrogantly perceived as unresponsive and inadequate, with the school curriculum-making world positioned as superior. As we read their work, we found ourselves drawn to their forward-looking threads which turned towards wondering about the "possibilities of in-between spaces where children can inquire into their embodied tensions as they world travel each day, each week, each month, each year between the two curriculum-making worlds of home and community, and school" (p. 230).

As we sit in their wonders, we considered our own experiences alongside the youth and how GYM was in very literal and metaphorical ways positioned as an in-between space. In the literal sense, we each felt that as our lives transitioned each day within the community school building. A building that was physically structured in a way where the second floor was designated as the high school and the lower, or main floor, was positioned as more of a community centre. In the lower floor you stepped into a grand, glass foyer with municipal offices, two multipurpose gymnasiums, a cafeteria, a public library, and a variety of school and community rooms all adjacent. Each day, teachers and high school youth travelled from the upper floor of the high school and the school curriculum-making worlds that lived in those spaces, down the wide staircase, into the foyer, and into the multipurpose room in which the GYM after-school program resided. As a research team we wondered about that literal and metaphorical travel that the youth and teachers experienced each day, each week, each month, and each year.

We each asked the youth how they experienced these literal and metaphorical transitions, those feelings of who they were, how they were known, and who they could become when the bell rang and they made their way down the stairs and into the multipurpose room for GYM. In many ways, we wondered how GYM was named in the lives of youth as it sat in what we, as a research team, conceptualized as the borderlands of school and community-familial worlds. For us a research team, we experienced and named GYM as a place of liminality within our lives as there was a sense of uncertainty and unease to the plotlines of who we were and how our lives could come together. We wondered if our storying of GYM as a place of liminality was coherent within the youth's lives as they navigated GYM as a place on the school landscape, yet at the same time off the school landscape. Much like other narrative inquirers (e.g., Clandinin et al., 2018; Davis & Murphy, 2016; Huber et al., 2003) who drew on Heilbrun's[3] (1999) work on liminality, we were drawn to considering the educative possibilities of liminal places where youth could story themselves and their relations differently, with strength. As we each turned to the youth to inquire into their experiences of transition, the value and potential naming of GYM as an in-between liminal place became clearer as Michael sat down with Maya, one of the youths:

A prompt on school and GYM, are they experienced differently…?

"School is more like memorizing things.
You're not actually learning for your experience…
Maybe I'm supposed to do something with all this information, but I don't know what it is!

We talk for a while
Discussions on school feeling pointless
As a place that pulled them away from their strengths

"it's like... all the people in high school they have to meet certain requirements to reach their dreams, so they're so worried about reaching those requirements, and if they're good enough for their jobs that they want to have in the future.
It's like... That they kind of think about that too much. And then it takes their attention away from their strengths and everything that they accomplished. And sometimes they just need a reminder of how much hard work they actually did up until that moment. And to not worry so much or stress so much about getting the right requirements and stuff for the future."

"In GYM it doesn't feel like that"

(*Michael, Reconstructed research conversation, 03/20/2021)*

While this is only one of many of our conversations, Maya articulated that GYM was experienced outside of what her, and many of the youth, knew and associated with the school curriculum-making world. GYM was experienced and named differently in their lives, and for many they named themselves differently in those spaces, as brothers, kin, teachers, role models, and friends. As we turn towards thinking with what Maya shared with Michael, we are reminded of how significant in-between spaces were for the youth as their lives and learning were experienced as embedded.

Conclusion: Threads of Continued Wonder

As we consider the significance of in-between spaces in the lives of the youth, we also turn towards ourselves as a community engaged in this work. In beginning this writing, we discussed how each of us were located in the youth's lives in different ways. Some of us were positioned as teachers, others as after-school community programmers, and others as researchers from the university. While the youth turned our attentiveness towards the value of in-between spaces to reimagine who one is and who one is becoming, as a community of researchers we similarly turned towards the significance of in-between space to reimagine who we were and were becoming in each other's lives. In doing this, we each found ourselves attempting to negotiate and understand our relational responsibilities as we lived alongside the youth. For some that meant meeting on the outdoor basketball court, for others it was through after-school play, sitting down for a meal, or travelling together to different landscapes such as the halls of the university. In travelling to places, we became attentive to the complexity of the youths' lives as they lived on different landscapes. As we state this, we return back to the many moments Michael had alongside Wilt as he played basketball with children from the neighboring elementary schools. With each dribble, pass, and shot we are reminded to stay grounded in becoming attentive to the unfolding lives within these borderland spaces of school and community so we do not reduce life-making of youth, like Wilt,

to predetermined concepts such as leadership. As we began this work, we noted our tensions of resisting starting in concepts of leadership. Now, as we continue to live in the midst of this work, we remind ourselves to resist reproducing research and practice that begins and ends in concepts.

Notes

1. Within this research we turned to a variety of field texts as a way attend to the multiple ways people live and tell of their experiences (Clandinin, 2013). For us that meant: composing field notes of our experiences living alongside (reflective journaling of our observations, experiences, and wonders), *art*-full annals (creative drawings and accounts that opened space for the research team and the youth to draw, write, and share memories, events, and stories within their lives), and research conversations (multiple transcribed interviews with each youth). The term *reconstructed research conversations* signify the where of the specific field text (i.e., research conversations) and acknowledges that we, as researchers, were not separate or disembodied recorders of experience, but actively part of the experience itself.

2. The process of creating this *assemblage of reconstructed field texts* developed out of questions of how do we show and tell how becoming responsible adults was storied and experienced by the youth on the school landscape. Each of the sentences in the *assemblage of reconstructed field texts* are from the youth, stated in research conversations, written through annals, or shared in the field. As we listened across the youth, we each began to hear stories of the diverse responsibilities that existed in the youth's lives. We also began to wonder how these responsibilities were silenced on the school landscape as becoming responsible adults was framed around becoming responsible and accountable to content and curriculum. The final research text was a way for us to show that process of silencing that was experienced by the youth on the school landscape for the reader. With each phrase shared we hope the reader notices the font becoming smaller, harder to read, and ultimately less visible. Our hope is that this form of (re)presentation shows the reader how the youths storying of being and becoming responsible was delegitimized and ultimately silenced amidst the narrow ways in which responsibility was framed on the school landscape. We also hope that you as a reader have a sense of wanting to read the miniscule text and feeling the strain of being able to read more; this strain was also present for those who lived as teachers within our research community, as they too negotiated dominant stories of being and becoming responsible to curriculum.

3. Heilbrun (1999) described liminality as, "the word 'limen' means 'threshold,' and to be in a state of liminality is to be poised upon uncertain ground, to be leaving one condition or country or self and entering upon another. But the most salient sign of liminality is its unsteadiness, its lack of clarity about exactly where one belongs and what one should be doing, or wants to be doing" (p. 3).

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Capturing the Shift:
Interviews During Pivotal Covid-19 Debut

Stephanie Ho

Abstract

During a two-term observational study of my Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) class, I introduced "Surrealism" to the existing curriculum. Jot notes, personal interviews, and a self-study comprised my data strands. The Covid-19 pandemic struck shortly before my scheduled in-person interviews. This uncertainty disrupted my doctoral study plans, but offered a valuable opportunity for critical reflection. The fears and questions prompted by the pandemic were captured in the vulnerable "safe space" of our at-home Zoom interviews. This process thus prompted my contemplation about interviews as a continued method for combatting the stagnancy of educational spaces.

Background

It could be argued that education is an assemblage of interactions constantly in flux. The lack of linear progression and prescriptive nature to teaching and learning is precisely what allows for pause, contemplation, and meaning making. Teachers, therefore, could be understood as changemakers, as well as seasoned "pivoters." These individuals hold the power and responsibility to move their practices according to the needs and developments of their surrounding contexts. There is a degree of vulnerability that also comes with recognizing this pivoting power, which illuminates the inability of a teacher to be the sole arbiter of unmoving knowledge. Rather, the pivoting teacher is a listener who recognizes that learning cannot exist in a vacuum, separate from the arbitrary and exciting human players.

As an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher, I conceptualize these players, including everyone from students and school staff to curriculum developers and policy makers, to be characters. Characters breathe life into plots, and render events into "stories," through their feelings, interactions, and conflicts. The setting is also an important factor, in a story of education or otherwise. The specific pocket of time and space within which a story is housed, has the power to directly affect the narrative flow. I will discuss the power of setting later in this article, by illuminating a topical, ever-evolving global example. Returning to conflict, a necessary element in every narrative arc, it could be argued that stories of education are composed of conflicts; in fact, I would argue them to be a necessity. Sheriff Folarin (2013) noted that, "conflict means collision course; it also refers to opposition to existing view, stand, or position" (p. 2). Within the ELA classroom, a lack of clashing perspectives, be they interpersonal or personal, would likely mean a lack of critical contemplation. While conflict holds a rather loaded significance in society, as well as our everyday vernacular, I personally feel it to be a societal inevitability, and an ingredient for change. Within our daily interactions, for example, many of us attempt to "avoid conflict" in the name of peace and harmony. However, what we may not be asking ourselves in the process of avoiding the

uncomfortable stickiness that comes from any emotional, physical, or conceptual clash, is whether or not we are attempting to maintain the peace, or the status quo.

Therefore, while humans may shy away from conflict, whichever form it may take, as a matter of natural instinct, I ask myself if we are not stalling our stories in the process. To this end, I argue that seasoned teachers hone their specific pivoting power in their ability to recognize the intimate relationship between conflict and life. Teachers need conflict to move our practices forward. This is not to say that we are perpetually pushing for "person vs. person" conflicts in the classroom and would condone bullying and violence as means for pedagogical growth (Folarin, 2013). Rather, conflict in the classroom serves as a combat to stagnancy, and requires students and teachers to stop, think, and ask questions. Essentially, conflicts spark personal reactions in their visceral, relatable nature. These interactions, whether they take the form of characters in conflict within a novel, or battling perspectives of readers in response to the events of the story, cannot be premeditated. This unpredictable nature of education is what renders the curriculum human, and "real," and it could be argued that conflict is what allows this to happen.

Other important forms of narrative conflict, which hold an important place within the ELA classroom, are person vs. environment and person vs. society encounters (Folarin, 2013). While localized conflicts between and within individuals can cause spikes in the flow of a narrative, some disruptions can be triggered by external stimuli. I recall teaching a Grade 8 class early on in my practice about the difference between these two forms of conflict. Students conceptualized environmental conflicts to include tornadoes or mudslides (neither of which were likely to happen in our Montreal context), and societal conflicts to involve dictators and coups d'état (again, not entirely likely). I realize that students don't interact with these forms of conflict as often as they would with the personal or interpersonal iterations (Folarin, 2013). This being said, I feel nobody could have predicted the overwhelming external stimuli of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the narrative (life) shifts that would result from its impact. The pandemic constituted, in my mind, a strong example of a person vs. environment and society conflict, as humans all over the world were shocked into reshaping their ideas of education, work, and life. During the first wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, I had yet to complete the data collection for my doctoral thesis. My plan was to conduct in-person interviews following a two-term-long in-person observational period. I had been piloting a new form of Surrealism-inspired pedagogies into my Secondary 5 (Grade 11) ELA class, in an attempt to elicit critical thought and contemplation. From my experience, ELA class had become somewhat of a sleepy subject, with students often confusing talking with dialoguing and meaning making. The frustrating part of this exchange, as a teacher, was that students often displayed contemplative power within their informal exchanges, but would not pursue these thoughts further; much less, put them on the page. As a result, ELA became a lofty, somewhat elitist and luxurious subject devoid of any actual "life" substance. I feel my students envisioned the ELA class as a breather space, which allowed them to relax from more cognitively draining subjects such as Mathematics. This is not to say that the students were drawing any more life-to-class connections within their Mathematics studies, but it does speak to the stagnancy of narrative flow within our ELA teaching and learning experiences. I recognized this problem, which subsequently prompted my pursuit of big questions within my doctorate degree. In a sense, this "conflict" between ELA possibilities and realities, or theory and practice, sparked my desire for change. However, within my neat and contained study of change-making possibilities, the

pandemic "setting" forced our world into an all-encompassing state of questioning. From one day to the next, I was teaching my classes from the second bedroom of my condo. I also needed to shift my interviewing method, as I was uncertain about when I would actually share a physical space with my students. I therefore conducted my post-observational phase interviews via Zoom, and in the process, managed to inadvertently capture a pivotal moment of educational change.

Zoom: Electronic Intimate Interview Spaces

At the time of my data collection period, the spring of 2020, the Zoom platform appeared foreign and oddly intimate. I recall being hesitant to opt into our school's initial experimentation of using Google Meet, which would quickly be replaced by Zoom. As we would soon discover, the school recognized the former platform's limitations, and opted to move forward with the latter program in an effort to keep up with the times, and the world. Little did teachers and students know, upon saying our swift goodbyes before March break, that those moments would form the end of our in-person time together. I recall, after moving through several weeks of the strange pandemic teaching and learning experience, quickly shifting my view of online learning platforms; and the students appeared to feel the same. Suddenly, we felt the need to reveal the intimate spaces we had previously housed behind stiff "life" boundaries. Before, work lives and private lives were not to permitted to mix. However, with the introduction of Covid-19 "conflict," I personally found that rule to be dissolved.

After requesting an amendment to my ethics board application, thus receiving approval to shift my platform from in-person interviews to digital, I reached out to my volunteer participants. The interviews, despite taking place via distance, took on an unexpected tone of closeness. Each interview lasted longer than I had originally anticipated, possibly due to our mutual need for connection when navigating the uncertain pandemic circumstances. Zoom therefore served as a visible marker of the unknown times, as a large population of the world was experimenting with the platform in real time. However, Zoom also served as the vessel for connection building, which was suddenly halted due to the global pandemic. Suddenly, physical closeness, body language, and even touch were removed from the teaching and learning process. Especially when my study aimed to explore the collective building of critical ELA experiences, it seemed unnerving that the world could have entered a space where teachers and learners could no longer share a physical room. As my students and I navigated the Zoom animal, learning to conceptualize normalcy from the abnormal, we could not have imagined that this reality would become our new norm for nearly three years to come.

Now, having lived through several iterations of online, hybrid, and in-person returns (with occasional shutdowns), I realize that my interviews captured a unique moment in (global) teaching and learning. While the moment was unique to us, as I spoke with students about ELA teaching, and learning, the "life" outside the classroom walls (which now had become digitized), seemed to permeate the questions in a considerable manner. I had attempted, for years leading up to the study, to bridge the conceptual gap between the classroom space and the students' lived realities. Suddenly, students' lives were being permeated with a unified global unknown, and ELA seemed to serve as an ideal experimental space to contemplate these my(steries/stories). My interviews all started with some initial chatting and odd

technological blunders (signs of the "setting"). The Zoom platform also allowed for our conversations to be recorded, and upon looking back at the exchanges, I marveled at the vulnerability and authenticity that was captured. An outsider may easily have mistaken our exchanges to have taken place between research participants, rather than participants and their principal investigator. The fact that we all wore comfortable sweat clothes and had backdrops of dying houseplants or rogue pets and/or younger siblings, greatly helped in democratizing teacher-student power dynamics (Freire, 2018). In fact, I would argue that this method helped in reconceptualizing my research approach, rendering me a research participant alongside my students, and a learner within the educational experience. It seemed odd to me that by removing ourselves from the school place, all we could seem to think about was a return to school. As previously noted, this global contextual conflict urged my students and me to pause and contemplate. My students would frequently complain about not having time to meet assignment deadlines, whilst negotiating other life concerns such as orthodontist appointments (braces needed to come off before graduation, of course), and social engagements. All of these plans were instantly halted in the spring of 2020, however, and we all found ourselves with nothing but time. With that time, and uncertainty, came a great deal of fear. I could hear the worry through my students' responses, as they wondered about their highly anticipated graduation plans, and whether or not they would receive a real ceremonial end to their high school careers. They wondered about birthday parties and holidays, as well as final exams and Cegep. I feel Covid-19 provided the perfect storm of private and public (narrative) conflicts. While it was difficult to witness the struggles of my students as they navigated this time, I argue that this unexpected external stimulus provided a pivotal opportunity for critical contemplation.

Data Collection: Interviews: Student Voices and a Contemplation of ELA

Prior to leaving my students for the March break, I completed my in-class observational period. During that time, I created jot notes following every class (Vanner, 2020). The notes consisted of small exchanges, group discussions, breakthroughs, and even off-topic discussions about shoes. In short, my jot notes aimed to capture the "life" of our shared ELA experience. However, these notes expressed my voice exclusively, even when recounting the stories of others. I am aware of the fact that interpretation plays a great role in remembering these events, as the occurrences have all been filtered through my memory. The interview portion of my data collection therefore formed an attempt to express students' voices in a more direct manner. Originally, I had prepared interview questions that targeted Surrealism and our specific class goals. However, upon reflection, I revised my questions to focus upon students' general interest levels in ELA. This shift proved to be particularly conducive to our pandemic circumstances and students' engagement with big "life" questions. With open-ended questions, I encouraged students to think about their experiences within ELA, their understanding of the subject and its perceived possibilities, and their personal relationships with the subject.

Conducting Interviews: Ethical Concerns and Shifts in Methods (Covid-19)

As previously noted, my interviews were originally slated to take place at school, following the submission of term two report card grades. It was important to me that the interviews be conducted on a volunteer basis after the submission of grades. I recognized that concepts of voluntariness could arise.

While students could feel pressured into participating to better their grades, they could also feel obligated to participate in my research study by virtue of our teacher-student dynamic. Despite attempting to dismantle traditional power structures within my practice, the reality remains that students exist in a dependent relationship with me, their teacher. Students could thus interpret the choice to participate in my study to constitute an unspoken obligation. I therefore aimed to avoid any undue influence students may have felt in participating within my study. I emphasized that this portion of data collection, like all other portions, was purely inquiry based and that I was interested in learning alongside the students. Following the March break, which marked the end of the second term and would have originally been the beginning of my interview period, the Covid-19 pandemic began. As previously noted, I shifted my entire interview process to our online Zoom platform. While I had initially obtained ethics board approval to conduct my interviews in-person, I requested an amendment to my application when our lockdown began. Upon obtaining my ethics board amendment, students were presented with the opportunity to take part in online interviews. I managed to conduct four sessions, interviewing a total of seven students. Some students opted to run interviews in pairs, while one chose to be interviewed individually. After receiving consent from parents and assent from students to participate in the interviews, I requested revised consent to use our recorded Zoom conversations as backup data to accompany my written interview notes.

During the interviews, which took place during scheduled sessions outside of regular distance learning course hours, I asked students eight interview questions. I attempted to address ELA as a curricular subject and experience, with questions such as, "Think about what you feel is the 'point' of ELA class. Below, check all the categories that you feel apply to the point of ELA." The majority of participants focused upon the utilitarian function of ELA, including developing public speaking skills and learning grammatical efficacy. Imaginative experimentation and building real-world connections did not seem to constitute a goal of ELA, according to my participants. I also asked some questions that were specific to our shared experience, such as, "In English, we focus a lot on storytelling. What do you feel is the story I was attempting to tell this year?" This question garnered a variety of interesting responses, as students pulled from our class discussions about power dynamics to our focus on traditions. Despite perceiving ELA to involve preparation for career-based skills, students also recognized that we had spent our time together deconstructing societal norms. I listed the questions in a Google Doc and created a separate copy for each interview group. I then shared my Zoom screen so that the questions were visible as I read them aloud. For questions with a variety of available choices, such as the question, "Criticality means (check the definition(s) that apply)," I entered the options students chose onto their respective documents. I chose to offer a range of responses for several of my questions, as I recognized students may feel lost with entirely open-ended inquiries. Rather than block critical contemplation due to sheer confusion, I opted to offer some choices in terms of possible contemplative routes. The choices students identified thus served as prompts to fuel critical thinking, as students verbally expanded on their selections of specific options. Their expanded answers were captured both via video and my personal, handwritten interview notes. My decision to offer a variety of options for certain questions was intended to provide students with range in their chosen responses (especially important when it came to defining terms), while also targeting their answers towards specific research interests I developed. Keeping in mind the Zoom platform, I felt that expansion and critical contemplation were necessary for my interviews, as was

specificity and focus. By offering students some options with which to build their responses, my hope was to make transparent what I was asking them, but also fuel their critical thinking in those directions. The sessions lasted between 30 to 60 minutes and were conducted in a casual manner that was designed to encourage critical contemplation and sharing.

Data Analysis: Interview Notes and Student Interview Google Docs

When approaching my interview notes and the Google Docs with students' recorded choices for answers, I employed an adapted version of Carl Rhodes' (2000) ghostwriting strategy. I watched the recorded Zoom interviews and analyzed them alongside my written interview notes and my participants' respective interview Google Docs. Rhodes (2000) noted that when creating his autobiographical-style account of a subject, he produced his text shortly after his interview. In my case, I had a year of temporal distance between conducting the interviews and creating my ghostwritten accounts. For this reason, it was important for me to view my video recordings and experience the interviews for a second time. I then, as with my observation notes, extracted common themes and threads of inquiry and developed a narrative structure for the content. Rhodes (2000) discussed determining salient points that resonated from the interview, and forming a narrative stemming from those points. When viewing my interview recordings, I took observational notes before producing mini narrative accounts. Rhodes (2000) noted that, "a key part of the ghostwriting practice [is] to 'regenre' the story from that of an interview conversation to that of a conventional written narrative" (p. 517). As a number of casual thoughts and musings were raised in my interviews in response to my prompts on ELA, I aimed to restructure the flow of these interviews to form interactions between my participants. My aim was to render myself a Rhodes (2000) ghost and remove my physical presence from the interactions. As three sets of interviews took place in pairs, I chose to (re)construct exchanges between the participants based on the thoughts they expressed to me. The only exception was my third interview, which took place individually. For this narrative, I chose to assume the presence of the participant and my narrative constituted reflective, personal contemplation. Rhodes (2000) articulated that a researcher should work mainly from memory when constructing a narrative account from interviews. The interview notes and Google Docs were therefore used to verify structure and content. My adaptation of the technique was intended to create succinct accounts of the interview interactions with which I could more easily work and form my larger narrative account following analysis. The ghostwriting approach shows how removing myself from the interview process could refocus the "voice" of the perspectives expressed, while also illuminating my role in shaping these responses (p. 517). This was once again an exercise in subjective interpretation, as I gleaned from the interviews what I felt to be significant, thus rendering the raw interview data (Zoom recordings) into concise bodies of text. I created stories from the commentaries of my students, which contained logical flow and organization. I would later work exclusively with these mini write-ups as I moved forward with my data analysis.

In addition to offering a moment of reflective exchange, the interviews allowed for honest and personal accounts of our shared teaching and learning experience. While my questions focused on ELA, including our goals, responsibilities, and possibilities, our conversations merged into considerations of identity and personal values. As previously noted, many of my participants prioritized the technical components of

ELA, involving rules and structures. All of the interviewees, with the exception of two, were native English speakers, reflecting that they had "less to learn" within the ELA classroom. The perspective that ELA holds less importance for societal preparation, as opposed to Science or Mathematics, was a common perspective within our responses. I wonder whether or not this "misunderstanding" (or perhaps a misalignment) of ELA's purpose and potential contributed to students' lack of criticality within our classes. Similar to our seemingly "low-stakes" in-class discussions, students offered a variety of critical opinions within our interviews; thus, they inadvertently fulfilled a goal of ELA. Returning to the "setting" of our story, feelings of uncertainty were also present throughout my interviews. While these emotions were likely prompted by the unknowns of the Covid-19 pandemic, I noticed my students using our ELA-based interviews as an opportunity to muse, share, and commiserate about their looming fears. I frequently referred, within our interviews and our in-class conversations, to "the real world." Now, all of a sudden, students were collectively faced with the realities of the previously hypothetical world outside of the classroom. With the last days of high school on the horizon, I noticed a degree of anxiousness with regard to leaving the comforts of the school place (even if it had become virtual). I then wondered whether or not the students' conceptual misalignment, with regard to the aims of ELA, was an act of self-preservation. ELA embodies the real world, but until the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted a number of students' routines, the challenges of that world could more easily be avoided. Perhaps students' choices to focus on grammar and rules could reflect a desire to render ELA concrete; and, as previously noted, avoid conflictual stickiness. The fact that there are few "correct" answers in ELA could seem exciting, but also daunting, especially when everything students had taken for granted had suddenly, with the pandemic, been rendered unstable.

Student Interviews

The following four passages form my interview mini write-ups. All of the students' names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

INTERVIEW 1:

"Jacques, what is the real world?" Braden had wondered why his English teacher had gone on and on for an entire year harping on about the real world, using air quotations and pointing out the window when referencing "pertinent" material from the class. "Braden, the real world is not something that an English teacher needs to teach me about." Jacques decided to emphasize his point by placing a mask on mid-conversation, perhaps to offer an air of emphasis to his philosophical stance. "In English class we talk about the real world," Jacques said, echoing Braden's personal thoughts, "but we don't learn about social skills. I just pick those up and I don't need English class to teach me those." "Okay, then why are we here?" Braden hesitated before placing his suitcase-style backpack on the desk. "To start to become critical, I guess, and creative. That's what the teacher says at least. I don't know, I'm not really creative every day. Or critical." "What does that mean though?" Braden was hugging his backpack now, "Like showing someone they're wrong? I don't really think about that all the time." "Me neither," Jacques responded, "maybe I just don't put in the effort. I know I should, but I need to feel like the teacher cares too, you know? I didn't enjoy a lot of English classes because the teacher didn't care about getting to

know us." "Like last year? Funny, I liked that class. I guess it depends on the person." Braden started to unpack his suitcase to get ready for class. "I'm still not sure what we're supposed to learn here though. We keep talking about things being normal and not normal, but why do I need to know that?" Jacques sighed and removes his mask. "I don't know, maybe that's the point. Maybe the point is to expand, not to be taught." "Oh." Braden said, looking out the window.

INTERVIEW 2:

"Scarlett, pay attention! You'll need this for the real world!" "But we're not in the real world yet, Vicky! That won't come till after university!" Scarlett was gazing out the window as Vicky frantically recorded notes. "Scarlett, we're going to be in the real world soon, like when we start working will need to *talk* professionally and not make mistakes with grammar! We'll be doing that our whole lives!" "But this is just a fun activity, Vicky, it's not like it's public speaking." "That doesn't matter, we can still learn something that will help us later." Scarlett resumed her daydreaming. "Vicky, when we're in the real world, we'll need to pay for our food, but what about people who can't pay? Food is just normal for us, but there are homeless people who can't eat." Vicky stopped notetaking to consider her friend's reflection. "I guess that's their normal. It's horrible, but we are lucky, so I guess it's kind of normal to be lucky." "But it's not normal for anyone to not eat!" Scarlett's strong sense of sympathy had surfaced. "We're supposed to be preparing for the real world, even if we're not going to be in it for a long time, but when we do go there, it won't ever look like it does for those people. That's their real world and it's sad." "Yeah, I don't know." Vicky paused, "I guess I take a lot of things for granted in my life, it just *is*." "I just don't really understand what I'm supposed to be doing." Scarlett expressed, slightly concerned. "For the assignment?" Vicky began handing over her detailed notes. "No." Scarlett shook her head, "When I get into the real world. I don't even know what that will look like. We all experience the world differently and my real world is going to be different than yours, so how do I prepare, here in English class?" Vicky had stopped typing. "I'm not sure. I guess we can just try to get something from all of this. At least we know that grammar is important in all real worlds so we can focus on that."

INTERVIEW 3:

Gregory sighed as he examined his schedule. "English. It's fine, it is what it is." It wasn't so much that Gregory disliked the subject, but he saw little utility in English class, seeing as he was fluent in the language. "I'm not even planning on being a writer." He thought to himself. "Why will I need this in the future?" He scanned the board, pausing on the terms "analysis" and "connections." "Can't you do English without analysis and connection building?" He wondered, "It won't be as interesting, but it would still work." As the teacher spoke, Gregory felt a small wave of tension rise in his chest. He was reviewing the feedback on a recent submission. He knew that in resisting critique, he was limiting his own ability to be critical and by extension, creative. It just wasn't easy to see his work littered with comments when he felt he had put forth a decent effort. It wasn't that hard, it was just writing, and he did it well. Isn't that the point? Gregory felt slightly disconnected from his submission, despite the teacher having stressed the relevance of its "human-centered" themes. "Where are the humans in this class?" Gregory thought to himself again. He wished English would focus more on how humans actually communicated and

behaved. He concluded he could do that in Ethics class, but couldn't the system just do away with English then? Gregory felt his naturally skeptical nature caused him to take English class (and everything else) with a grain of salt. He then stopped upon one of the teacher's comments: "Great critical perspective!" "Was I being critical? I was just breaking apart what I saw. I didn't really say anything new; I just questioned what's already there. Maybe *that's* the real point. I'm still not sure."

INTERVIEW 4:

"Shawn, do you agree with what he just said?" Sookie's attention had been sparked by her classmate's presentation on a particularly touching societal norm. "No, I don't." Shawn whispered, "But it's not really my place to say anything. We don't come from here, so maybe it's a question of culture." "Yes, but our own culture isn't normal either." Sookie whispered back, "At least not according to me. It's like we're living outside of both cultures. I don't even know what's supposed to be considered normal." Shawn stopped and contemplated the girls' shared debacle. She had been doing a great deal of reflection recently, in the process of negotiating her new home and, at the same time, observing her familiar context from across the ocean. "I guess some groups of people can benefit from norms but the same norms can harm those who stand outside of them." Shawn stopped and continued to glance around her class, noticing the somewhat monotonal cultural representation. "Doesn't that mean we will never be normal?" Sookie responded, somewhat concerned. "No," Shawn offered softly. "We are normal in some ways and not normal in others. It's not as simple as we learn about in books, real people don't look like that. I mean, that's part of it, but it's not the full story." Sookie sat silently. Shawn's reflections had spurred her own set of questions in her mind, as she began noticing the convergences and contradictions between her ideas of normality and her personal practices. She wondered if she lacked the words to express her questions to others, or the analytical skills to build and develop these questions; or, perhaps she required more cultural leverage to take a stand. Either way, she was beginning to think much of the "real world" around her was not normal, but she also recognized her own comfort in this abnormality. Perhaps it would be easier to just stay silent.

Concluding Thoughts: Interviews as Discovery

Following the interview collection period, as well as the data analysis period, I have begun to examine my entire study experience afresh. I wonder if students would still have asked big questions and engaged in vulnerable, critical thought, were we not to have been struck with a global pandemic. I wonder, as well, whether I would have recognized the richness of students' reflections and queries, were I not to have conducted interviews in this manner. I also question my method and ask myself how the process could have been different were it not to have been so oddly intimate (from a distance). It is highly atypical for teachers and students to see into one another's homes, in the comforts of their own respective spaces, asking big questions while sitting with mugs of tea and bowls of breakfast cereal at odd hours of the day. In a way, I feel these interviews allowed for a shift in my own teaching and learning, as I discovered an essential component of the education process; that being the symbiotic and fluid nature of the teacher-student relationship. While I believe the global pandemic served as the external stimulus, or "narrative

conflict," which I previously deemed necessary to disrupt the status quo of our everyday educational experiences, I feel my interviews allowed me to capture this pivot. Essentially, the world was pivoting on a monumental scale, as every level of society was affected by the enormity of this unprecedented conflict. However, as I firmly believe ELA and all levels of education offer a microcosmic window onto the outside world, the personal, human-centered shifts were what captured my attention. I argue that the conflict of the pandemic thrust my student-characters into a setting of self-discovery, which thus fueled an exciting and powerful narrative. I wonder, therefore, if interviews could find their place in our everyday teaching, beyond situations of Covid-19. Perhaps the check-in opportunities my interviews offered me could be of use in capturing a whole myriad of other pivotal moments. It is possible that the intimacy of small, teacher-student interactions, and a round of "meaty" questions on the table, could aid in connecting school spaces and students' lived realities far beyond the singular pivotal moment in question.

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The Magnus Effect Behind the Transition to Higher Education in Türkiye: Uncovering Equity Issues

Türker Kurt, Pinar Ayyildiz, and Tuncer Fidan

Abstract

We analyzed the links between access to higher education, exams, and equity in education in Türkiye. Next, we made numerous recommendations and referred to a phenomenon: "The Magnus Effect" to delve into the problems of the relevant processes. After conducting a review of the literature, we came up with four core sources that produce equity issues: tracking, stratification, socioeconomic status, and the qualifying elimination system. One of the ironies was that access to higher education institutions is enabled via high-stakes national exams, which seem to legitimize the process while leading to countless more inequities.

A total stranger might not easily comprehend the significance of an assemblage of diverse individuals from all walks of life patiently waiting, though anxious, and holding their breath on a warm day in June at schools all over Türkiye. These crowds comprise parents, grandparents, siblings, officers, and a fair number of other immediate stakeholders in a lifetime experience: the national university entrance exam (Transition to High School Exam, THE). As a matter of fact, they are the ones accompanying candidates taking the exam. The authors of this paper all went through these extremely tough times with their families as well so that they also could be deemed "appropriate" to go into a higher education institution, to continue to work hard, and to graduate with a diploma, which may or may not warrant their employment. In fact, one the authors, who is female, might be feeling relatively "luckier" (if not *privileged*)—bearing in mind her parents are both academics—as she became a faculty member, unlike other women who struggle with the risk of dropping out of school, early marriage, and/or child labor despite all the ongoing effort to mitigate these problems in 21st century Türkiye.

This is a clear picture of Türkiye on the days of these high-stakes examinations. To this end, this paper attempts to address the "total stranger" mentioned above with a view to depicting, questioning, and criticizing the existing—and at times surprising—situation in Türkiye, a developing country that has millions of refugee students, together with a highly heterogeneous profile of learners and teachers. The country was recently identified by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) as having an extremely high number of young people who are not employed, educated, or trained (NEET). As such, it would be fair to state that our initiative as Turkish researchers can help "outsiders"—for instance living in the Global North—to reconsider the case with their own countries, make comparisons, and hopefully become more knowledgeable and prepared for cross-national cooperation and collaboration to maintain an equitable mindset and related practicum for education matters around the world.

Background

It is important to chronicle the particularities of the university system in Türkiye. National university entrance exams have been implemented in Türkiye, though in varying forms, since 1964. These are high-stakes and often two-stage examinations. The exams in question are entitled Higher Education Institutions Examinations; there are core competence tests and tests that assess the knowledge acquired with respect to specific subjects. Candidates are expected to reach the specified grade threshold in the former and basically strive for being more successful than the other candidates in the latter to be placed in their desired area of study at a university.

All the exams are administered by the Measurement, Selection and Settlement Centre, which is as an autonomous government agency in Türkiye. For the past decade, a series of sessions have been administered nationwide as part of the whole process within the system that allows or disallows access to higher education through monitoring candidate eligibility. This process basically consists of obtaining the relevant scores from two to three sessions of exams conducted (comprising 78% of the final score) along with the high school grade point average (HGPA comprising 12% of the final score) for each candidate where the HPGA has relatively less weight in the total score. For each of the candidates, a total score is calculated, and if sufficient, allows them to continue with the process. Next, they are able to make decisions on the most appropriate higher education institutions, in line with the aforementioned total score and "ideally" in line with their interests, preferences, and aptitudes.

However, there are always innumerable system-wide changes that a student inevitably experiences before graduating from high school. For instance, in a study carried out between 1999 and 2011, technical aspects such as the number of exam questions and the scope and the duration of the exam changed "dozens of times" (Taşpınar Cengiz & İhtiyaroğlu, 2012). Without a doubt, such a structure which is constantly changing and causing uncertainties makes students, families, teachers, and other parties anxious or leaves them in difficult situations (Güler & Çakır, 2013; Gür & Özoğlu, 2015; Taşpınar Cengiz & İhtiyaroğlu, 2012).

In spite of these constant changes, the modus operandi still seems to cater to the expectations from a highly competitive system that is originally intended to serve all citizens equally. To a certain extent, the model directs all the candidates to sit a number of exams and to perform well during high school years. While claiming to be strive for equality, the current system in Türkiye is actually far from operating on a wholly equitable basis. Furthermore, it is evident in the international body of literature that central university entrance exams are indeed causing a number of equity issues (e.g., González Canché, 2019; TED, 2010; Wightman, 2003).

Taking these factors into consideration, it can be surmised that these exams also represent some of the issues pertaining to equity, in particular when recalling the multiple, and, at times, last-minute, changes made to the system.

The analogy of the Magnus Effect helps shed light on the current situation in Türkiye. Well known in the field of Physics, the Magnus Effect provides the rationale behind the different routes taken by two objects

(i.e., two similar balls that stand exactly at the same point prior to being pushed at the same speed in the same direction). Undoubtedly, there are incalculable factors which come into play during their motion: the material they are made of, the current of air at that moment, the nuances in the force applied and numerous other elements. However, even if the other factors are somewhat neutralized, the material the object is made of is extremely important. This is due to the fact that it determines the balls' point of destination. Similarly, the destination the university candidate arrives at, depending on their background, is also predetermined to a very large extent. We believe the visual (Ireson, 2000, p. 10) below offers a useful depiction of the present-day situation for university candidates in Türkiye:

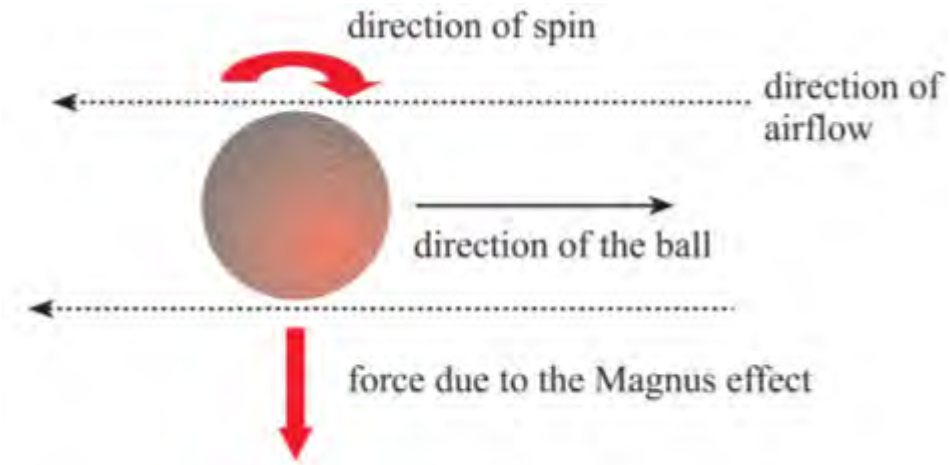

Fig. 1: Magnus effect (Ireson, 2000, p. 10).

As described earlier, millions of candidates in Türkiye take the same exam administered at the same time in all the predetermined locations across the country, for the chance to gain access to higher education. Why do some succeed in reaching the gates of universities while others lose their way (like some of the aforementioned balls that are moved), going into separate directions? Is it simply because of the "scores" obtained on the way—similarly to what happens in a video game? Are there are any reasonable or, more importantly, humane explanations that can shed light on what might be causing deviations in the desired path, as is the case with the Magnus Effect? Our answer here is, "no" indeed. However, we can refer to the Magnus Effect again to highlight the inequities through the allegory. Along the same lines as what happens to the pushed objects due to the Magnus Effect, the system invites the individuals wishing to enter university to the "game." Next, the "fate" (the decision) is determined through the mechanism, namely, through several parameters that do not really allow for equity while claiming to assure equality among candidates.

There is a lot going on behind the scenes in the process of trying to gain access to higher education in Türkiye, which unfortunately adds to preexisting issues. These can first be handled through the lens of equity, touching on the main components of the mechanism that allows candidates to begin their new lives at university. As has been previously discussed, there are many research results which reveal factors that make transition to higher education far from equitable. These are the differences in success between school types (Berberoğlu & Kalender, 2005; ÖSYM, 2018; Köse, 1999; Suna et al., 2020b; Suna et al.,

2020a), socioeconomic background of students who sit the exams (Suna et al., 2020a; Suna et al., 2020b), limiting access to higher education through extremely important exams with one or two sessions (Köse, 1990; Yolcu, 2015). The inequities that occur owing to these realms intersect at various points and, furthermore, it is clear they are oftentimes interwoven. Without a doubt, these factors come into play when candidates arrive at the gates of the university, reminding us of the determining factors related to the destination of the balls in the Magnus Effect.

In this article, we have tried to focus on equity problems associated with the transition to higher education and particularly with its exam-oriented nature. To that end, we have identified four main problem areas: tracking, stratification, socioeconomic status, and the qualifying elimination system itself.

Tracking: A Mechanism Through Which Inequities Are Reproduced

Taking a glance at the literature in its simplest sense, tracking seems to be a means to sort students based on external factors, which are, in reality, beyond their control, in a highly capitalist manner (Wells, 2018). In a similar vein, in a recent study conducted in Türkiye, problems with educational equality have been explored through the tracking system in which the concepts "dreams vs. realities" were used to indicate the "cruel" dimensions of the system that interfere with the expectations and hopes of young people (Ozer & Perc, 2020). It goes without saying that for developing countries like Türkiye, which are also populous, university entrance exams are of crucial importance (OECD, 2004). They are utilized to make decisions about the transition to university through national test scores. In Türkiye, the tracking system turns into a direct source of inequality, and this is evident in the actual purpose of tracking: providing diverse high school options for students with different needs and desires. Thus, for Türkiye, student performances differ to a great extent in university entrance exams since university candidates have already undergone tracking through national high school entrance exams, which, again, are high stakes in nature. In this sense, Türkiye is reported as one of the countries with the highest difference amongst school types in numerous studies (Berberoğlu & Kalender, 2005; Gümüş & Atalmış, 2012; Suna et al., 2020a/2020b; OECD, 2018; TED, 2010; Worldbank, 2013). The most successful high schools in the university exam are "science high schools," whereas the most disadvantaged high schools are vocational high schools. As is the case in most parts of the world (Wightman, 2003), Turkish students from disadvantaged parts of society, such as refugees, mostly go to vocational schools (Çelik, 2015; World Bank, 2013), while students from middle- and upper-class socioeconomic backgrounds continue to study at relatively more prestigious high schools like science high schools (Berberoğlu & Kalender, 2005; Suna et al., 2020a/2020b) or private high schools that offer curricula that are mostly university entrance exams—oriented together with the promise of classes conducted in English. In this frame of reference, the tracking system makes up both the cause and one of the results of educational inequities.

Tracking spans the entrance race from the pre-high school level all the way to university admission. Moreover, the type of high school turned out to be a key determinant in the university admission process, in particular resulting from the effect of the weighted high school grade point average (WHSGPA) practice implemented in Türkiye for years (Kurt & Gür, 2012). WHSGPA is used to weight the high school grade point average (HSGPA) based on the academic success rate of high school graduates. In other words, as

the number of students that successfully passed the university admission exam in a high school increased, so too did the coefficient that was multiplied by HSGPA of the students at that specific school. The chief purpose of this application was to protect students who graduated from science high schools, where relatively heavier curricula are implemented, against the possibility of common high school or vocational high school students getting higher graduation grades when they finish high school. Nevertheless, the influence of such a factor (the type of high school graduated from), which was not closely connected to the student's intentional acts or study habits and talents, on the university admission, had given rise to a complete inequality. In 2012, the application of the practice of integrating WHSGPA was abolished and since then, solely a certain ratio of HSGPA has been added to the sum of university admission points. On account of the fact that the tracking evolves into a greater element of inequity, studies and policy documents have now recommended to diminish the variety of schools in secondary education in Türkiye (World Bank, 2013; Çelik, 2015).

Stratification as An(other) Emergent Factor

Although it is a topic considerably related to tracking, stratification among high school types can be regarded as one of the inequality-producing results of the exam-based university admission systems. That said, stratification includes a problem that perhaps poses a greater threat to the system than tracking. It not only emerges between dissimilar school types, but also among the same types of schools (Gür & Özoğlu, 2015). For instance, certain high schools may become more advantageous in comparison to their counterparts as relatively more of their students become successful in university admission exams. This may also trigger yet another problem: students may gravitate toward a certain school instead of a specific type of school, which is a situation that can be widely observed in Türkiye. For example, one of the two closely located Anatolian high schools in the same neighborhood may enroll students with higher High School Admission Exam grades. It should be pointed out that students tend to opt for the more prestigious school, namely the one that accepts applicants with higher grades. In this context, the concentration of successful students at particular schools has gradually interfered with the difference in quality between the schools. When a system approach, which emphasizes the importance of inputs for the overall functioning of a system, is used to address this situation, it is clearly seen that students gathering in schools with higher academic success rates have an advantage over their peers at those schools with relatively lower levels of academic success.

On account of the competitive but unequal race caused by tracking and stratification, the percentage of academic high schools enrolling students through examinations reportedly rose from 2% in the 1990s to 20% in 2010, 36% in 2012, over 50% in 2013 and 100% in 2014 (Gür et al., 2013; MEB, 2014). Ranking all schools and students in score tables and enrolling students based on grades, made the secondary education system much more hierarchical than ever before. In addition, this has resulted in labelling students and schools, which discourages teachers and students in lower-ranked schools. Last, but not least, enrolling students with the same level grades to the same schools weakened the effects of peer learning and school-environment relationships (Çelik, 2015), which could be taken as another pivotal side effect of the present mechanism.

Socioeconomic Background: The Key Element Affecting Achievement

A considerable number of students, who wanted to be successful in the exam, had received preparatory training from private courses together with their school education until 2015. When these courses were officially closed down in 2015, this subject took on a different shape. After this incident, once these courses were abolished, students tended to receive outside support, oftentimes in the form of individual preparatory training sessions. Since both private courses and individual preparatory training offerings are closely linked to students' socioeconomic status, they have given rise to another inequity problem.

The examination-based entrance system leads students to seek ways to be ahead in the race even though authorities try to discourage such attempts. Given that GPA affects university admission exam grades, students may choose to transfer from their schools, where getting higher grades is difficult, to other schools to enhance their grades. Today, it is observed that thousands of students choose to be at Open Highschool via distance education in their last year of study. Another strategy used to get a leg up on the competition: students and families search for excuses for absenteeism (e.g. obtaining health reports), since the final year in high school requires intense preparation for exams. Paradoxically, this situation has introduced a mentality suggesting that students can be more successful in national high stakes exams if they do not continue their school education in the traditional way. Open Highschool is also attractive because it permits students to remain at home and study hard.

These "behind-the-scenes" occurrences that affect the success or failure in the university entrance exam reveal a lot about the educational inequities and, in fact, may sound rather absurd to outsiders who are not familiar with the system in Türkiye. Being lucky enough to take one-on-one private courses all throughout, stay at home, and focus fully on the exam preparations are the salient components of the whole.

As for GPA, one of the striking sources—or perhaps the main one—of inequities is the school itself and all that it encompasses: the curriculum, the teachers, the ethos, the learners, and the stakeholders. In fact, a large spectrum is witnessed in Türkiye when it comes to high school types. Not surprisingly, this spectrum is mostly related to the "high school entrance exam" administered in a similar manner to the university entrance exam, which was previously discussed in this article. Without a doubt, socioeconomic determinants and regional differences play a significant role here.

High Stakes Admission Tests: The Main Facilitators of the Mechanism

The notion of sitting a single or a couple of exams of vital importance to enter into university after years of education is inherently inequitable. Holding an examination only once in a year and the extension of examination sessions that include hundreds of questions and hundreds of minutes create a psychological burden for many students (Taşpınar Cengiz & İhtiyaroğlu, 2012).

In Türkiye, the examination policy and the effects of high school types on exam grades, gave rise to high school admission exams. Children are engaged in a race to be admitted to more popular high schools. Therefore, middle school education became a system featuring predominantly the preparation for high

school admission exams; in other words, a system that promotes never-ending tests and test-preparation. Accordingly, children started to take education focusing on solving multiple-choice questions beginning from the first grade of elementary school. Moreover, families, teachers, and schools all hold the belief that the lives of children depend on their success in these exams. Once again, recalling the Magnus Effect, we assert that the more one is engaged in tests at an early age, the more likely it becomes for one to be directed toward a "good" destination when the university entrance exam time comes. In other words, together with the other advantages that a person may innately have, familiarizing themselves with examinations at a young age puts them in a more advantageous position.

There are numerous criticisms about the negative effects of exam-based education. For example, it is thought that students spending their academic lives with multiple-choice tests from primary school to high school cannot sufficiently acquire advanced reading, writing, or critical thinking skills, which are deemed necessary for tertiary level education. As such, students may fail to reach the minimum requirements of academic success in university life and are unfulfilled from the education they receive in universities (Kurt & Fidan, 2019; Ural, 2016).

Furthermore, stress and anxiety caused by these exams can hinder students from making healthy choices. The fact that the central examination system poses many problems regarding unhealthy university and/or department choices, has also been revealed by a survey of the literature (e.g., Korkut-Owen et al., 2012; Fidan et al., 2018; Özsoy et al., 2010; Sarıkaya & Khorshid, 2009; Tataroğlu et al., 2011). Within this point of reference, even though students have access to a university, it is not very likely that this will benefit them. It is difficult or, at best, coincidental, for students to choose the right major in accordance with their interests, preferences, and abilities.

Conclusion, Discussion, and Implications

The main result of this research is that university entrance exams, which are highly legitimate in social terms, produce serious inequities. Such exams do not respond well to the educational and individual needs of the students—or even cater to societal demands. Moreover, these exams are transformative in nature; they shift the mechanism and leave it full of inequities. The most typical example of this is tracking. Tracking now appears to have turned into a medium that distinguishes students partly with respect to their achievement differences, and to a much greater extent, with respect to their socioeconomic background. With stratification, specific schools are able to attract students with high(er) academic achievement levels when others cannot. The fact that a student's socioeconomic background is the most important variable for receiving a good education at high school and ensuring a "smooth" transition to a good university clearly discloses the unequal face of transition and access to higher education.

It is undeniable that an exam is still and, inevitably, the most legitimate method of entering a higher education institution, in particular for developing countries like Türkiye with millions of high school graduates. Notwithstanding, considering the issues of equity produced by the examinations and the system, it is vital to accept that the legitimacy of the examination should be deeply questioned. Obviously, it is not just or sustainable to adopt such an examination-centered system. In education systems where lasting problems are not acknowledged, students are urged to face the reality of exams beginning from early on. In a way, this is the hidden facet of the so-called legitimacy of the exams and that of the related systems. In this direction, (re)establishing a system that will pave the way for an equitable evaluation of individuals with unique needs, aptitudes, capacities, and capabilities, and, of course, aspirations, will be a meaningful and purposeful act. Such an endeavor will require the involvement of all stakeholders from learners themselves to policymakers, authorities, educators, and researchers in the planning, implementation, and sustaining of the novel structure.

So as to reduce—if not minimize—the pressure created by the exam-based system on teenagers sitting the high-stakes exams as a shorter-term solution, some other suggestions could be made here. The university entrance exams may be carried out at a few times in an academic year in a successive way throughout and/or alternative exams can be in effect (e.g., administered at differing levels targeting distinctive competences); some of the exams can include open-ended questions and alternative parts that encourage the candidate to express themselves; along with this, the share of the high school graduation grade in the university entrance score might be revisited to ensure a decrease in the high-stakes nature of the exams. That said, all these suggestions entail an equitable approach toward the said checkpoints and assessments.

Recalling the many potential results of the Magnus Effect, university entrance exams in Türkiye are inherently complicit in the mechanism of inequality, making a student's chance of success dependent on too many factors beyond their control.

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Meaning and Making: Laying the Groundwork for Community-Based Research-Creation

David LeRue

Abstract

Research-creation practices have long consulted the public in the process of research, yet the act of making often rests in the hands of the individual researcher. This paper proposes a more integrated and collaborative framework for arts-based researchers and educators called Community-Based Research-Creation, which extends the collaborative logic of oral history into the realm of creation by encouraging art educators to develop focused and prolonged workshops and classes with community. I draw from my own practice as a community art teacher working primarily with adults and propose methods and frameworks for developing community-engaged studies using artworks.

What Is Community-Based Research-Creation?

Community-engaged research-creation practices consult the public in the process of research, yet the act of creation often remains in the hands of the researcher. This paper proposes a collaborative framework for arts-based researchers called community-based research-creation (CBRC), in which researchers provide the conditions for research participants to create their own works of research-creation within the framework of a larger research study. CBRC extends the logic and ethics of oral history, which studies historical events and memory through oral testimony given in long-form interviews (Yow, 2014; High, 2009), into the realm of visual creation, welcoming community members to create artworks depicting their experiences, memories, and present understandings. By emphasizing the agency of participants and their perspectives within an academic research project, CBRC democratizes the creation side of community-engaged research-creation and opens the artistic aspects of these inquiries to diverse perspectives, fruitful complications, and more interesting directions than is possible through gathering community input for individual creation alone. I propose a methodology that engages community through multi-week classes that conjoin the researcher's chosen topic with guided making. These classes ideally see participants through the concept to realization of a project, which is fostered by skill-building activities and discussions between participants and the instructor that help to form individual and collective understandings of the topic and the artworks made about it. I argue that, when conducted thoughtfully, CBRC provides an exciting possibility for researchers wishing to work with community and arts-based practice.

I came to CBRC as a methodology while developing an oral history and research-creation doctoral project on development in the urban environment in Montreal's Sud-Ouest, while also teaching free online community classes during COVID-19 lockdowns at the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School called

Landscaping the City (LeRue, 2023). Classes were eight-week sessions open for free to anyone who registered, which attracted participants spanning a range of ages, backgrounds, and artistic abilities. Working from Kevin Lynch's (2008) framework of the image of the city, exercises drew on landscape drawing principles and theory to have participants reflect on their own experiences of living in Montreal to create artworks. The class culminated in a three-week final project that asked students to reflect on something they notice in their neighborhood that others might not. As work developed, students took up several mediums and topics, and it became clear that the projects were high quality, rigorous, and represented an exceptional plurality of viewpoints and experiences of the city. In my initial project, I intended to create works of research-creation based on the testimony given to me through oral history. However, student projects in *Landscaping the City* showed the complicated artistic perspectives I was aiming to replicate in my project, providing a plurality of views that my singular art practice could not have captured alone. I found my initial research plan was better articulated by the works created by the students and thus conceived of CBAE as a method.

In what follows, I will articulate CBRC as an education-based framework informed by oral history and artistic creation of mostly 2D practices. This is not to discount other possibilities and applicability of this method, and I welcome others to extend the logic of this method as they see fit. However, I will keep the following inquiry rooted in my practice to offer concrete examples that I found relate to a study of this nature. I do not claim CBRC is a new framework, but rather that it is an assembled paradigm that articulates a process of collaborative creation in, and with, community that offers new approaches to authorship, co-creation, and collective meaning. In the following sections, I will situate CBRC within three fields of academic and pedagogic inquiry—I will explain how I came to develop CBRC through what J. Ulbricht (2005) called Community-Based Art Education (CBAE), before considering how CBRC re-purposes ethics and frameworks of oral history to extend its logic into the visual realm. I will then consider community-engaged arts-based research (ABR), and how CBRC can contribute to enriching and deepening the connections arts-based researchers have with their participants. These discussions will culminate in a proposed method and ethic for CBRC, considering how we might design our studies, treat the works created, and use them as parts of larger arts-based and qualitative studies.

Community-Based Art Education

CBRC is situated within, and inspired by, existing frameworks of Community-Based Art Education (CBAE). CBAE is defined simply as art education taking place outside of K-12 and university settings (Villeneuve & Sheppard, 2009), best understood as an umbrella term describing several community-engaged artistic and pedagogic practices, including art workshops, informal community sharing, collective making, and the making of artworks for community, such as murals and public sculpture (Ulbricht, 2005; Lawton & La Porte, 2013). CBAE can refer to grassroots artmaking by community members such as the Fibres and Beyond collective, where members offer each other feedback and exhibit work in rural British Columbia (Sinner & Yazdnapanah, 2021). It can also refer to educators from formal settings engaging with communities as a site of collaboration, such as art education professor Pamela Harris Lawton's (2010) community quilting project, where she and preservice teachers welcomed people visiting a homeless shelter to contribute a square to a collectively made quilt. Formal educators may also develop curricula

designed to learn about and with communities, such as the collaborative project between art education professor Kathleen Vaughan et al.'s (2016) three-year initiative in Pointe-Saint-Charles, a post-industrial Montreal neighborhood with a reputation for social activism where students from Concordia University in four artistic disciplines were invited to engage with oral histories and the built environment to create community-engaged artworks.

Many engage in CBAE for its perceived benefits for students from a community and students in formal education engaging community. CBAE has been taken up in public schools and universities under frameworks of contextual and cultural learning to better form students' understanding of communities and identity (Luo & Lau, 2020; Ulbricht, 2005), and to make education socially relevant for participating students (McFee, 1991). Lawton (2019) conducted work with preservice teachers in community settings and argued that CBAE "connects them with the democratic concepts of civic responsibility and social justice" (p. 215). Community art practice, she said, provides rich learning opportunities for all involved, creating moments of reciprocity between educator and participant where each contributes to the outcomes of the project, while gaining mutual understandings beyond simple artistic creation (Chapman & Sawchuk, 2012; 2015). Reciprocity here means changing the relationship from one between artist/teachers and student/learners to one of mutual interest and respect rooted in mutual understanding rather than charity or simple giving and learning. Others claim that CBAE can help to rectify social inequality by either beautifying public space, reclaiming land for public use (Hutzel, 2007), or through empowerment programs to elevate the person creating the art (Kim, 2015; Bellavance & Venkatesh, 2018). Belgian social work professor Griet Verschelden et al. (2012) argued that community-based art practices conscious of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire's (2018) definition of praxis, meaning, to conjoin the process of reflection and action, contain an emancipatory potential that enables participants to consider their needs in society with the potential to act in resolving their needs. However, Verschelden and colleagues recognize that some community practices see communities as lacking and needing external intervention, which they argue, citing theorist Chantal Mouffe (2000), negates the agency of the community and the conflict and dissent that exist within them. This reveals a split in philosophy in CBAE—some engage in reparative practices that engage in community to repair an apparent lack, and inductive practices that view communities as fully formed, containing their knowledge and understandings of the world.

CBRC asks researchers to use the principles of critical pedagogy to see communities as fully formed (Freire, 2018; hooks, 1994) rather than sites in need of external intervention. Freire (2018) implored educators to enter the student-teacher relationship as equals, believing students arrive already with tremendous knowledge about the world. Rather than recounting facts and rules to students as is common to traditional education, it is the educator's role to engage in dialogue with students that pose problems for students and instructors to think through critically and collectively. Detractors often claim critical pedagogy merely adds social activism into the classroom. While this characterization of many critical pedagogy practices is not entirely false, Freire claimed its true humanizing potential means educators should allow students to think freely, and to trust them to draw their own conclusions. He said, "Without faith in people, dialogue is a farce which inevitably degenerates into paternalistic manipulation" (p. 91). Feminist theorist and professor bell hooks (1994), a follower and student of Freire, introduced teaching

as a practice of freedom, meaning "a way of teaching so that anyone can learn" (p. 12). To teach as a practice of freedom requires knowing one's students, seeing them as individuals, and delivering course content in a way they can both understand and engage with. This does not mean watering down the course content, rather knowing how to make understandable and tangible course content so that students can self-actualize through the learning process. By working through exercises that draw from existing knowledge and perspectives in conjunction with sharing skills and frameworks that help our students articulate them through art, a CBRC study aims to make visible and tangible the individual and collective knowledge of our participants.

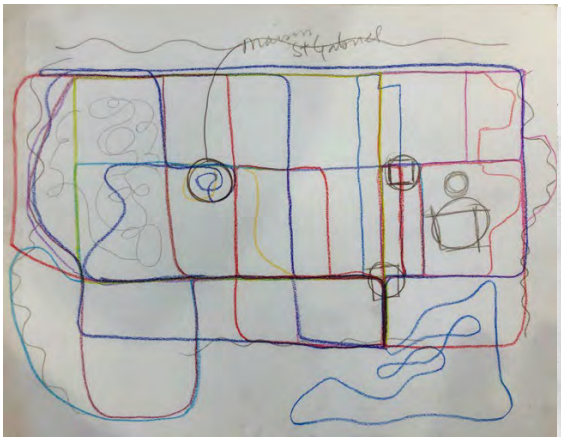

Fig. 1: Example of mind-mapping.

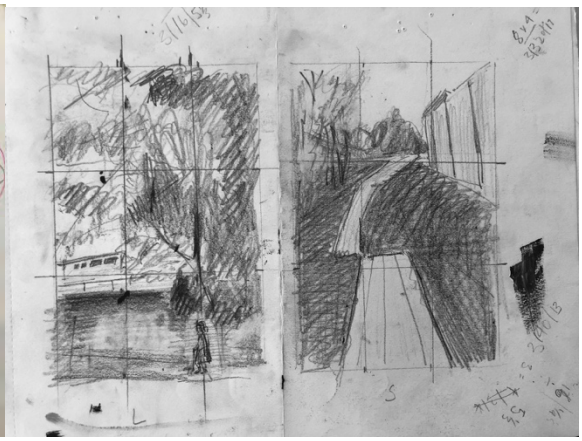

Fig. 2: Example of rule of thirds (Courtesy of Catherine Wells).

Landscaping the City as Case Study

So how might we structure our CBRC classrooms to promote inductive participation? I propose that educator-researchers taking up CBRC develop classes that can both guide and stoke the imagination of participating students. The topic and content of the class should directly relate to the researchers' desired study, while striking a balance between skill development, conceptual thought, and personal and group reflection. In *Landscaping the City,* exercises catered to students from multiple levels, ages, and abilities, and built off each other in equal parts skill building and brainstorming. We aimed to understand our relationships to the city, drawing mind-maps of the neighborhood (Figure 1) and developing projects that sent students out into the neighborhood to sketch and gather photographs, many of which were used in class exercises. We also covered drawing skills, going over shading, value, and compositional tricks such as armatures and the rule of thirds and mark making (Figure 2). Weekly exercises scaled engagement, and optional homework allowed students to continue with a skill or method if they desired. Throughout, we explored conceptual frameworks for landscape and found ways to bring it back to discussions about the student work. This culminated in an open-ended final project over the last three weeks of the session that invited students to share what they thought was overlooked in their neighborhoods. I met individually with students to aid in their thinking and project building and made groups to give feedback to each other. Like any other art classroom, peer feedback helped students to identify the strengths of their work while aiding in thinking through the concepts and techniques required to fulfill these visions.

Fig. 3: Example of potential CBRC project (Courtesy of Nouella Grimes).

As a result, these converging elements created guiderails that led most students to complete a final project that was unique to their own ideas and stories within their capacities as artists. Bhea, one of the younger participants of *Landscaping the City*, took notice of larger squirrels in the park and decided to create a work on transparent mylar documenting overlapping layers of bone, muscle, and fur on the animal. When she could not find a visual reference for the skeleton, she used a reference from another small animal and imagined the structure given the top and middle layers (Figure 4). Nouella considered the multiple storefronts in the neighborhood ranging from the Islamic cultural center, specialty grocery stores, and a church that had significant meaning for her and considered how they are a metaphor for the many people living in the neighborhood. She decided to put them together in an imagined storefront (Figure 3), and further discussions in class revealed the fear that changing neighborhood conditions put these stores—and the communities they cater to—at risk of displacement. Leon recounted growing up around the Negro Community Centre (NCC), which was formed in 1927 in the Sud-Ouest neighborhood of Little Burgundy. Unfortunately, lack of funding led the center to close in 1993, and despite hopes for revival a retaining wall eventually collapsed, leading to its eventual sale and demolition in 2014. Leon made a pencil drawing of the collapsed retaining wall, before noticing abstract faces in the rubble that then became a subject of further drawings (Figure 5). The mother-son duo of Nadia and Justus created a one-minute animation about ruelles, which are back roads behind many Montreal rows of apartments that are far less formal than the front side. Often, these are the sites of social life, where kids leave toys, people socialize outside and have garages and other informal architectures. The animation personifies elements of these sites, slowly revealing the narrator to be a white cat who has made this ruelle its home. This is but a small sampling of the works students made, standing alone as excellent works of creation. Taken together, they reveal compelling and complex views of the neighborhood that are multifaceted and worthy of a larger study.

Fig. 4: Example of CBRC project (courtesy of Bhea).

Fig. 5: Example of CBRC project (Courtesy of Leon Llewyn).

Oral History

CBRC is informed by the ethics and frameworks of oral history, which unsettles academic expertise by taking interviewee's testimony as the expert of their subject. Oral historians conduct prolonged interviews with individuals who are non-experts in the academic sense and who may be overlooked in traditional arcs of historical research. Oral history testimony may be taken individually or with others to give descriptive analysis about the historical past or present that is filtered through a participant's subjectivity; they may remember, misremember, selectively remember, or otherwise emphasize different meanings about a situation over time. For oral historian Alessandro Portelli (2018), an oral historian's subjectivity is integral to the study, as it is the historian themselves who asks the questions, puts them into the narrative, and is a physical presence during the interview for participants. If an interviewee has a desire to tell a story, an interviewer has desires for the direction of the story and their overarching project narrative, with the oral history interview becoming a navigation between these two interests. While these interests can be antagonistic, they may also find mutual understanding and reciprocity if both parties remain open minded.

Group or collective memory is of particular interest to oral historians, who often interview those who share a location, culture, or experience. For oral historian Valerie Yow (2014), there is a distinction to be made between individual and collective memory, which might both be held within the same narrator with memories that contradict each other. Yow used the example of workers at a cotton mill, who remembered a backbreaking work environment controlled by an unforgiving company, while also remembering the lifestyle around work positively. While individual memory remains in the realm of what happened and how an individual perceived events, she argued that collective memory is the product of rigid social forces that incentivize certain identifications with the way things were or are. She theorized that collective memory informs how one derives meaning from individual events, which is how the workers recalled brutal conditions and the close-knit community that built up around it with no

contradiction. As such, human memory for Yow should be seen as both fallible and trustworthy, meaning that the oral historian is not only interested in specific accounts of history, but also how that history is remembered and why one might be remembering it this way.

If "oral history is the recording of personal testimony in the recorded form" (Yow, 2014, p. 3), CBRC is the recording of personal testimony in the artistic form. If oral testimony gives us insight into one's memory, experience, and meaning over historical events, CBRC offers extra-linguistic insights into participants understanding, memory, and experience, providing viewers the product of artistic choices and expressions that are made over a prolonged period. But why might we want to ask our participants to make artwork rather than give an oral testimony? And what kind of participant might this attract? Admittedly, oral history interviews are far less burdensome for the participant than participating in an eight-week class, the latter requiring up to 30 hours of engagement. The perspective pool of participants is narrowed to those with an interest in artmaking, those who have the desire and time to complete a class, and those with enough interest in a specific subject to register. However, the participants who do meet these criteria are likely to find much in common with the researcher-teacher, and the situation provides an opportunity reciprocity based on shared interests—The researcher is not merely extracting "data" from participants, as is a debate in oral history methods (Lawless, 2000), but is learning with participants, embedding in their sites and offering spaces for participants to reflect on their own lives and grow as artists, ideally for free. This process responds directly to feminist historian Elaine Lawless's (2000; 2019) call to practice reciprocal ethnography, meaning to narrow the distance between researcher and participant, finding meaningful ways to engage and give back. In the case of *Landscaping the City*, the class was a reprieve from the pandemic, providing participants a community of makers who were remaining connected through the isolated period. Artistically, students expressed how the class changed their relationship to their neighborhood and helped them articulate meanings they associate with place. One student, who I have since become close friends with, has continued to make work about the neighborhood and think through the formal concerns initially articulated in the class. Others have created works that have found their way into exhibitions, and in one case a book written about the history of the Sud-Ouest. I also worked to create additional points of meaning and gathering, creating a publication of artworks and working with a local bike-gallery initiative called *Pedalbox* to put on a show of student works that could be viewed outdoors during the pandemic. I also continue to volunteer and teach at the Pointe-Saint-Charles Art School, working to sustain the school now and into the future. Through working to be less extractive, I have formed relationships that have become profoundly meaningful, both personally and to my practice, as I move toward completing my doctoral project, while ideally contributing to the lives of participants and the long-term well-being of the organization.

Research-Creation

Community-based research-creation builds off existing research-creation paradigms, which is a term to describe the integration of creative practice into the humanities, sciences, and social sciences. For communications professors Owen Chapman and Kim Sawchuk (2012), research-creation describes practices which have existed for decades but have only found widespread institutional uptake since the

turn of the millennium. The definitional boundaries of research-creation are porous, with the Social Sciences and Humanities Research council of Canada defining it as:

> An approach to research that combines creative and academic research practices, and supports the development of knowledge and innovation through artistic expression, scholarly investigation, and experimentation. The creation process is situated within the research activity and produces critically informed work in a variety of media (art forms). (*Definitions,* 2021)

For Chapman and Sawchuk (2012; 2015), these practices pose radical possibilities for research in the university, which they argue is governed by a "regime of truth"' that favors knowledge stemming from the written word and the scientific method. Research-creation instead welcomes the extra-linguistic insights of artistic making, including affect, emotion, and the uncertainty of artistic practice into the research process, which often cannot be accessed or described by the written word alone. This view takes seriously the knowledge contained within artistic practices and their possibilities for exploring research questions and problems.

Research-creation practices by definition merge multiple forms of academic and artistic inquiry into interdisciplinary studies. Art historian and artist Natalie Loveless (2019) proposed the framework of polydisciplinarity as an approach to research-creation, which centers one's object of study, rather than disciplinary boundaries. She contrasts this with interdisciplinarity, which calls for fidelity to multiple methods simultaneously. For Loveless, the uptake of arts-based research makes a similar move to research as the expanded field had to sculpture in the 1970s. *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* by Rosiland Krauss (1979) identified moves being made in sculptures of her era that expanded the field beyond its own boundaries and logics. Sculptures were becoming unpredictable, boundaryless, and resistant to paradigms. Rather than create a new logic for sculpture, the expanded field seemed to overturn disciplinary boundaries altogether, meaning sculpture could suddenly become a landscape installation, or an architectural interruption in a gallery. The expanded field thus liberated sculpture from its conventions, to take up ideas and interventions as the artist saw fit. For Loveless, arts-based research expands the field of the social sciences and humanities, which for her ought to embrace this newfound erosion of disciplinary boundaries, rather than invent and institute new, formalized methodology. In short, polydisciplinarity means each project or approach requires specific methodological considerations that are resistant to simple duplications.

The framework of polydisciplinarity is useful in describing CBRC, as the community-created artwork will likewise draw from multiple methods without much consideration for their conventions. For the researcher-teacher, CBRC can be seen as another tool in the toolbox of arts-based research, easily adaptable to a given framework as needed, and expands Chapman and Sawchuk's (2012) model by pushing the envelope of *who* makes works of research-creation. Important to note for CBRC, however, is that these types of practices can needlessly jettison traditional arts practices such as painting and drawing, which are at once accessible to view for a public who might not be versed in expansive practices, while also being an accessible entry point into making. For example, Loveless takes "easel painting" as the stepping point *from which* research-creation evolved, whereas I argue that if we are truly taking research-creation as a framework of expanded possibility, we must not discount the potentials

available to us from traditional approaches to artmaking. For CBRC to function as a method, it requires making accessible the process of making, which for a participant who did not train as an artist would likely be traditional 2D and 3D practices.

In the following section I will define CBRC, describing its implementation as a methodology, strategies for data collection, how to use it in larger studies and propose ethics for its implementation. At risk of defining CBRC too narrowly, I hope other researchers take this as a proposition of methods and principles which they may alter or edit for their own practices.

Articulating the Methodology of CBRC

CBRC refers to singular artworks made by students in community art classrooms that the instructor has specifically designed to foster creation, contemplation, and sharing on a given topic over a prolonged period. For a work to be considered CBRC, it must turn the participant's life, ideas, hopes, or research into a finished artwork, which the researcher accepts as an inductive piece of data over which the participant is the expert, like an oral history interview. It is the responsibility of the researcher to guide the creation by creating a class which helps students develop skills and stoke thought simultaneously, and the researcher ought to make themselves available in whatever means necessary to help the participant realize their chosen work of research-creation. In addition to the creative work, the researcher gathers qualitative data through the formation of the work: What has the participant said about the work? How was the work developed, and what meanings evolved over the course of its creation? The researcher should also document what other participants say about work in discussions and critiques and consider their own impressions and thoughts as well, realizing that extra-linguistic insights generated through making may be describable through ongoing discussions and interpretations.

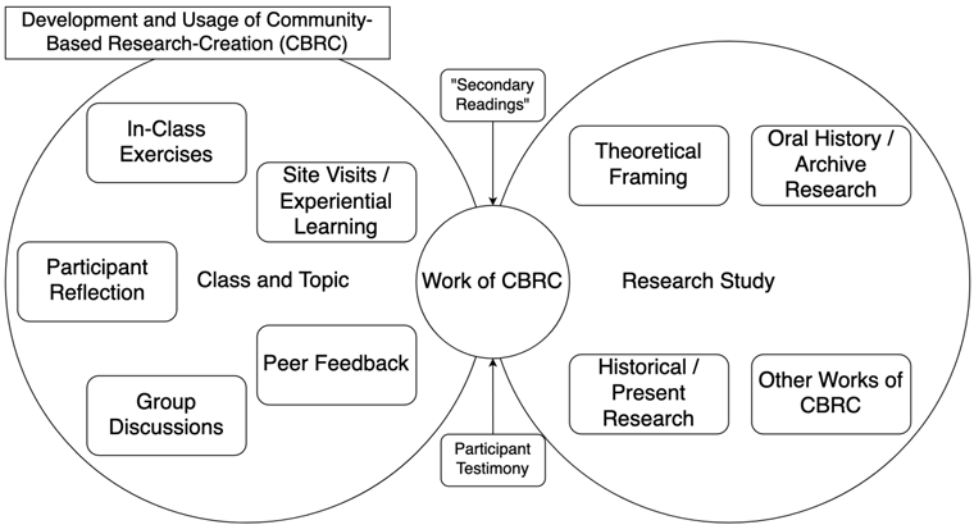

Fig. 6: Visual diagram of CBRC as a methodology

The artwork and the data collected through the classroom study must stand on their own, independent of the classroom in which they were formed and the study for which they will be used, as visualized in

Figure 6. Like any other study, a study integrating CBRC must frame its own methodology, theory, and background research, which will be unique to a researcher's interest and stated aims. A researcher may wish to use CBRC as one component of a study that uses other data such as oral history, use works of CBRC in a larger humanities, science or social science study, or conduct a study entirely of CBRC works that are examined singularly or put into conversation with each other. How we contextualize and interpret the meaning of works of CBRC likewise bears ethical consideration, given that artworks have meaning beyond the intention of their creator (Barrett, 2018). If we are to take our participants as experts, we must balance a fidelity to the creator's interpretation with the readings of the researcher and other observers. I thus propose the following ethic for researchers interpreting works of CBRC:

1. The stated intention of the creator should be the primary reading for the work. This should be gathered as secondary data through manners such as student journaling, classroom observations, or interviews about the project and its creation.
2. Secondary readings should add to, rather than contradict, the intention of the maker. These can be readings that emerge from classroom discussion, from the researcher's insights, or from community members who did not participate in the initial study. For instance, if during in-class sharing, a participant claims their work is about their family history and a classmate argues that it is instead about a political movement, this would be a fundamental contradiction in meaning. If in another instance a student created works about abandoned factories, and others read into the present re-purposing of said factories and the social changes that came with it, we might see this as an additive response. Ultimately, it can be tricky to discern what contradicts and what adds to a reading, and if in doubt we can member-check our secondary readings with the creator.
3. The work remains the physical and intellectual property of the student, who may keep it, sell it, gift it, or throw it away. The researcher meanwhile is obligated to ask permission when sharing works of CBRC beyond the initial study and to follow social science research protocols to destroy gathered data in a set timeframe after the study is complete.

Other researchers may tweak these ethics to fit the context in which they work. On this final point, CBRC sidesteps a longstanding debate in oral history that questions the life of the interview, and whether it is appropriate to reuse, archive, or otherwise adapt an interview beyond the initial stated aims for the project it was collected for (Bishop, 2009; Bishop & Kuula-Luumi, 2017). While it might be morally or ethically complicated to discard an interview, the eventual destruction of the observational or interview data about a work of CBRC does not compel us to destroy the artwork itself, which would have to be licenced by future researchers to include in further study. Further discussion is required to decide if and how works of CBRC should be archived, and whether the secondary data collected in these studies is appropriate to use for other purposes. In my own studies, I will use secondary data only in the service of a work of CBRC and will destroy data after the appropriate period of retention.

The interpretive framework of a study is up to the individual researcher, but I implore those using this method to see the communities they engage with as fully formed entities *from which* the pedagogical process draws. Ideally, we are listening to our participants and what data tells us, not engineering our classrooms to give us desired results, and not painting ourselves into a corner while teaching and sharing. Considering *Landscaping the City*, I have considered artworks through the dialectical method as articulated by Hegel (2013) and Marx (1981), which aims to understand how the whole is revealed through a particular instance (Lukács, 2013), in this case a work of art. This is affirmed by Brazilian

geographer Milton Santos (2021), who argued that current capitalist formations have made it so that even one in the tiniest village can learn about the world by examining their surroundings: "Each place is, in its way, the world" (p. 216). This has given me great flexibility in interpreting and conjoining data, while doing right by my participants. But one could just as well examine CBRC through feminist, decolonial, or postmodern frameworks; it is on the researcher to consider what emerges through the study, who ultimately shows up, and what the wishes are for those who do.

A study of CBRC inherently shares authority with our artist-participants (Frisch, 1990), but we must also consider how we share authority with the sites which host our collaborations (High, 2009). To engage community inevitably means to engage community centres, art schools, and cultural organizations. It is important that the ethic of reciprocity extends to them, and that as researchers we are aware of the shoestring budgets, lack of personnel, and diverging attention many sites have, even if they are delighted to receive such a project. To put on a class requires resources: space, time, competition with other potentially paid classes, advertisement, registration, and so on. For CBRC, I maintain that we must keep the cost free to the user, but the researcher ought to honestly consider what they can give the site. If one has adequate funding, the cash-value of the class should be paid directly to the school for each participant. If not, the researcher should offer something beneficial to the site, such as graphic design, administrative work, cleaning, or other forms of volunteering. I have been fortunate to be in the room when organizations decide whether to accept or decline projects and have had to make difficult decisions about what we as administrators can take on. Often the organization's human and financial sustainability is at stake, and small organizations often jeopardize both to accommodate worthwhile projects. It is imperative as researchers that we make it easy to say yes, and that we find ways to make it worthwhile for our sites to have hosted us.

At the center of CBRC is an ongoing sharing process, and work is best conducted when we make ourselves accountable to the communities we work with. If we simply conduct our CBRC study, document the work, type it up, and submit it to a journal or thesis committee, we have forgotten with whom our loyalties as community-based researchers lie. Throughout our study, we should find ways to remain accountable to the communities we are engaging with. A study is discredited when we find a researcher fundamentally misunderstood or misrepresented an individual or group of people, which is easy to do if one is only receiving feedback from a narrow group of participants. No community is a utopia, and most are rife with internal struggles and contradictions that we are best to understand. We need to spend time in the room listening, engaging, and *basing* ourselves in said communities. In my research, I have volunteered in organizations, learning their inner workings, goals, and aims, which has given my research an informed baseline from which to ask questions. During our study, we need to be sharing our research in progress, being clear with our intentions to all involved before, during and after a study. And when the study is complete, finding ways of sharing artworks by creating a publication, a website or finding a venue to host an exhibition, all of which give finality to a project, and is a material benefit to artist-participants that they can put on their CV. It also does right by the organizations we work with by inviting their larger communities to engage with their sites, and by giving documentation for the projects they have hosted.

Conclusion

To conduct a CBRC project is not a small task, asking infinitely more of the researcher, participants, and community sites. While the oral historian can show up to a site with a tape recorder and a pen, CBRC requires tremendously more commitment. However, I hope I have demonstrated that for the right kind of study, it can also be tremendously rewarding. I close this articulation of CBRC by referring to Figure 6, which gives visual depiction of the lives of a participant artwork—it stands alone while equally involved in the classroom in which it was formed and the study in which it was used. In a way, all works of community-engaged research work in this way, between contexts that they are not fully in and without. If the reader does not carry forward and make works of CBRC, I hope they appreciate what I have realized in the course of this work, which is that to engage a community is to engage a small segment that comes from a much larger, rich context that is already fully formed.

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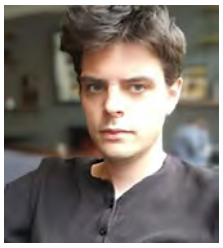

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Theories of Motivation to Support the Needs of All Learners

Diane P. Montgomery, Matthew Montgomery, and Molly Montgomery

Abstract

The increasing number of students requiring special education support is a plea for students to be taught the way they learn best. Through the authentic educational experiences of a diverse family, this paper explores the impact of theories of motivation to support all learners. This exploration proposes that educators may be able to support the needs of all learners in inclusive classrooms by integrating the theories of self-efficacy, self-determination, and implicit theories of intelligence.

Background

In Ontario, approximately 17% of elementary school students and 27% of secondary school students are receiving special education support through the implementation of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) (People for Education, 2019). An IEP is "A written plan describing the special education program and/or services required by a particular student, based on a thorough assessment of the student's strengths and needs that affect the student's ability to learn and demonstrate learning" (TDSB, 2020, p. 24). Approximately half of the students with an IEP in Ontario have not been formally diagnosed with a disability, but have an IEP so that teachers will be obligated to provide them with the support they need and teach them the way they learn best. Why not support all learners the way they learn best? Instead of creating IEPs to ensure students' needs fit the curriculum, maybe teachers should start by identifying the learning needs, strengths, interests, and motivational tendencies of all students and adapt the curriculum to the learner instead of the other way around. "Learning of all kinds goes on best, and lasts best, when it grows out of a real focus of interest in the learner" (Rogers cited in Grabau, 2017). Rogers (1980) believed that students who learned through their strengths and interests were naturally engaged and motivated to learn.

This theoretical inquiry explores the impact of students' motivation in multiple learning environments. Based on a critical constructivist perspective, we explore the authentic educational journeys of a diverse family: mother (Black), her son (Black with autism), and her daughter (Asian with anxiety), and the barriers they encountered in satisfying their distinctive learning needs. We start with a reflection of the influences of Dewey's and Rogers' theories on the mother's education and then further examine the impact of three contemporary theories: self-efficacy (Bandura), self-determination (Deci and Ryan), and implicit theories of intelligence (Dweck) on the educational journeys of the family.

Mom's Learning Through Experience

> My initial passion for education was ignited as an adolescent in grade 10, after convincing my parents that an environment outside the traditional classroom was essential for my social and emotional development. My transition to the first alternative school in my community in the 1970s opened my eyes to 'real' learning where the automaticity of good grades for good behaviour was disrupted when I received my first grade ever below 80%. The expectation was to construct my own learning through the mastery of real experiences, such as an interview with author Margaret Atwood for an English assignment. Biweekly one-on-one teacher-student consultations replaced traditional structured classrooms, advancing self-directed learning and socially constructed experiences. (Link to Mom's Audio)

Perceived as progressive at the time, this alternative school setting aligned with John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy that knowledge is socially constructed, and learning occurs through experience. The alternative school resembled Dewey's Laboratory School in Chicago, which reflected a process of creative enquiry, collaborative discussions, and the focus on students' interests (Provenzoi, 1979). However, unlike the alternative school which highlighted self-directed learning, Dewey (1899) believed that teachers still played a prominent role in delivery of the content. This did not mean the role of the student was any less; in fact, Dewey encouraged student participation in the process of learning, making choices, and goal setting.

Humanistic theorist Carl Rogers (1969) agreed with many of Dewey's philosophies, but Rogers was a strong promoter of self-directed learning where a greater responsibility of the learning was placed on the student. Rogers' (1980) humanistic theory encouraged teachers to be facilitators, allowing students to be active learners and giving them the choice of what and how they wanted to learn, whereas Dewey activated learners by focusing on the concept of learning through experience. Rogers (1969) illustrated that self-directed learning through the use of mutually negotiated contracts could provide students with flexible options for learning without absolving teachers of their responsibilities. The humanistic theory focused on educating the whole person, which Rogers (1980) described as bringing together cognitive learning with affective-experiential learning, so the learner's full potential could be achieved. In a documentary with Dr. Whitely (1972), Rogers expressed that sometimes students are unable to relate to freedom of education as he recalled a student once saying, "I always thought education was what I had to do before I could do what I wanted to do" (21:11m).

Rogers' educational philosophies more closely aligned with Mom's alternative school experience than did Dewey's approach. Similar to Dewey and Rogers, Mom believes that knowledge is constructed through experience, and growth is stimulated through student-centered educational approaches. However, as a critical constructivist researcher, in addition to identifying the issues that have an impact on learning, Mom also aims to demolish the barriers leading to inclusive education within the classrooms, schools, and broader educational contexts.

Introducing the Family

Expanding on the humanistic concept of educating the whole person, and understanding the strengths and interests of each learner, we introduce the rest of the family.

Matt

I am a creative, philosophical thinker whose learning differences conflicted with the instructional frameworks in the traditional public school settings. I prefer expressing myself through music so I created a simple rap to introduce myself.

> Yo, my name is Matt and I love to rap.
> I can rhyme which keeps me on track
> Some people thought that I was smart
> Because I had a really warm heart
> Others thought I was dumb
> So I was bullied by some
> Some people thought I was funny too
> It gave me the strength to know what I want to do
> So I used this strength to become a clown
> This helped me deal with my ups and downs
> Soon I accepted it was how I learn
> That's when I decided to make a turn
> So instead I figured out what I do best
> This helped me succeed when I had a test
> Now I'm on a journey to help others too
> But it's not always easy to do
> When my drum students jump all over the place
> It works really well when I stay on pace
> I know how it feels to be understood
> So music and teaching is what I do good. (Link to rap audio)

Molly

I am a well-rounded, diligent learner able to adapt to varying educational environments. I start the introduction of my journey by sharing a podcast I developed for a school project.

> My name is Molly and I was born in Fuzhou, China, a smaller city on the southeastern coast of the East China Sea. I was actually abandoned and dropped off in front of a store when only a couple days old, where the store owner found me and brought me to the local orphanage. From there I spent about a year with a foster mom, until I was adopted at one year old by my family who flew out from Canada to China to meet me. As for learning, I have always set high expectations for myself and worked hard to achieve my goals. Sometimes I would wrestle with my mental anxiety as a result. I have wondered if this disposition is related to my biological Asian heritage despite my upbringing in a tri-racial family. I will reflect on how my experiences have influenced my future outlook as I prepare for my transition to university. (Link to audio file)

Contemporary Motivational Theories Influence on Education

Our unique educational experiences were affected by our motivational dispositions, so we now explore these implications by considering contemporary motivational theories which expanded on Dewey's and Rogers' philosophies of holistic education and learning through experiences. Three theories which complemented these perspectives were: self-efficacy, self-determination, and implicit theories of intelligence.

Self-Efficacy Theory

Albert Bandura (Albert, 2017), a Canadian-American psychologist, was the founder of social cognitive theory and the theoretical construct of self-efficacy, a key component of motivation in learning. According to social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997), specific self-efficacy is based on the level of task difficulty and the certainty of successfully performing a specific task. Self-efficacy theory proposes the level of self-efficacy is based on four major sources of information: performance accomplishment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997). Performance accomplishment focuses on the personal mastery of experiences where successes of previous experiences raise mastery expectations and failures lower them. Vicarious experiences relate to a person's perception of their ability to perform a task after observing others performing a similar task. Verbal persuasion is the feedback provided to a person to reassure them they can accomplish a specific task. Physiological state is an emotional arousal elicited by anxiety and vulnerabilities to stressful situations which affect the level of self-efficacy, depending on how this emotional state is controlled (Bandura, 1997; Block et al., 2010).

Self-Determination Theory

The second theory, self-determination theory (SDT), was developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan and expands on self-efficacy. According to Deci et al. (1991), unlike self-efficacy theory, which focuses only on the direction of behavior that leads to the outcome, self-determination theory addresses both the direction and the reason for certain outcomes. SDT postulates that three basic psychological needs are essential to drive motivation: competency, autonomy, and relatedness. Competency concerns the feeling of mastery and self-efficacy that is satisfied through challenging tasks, feedback, and well-structured environments. Autonomy involves self-initiation and self-regulation of one's own actions and is triggered by intrinsic experiences of interest and value. Relatedness involves satisfying connections that stem from feelings of belonging and caring (Deci et al., 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2020). SDT suggests that social contexts that support these basic psychological needs promote intentional action or intrinsic motivation, rather than external motivations derived from rewards and avoidance of punishments. As a result, SDT demonstrates the relationship of different outcomes based on a continuum of motivation levels ranging from amotivation, to four forms of extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. Although we touch on several components of SDT, the focus will be on competence, autonomy, relatedness, the autonomous motivations related to extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation as highlighted in Figure 1.

Implicit Theories of Intelligence

The third theory founded by Carol Dweck is implicit theories of intelligence, which is often referred to as growth mindset versus fixed mindset. Figure 1 depicts a resemblance between fixed mindset and SDT's controlled motives; and growth mindset with SDT's autonomous and intrinsic motivations.

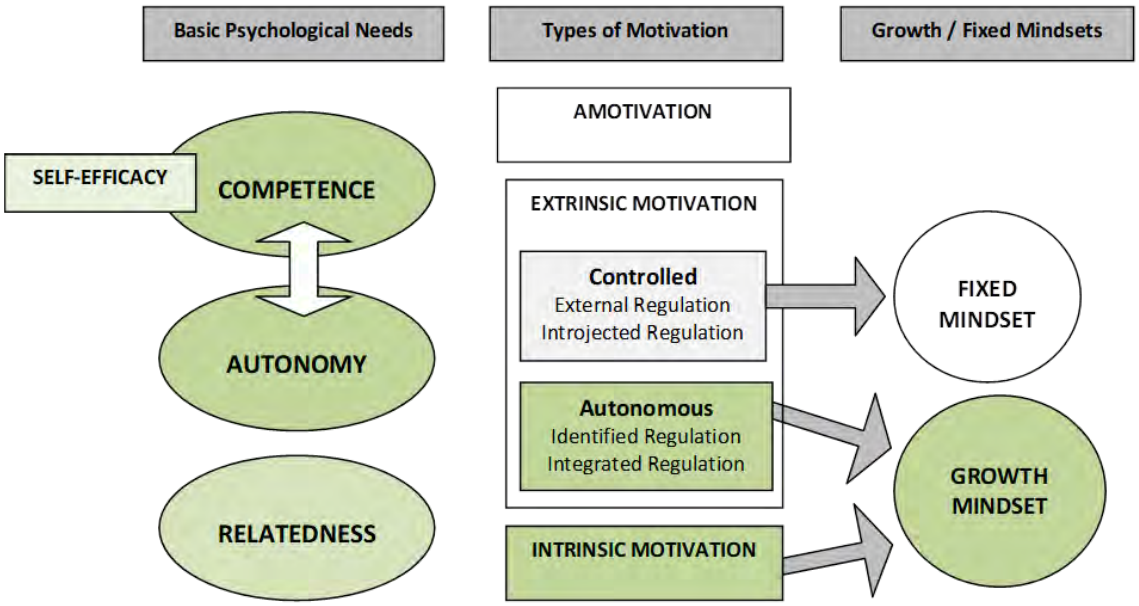

Fig. 1: Connections between motivational theories.

The growth and fixed mindsets propose that individuals can be placed on a continuum depending on their implicit beliefs of where their ability comes from. According to Dweck (2016), "The view you adopt for yourself profoundly affects the way you lead your life" (p. 6). Those who believe their abilities are innate and cannot be changed are presumed to have a fixed mindset, and those who believe their development is based on the effort they exert are said to have a growth mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset are always seeking validation and feel the need to prove themselves as they want to always appear smart. In contrast, those with a growth mindset want to improve and master their abilities so exhibit mastery-oriented versus helplessness behaviour when they face setbacks (Dweck & Yeager, 2019).

Dweck and colleagues have conducted numerous studies to support these theories (Dweck, 2016; Dweck & Yeager, 2019; Yeager & Dweck, 2020). When students believed their abilities could be developed, they approached challenging assignments differently; they viewed failure as a growth experience, and they were motivated to try harder on tests and evaluations. On the contrary, those with fixed mindsets tended to run away from challenges as they may associate high effort with low ability level. Based on her research findings, Dweck suggests a variety of methods for encouraging a growth mindset, a few include: setting learning goals instead of performance goals, praising for efforts (process praise) rather than praising for intelligence (person praise), considering instructional strategies which highlight the learning/process-oriented versus performance/person-oriented practices, and having teachers model their own belief in the student's ability to grow (Dweck, 2016; Haimovitz & Dweck, 2017; RSA, 2013). Even if a student has a growth mindset, the application of their efforts may be negatively affected in the classroom when teachers have a fixed mindset or do not believe in the student's abilities to develop beyond their current level of achievement. Although Dweck builds professional

development to understand the impact of students' and teachers' growth mindsets, there is more to learn in relation to the teacher's role in stimulating growth mindsets within their students.

Each of these three theories have distinguishing features relating to students' motivation to learn, which ultimately affects students' acquisition and retention of knowledge. Therefore, we believe that in order to meet the needs of all learners in the classroom, it is insufficient to consider one single theory or one single instructional strategy; it is the integration of all three contemporary theories which may provide a practical new framework to support teachers' practices. We now turn to factors which connect the theories.

In order to understand a student's motivation to learn, we need to first examine their motivational tendencies by identifying their levels of self-efficacy and perceived competence and determining how these translate into intrinsic or extrinsic motivation, which lead to a fixed or growth mindset. Therefore, we focus on three themes among the early and contemporary theories that drive different types of motivation.

1. Influences of self-efficacy, perceived competence, and autonomy on motivation.
2. Mastery experiences and performance outcomes related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
3. Meaningful feedback by praising for effort instead of praising for intelligence.

Influences of Self-Efficacy on Motivation

A student's initial motivation to learn is influenced by several aspects including self-efficacy in their abilities to perform a specific or multiple tasks. Bandura suggested this requires an internal belief in oneself and the opportunity to experience successful achievements (Bandura, 1997). Since previous experiences are a key factor of self-efficacy, students with special education needs have been found to have low self-efficacy because of repeated academic failure (Rhew et al., 2018). Bandura believed that verbal persuasion or validation from others may increase this self-efficacy. However, Dweck (2009) stipulated the type of feedback was also important. She proposed that praise from others can increase self-efficacy as long as students are praised for their efforts of overcoming challenging tasks, rather than only being praised for performance outcomes. Rogers also believed that teachers needed to be authentically caring and empathic in order to build trusting relationships with students (Whitely, 1972). These elements of the humanistic and self-efficacy theories constituted Matt's first experience of learning at the Montessori school he attended at age three.

Matt's Initial Experience at school

> I was stimulated by the melodic echoes from my teacher when she welcomed us to class each day during the attendance ritual of singing out the names of each student. When she got to me, she would sing, "Matthew, are you here right now" and I had to sing back, "Yes, I am and I'm ready to work." She also made it safe to fail with her encouraging words if I was unable to perform a task. When I reflect on my earliest memories of school, this student-centered approach always comes to mind and I wonder if it has any relevance to my current passion in music.

The Montessori Method of learning aligns with the humanistic theory; the focus is on the student from the moment they walk into the classroom. The teacher's goal is to provide a safe and caring environment where students are not afraid to make mistakes. Rogers reminded teachers in his interview with Dr. Whitely (1972) that "it's okay to make mistakes, let teachers create a climate so there is discussion of failures to learn" (31:00 min).

Although my initial school experiences were rarely replicated in the public school system, I do recall instances when teachers found ways to support my self-efficacy and competence levels once they understood me as an individual learner.

Influences of Competence, Autonomy and Relatedness on Motivation

Self-efficacy and competence have distinct differences as Ryan and Deci (2000) state that self-efficacy focuses on the level of behavior, whereas perceived competence is unlikely to be associated with behavioral outcomes unless the need for autonomy is also met. In order to trigger intrinsic motivation, one must believe they have the ability (perceived competence) and internal desire (autonomy) to complete the task (Rodgers et al., 2014; Ryan, 1982). SDT also proposes a sense of security and relatedness drive intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). If a person is in any way influenced by external factors in their decision to complete the task, the behavior is no longer autonomous or self-determined (Deci et al., 1991). Molly's transitions through the optional French immersion programs at her school affected her perceived competence and relatedness often leading to extrinsic instead of intrinsic motivation.

Molly's Experiences with Languages

After I came to Canada, Mom enrolled me in Mandarin lessons in order to maintain some of my Chinese culture. I found it difficult adopting the language, especially when I was the only one in the family learning Mandarin, so the lessons were paused at my request. However, Mom pursued the quest for exposure to another language and streamed me into the French immersion program in senior kindergarten. Although I tried my best to keep up with the class, learning French at five years old was hard. Other than the basics, I didn't really understand anything the teacher was saying so I just pretended by nodding my head as I tried to mimic the actions of my peers. Once my teacher and parents realized that French immersion was not the best fit for me at that time, my parents transitioned me back to the English stream until grade six at which time I made the decision to move back to an extended French program. I interpreted my initial transition from French back to English as a failure as all my friends were still taking French. When I realized how easy English was compared to French, I felt I was missing a challenge, so I started inflicting expectations on myself to always maintain high grades. I wonder now if I was just creating my own stereotypes of what I thought others expected of me because I was Asian, as I always wanted to appear smart. I think I was extrinsically motivated because I was more worried about the perceptions of others than considering my own interests and values first. I wondered if the reasons for my disposition were related to my tribulations during infancy. Although I did not grow up in China, my perspectives resembled those of students from China where an association was found between fixed mindset and "fear of failure" (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). I am not clear whether my goals were based on 'focused achievement,' where a person does not want to appear unintelligent in front of others or 'normative achievement' with the natural desire to do well in school (Yeager & Dweck, 2020).

Dweck states that if a person is extrinsically motivated, they are likely to have a fixed mindset, but SDT claims there are different levels of extrinsic motivation which are controlled or autonomous (Dweck, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2020). Therefore, we need to deepen our understanding of the SDT continuum of types of motivation, which is illustrated in Figure 1. On one end of the continuum is amotivation, which is a complete lack of motivation compared to intrinsic motivation where tasks are completed out of pure enjoyment and interest without any expected rewards or reinforcement (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In the center lies extrinsic motivation, which is regulated in four ways through external, introjected, identified, and integrated forms of regulation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The identified and integrated forms of regulation are categorized as autonomous motives because although some are affected by external factors, the intention is to accomplish for self rather than for others. On the contrary, external and introjected forms of regulation are referred to as controlling motives solely based on expectation of reward, or avoidance of punishment and the need for approval or validation (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

Based on these SDT definitions, Mom believes that Molly's motives fall between introjected and identified forms of regulation because of Molly's desire for security, acceptance, and approval while possessing strong personal values to succeed based on self-inflicted expectations. We next examine how mastery of experiences affects motivation.

Intrinsic Motivation Through Mastery of Experiences

Mastery of experience can increase self-efficacy, and enhance perceived competency (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Ryan, 1982; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Providing opportunities to master experiences can also move behaviors from extrinsically to intrinsically motivated actions. However, students also need to be ready to master their experiences. If students are compelled to perform actions before they are developmentally ready to master them, their motives may remain externally regulated or introjected (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Matt's initial experiences with oral and written communication demonstrate how perceived competency and limited opportunities for mastery affected his motivation.

Matt's Experiences With Oral and Written Communication

> When I transitioned to the public school board in grade one, my motivation in school plummeted when I was forced to adapt to a standardized curriculum that didn't consider my learning differences. Despite a diagnosis of dysgraphia, I recalled countless hours of being pressured to write my thoughts on paper. I couldn't understand why I was unable to express my thoughts orally or through music, which came naturally to me. When I did have the opportunity to talk but I did not respond fast enough, I was accused of not listening when I was simply processing my thoughts. My initial joy of learning from my Montessori days was squashed and then most academic tasks started to seem insurmountable.
>
> Was I really incapable? Was this my low perceived competence, or was it the teacher's low perceived competence of me, or both? The teacher seemed to be portraying the characteristics of a fixed mindset as she judged my ability based on an assumption that I was deliberately not meeting her expectations without having a holistic picture of me. It would be difficult for the teacher to provide opportunities to master my experiences when she was not even aware of my strengths or interests or what motivated me to succeed.

Dewey proposed that teaching should begin at the student's readiness level, and that prior experiences and interests should be promoted and woven into the curriculum (Feinberg, 2014). Rogers iterated an example of transitioning a student to mastery in his interview with Dr. Whitely.

> Instead of forcing a student to agonize over writing when they aren't ready then lose interest, Rogers suggested the teacher encourage the student to tell his story to the teacher or the whole class while the teacher scribes for him. Then when the other students get excited about the story, the student will be motivated to start writing on his own. Small doses of programmed learning when the student is ready. (Whitely & Cohen, 1972, 37 min.)

King and Watson's (2010) research on teaching excellence further proposed that teachers are accountable for developing a student's own belief in their potential to succeed. This is especially important for students with learning disabilities. According to Deci et al. (1992), encouraging competence in students with learning disabilities positively affected their motivation to learn as competence is associated with achievement. In fact, some students with mental delays sought pleasure from challenging tasks. However, Dweck (1999) stated that an overemphasis on performance goals may also hinder students' progress if students feel they are unable to meet the teacher's expectations.

Mastery of experience is sometimes interchanged with achievement-based performance outcomes, but these are distinctive concepts. In Dweck's work on achievement goal theory, achievement-based performance (performance goals) was intended to prove one's ability, whereas the objective of mastery of experiences (learning goals) was to develop or improve one's ability. The beginning of Dweck's work on growth mindset stemmed from the realization that, "the ability that people wish to 'prove' (fixed mindset) had a different feel to it than the ability that people wish to 'improve' (growth mindset)" (Dweck & Yeager, 2019, p. 483). Therefore, the growth mindset was derived from a mastery-orientation as opposed to an achievement-based philosophy. This perspective also aligned with the SDT continuum of motivation, which would suggest that those with a growth mindset also inhibit some level of autonomous extrinsic motivation or intrinsic motivation as illustrated in Figure 1.

In addition to considering a student's motivation in attaining their goals, Dweck's research also distinguished the differences of providing feedback by praising for efforts based on how hard an individual works to achieve a goal, rather than praising for intelligence or the actual outcome or grade level achieved (Dweck, 2016).

Providing Meaningful Feedback and Praising for Effort

Haimovitz and Dweck's (2017) review of research on practices that instill a growth mindset evidenced the importance of the process of learning. Students who were praised for intelligence viewed intelligence as a fixed trait regardless of their efforts. If they achieved high grades with little or no effort, they may believe they have mastered the learning, when, in fact, this may not be the case. Alternatively, when they encountered obstacles or failure, these students with a fixed mindset may believe they are incapable of improving. According to Dweck (2016), when a student is facing test-taking anxiety, it may be more damaging for parents and teachers to reassure students about their intelligence when trying to build a student's confidence by saying, "Look, you know how smart you are and we know how smart you are.

You've got this nailed, now stop worrying" (p. 183). This type of statement just puts more pressure on students for fear of disappointing those who may expect more of them.

However, when the process was highlighted, students who were praised for their efforts believed their abilities could be improved through hard work or specific strategies. Test scores and measures of achievement tell you where a student is, but they don't tell you where a student could end up" (Dweck, 2016, p. 66). Dweck (2016) believes that a growth mindset is developed when praising both the effort and outcome and the goal should also have value to the student.

When this distinction between praise for intelligence and praise for effort is not fully understood, the outcome may become more relevant to the teacher or parent than to the learner or child.

During Matt's educational journey, grades did not mean much to him, so he usually exerted little effort to attain high grades, but for Molly, grades meant everything and she worked very hard to achieve high grades. Based on Dweck's theories of intelligence, if grades came naturally to Molly without the effort, she may be presumed to have a fixed mindset and since Matt was not motivated to put in the effort, the presumption may also be that he has a fixed mindset. But are these assumptions true? There is more to be considered about these profiles before we can automatically assume these labels. Therefore, we look at an example from each of Matt's and Molly's grade 12 experiences in preparation for their postsecondary journeys to explore the possibilities.

Matt's grade 12 experience

> Since most of the courses I selected in grade 12 were of interest to me, my grades were much higher in grade 12 than previous years and by the middle of the year, my grade average was about 80%. It wasn't until Mom told me that if I continue to maintain this average, I could obtain an Ontario Scholar achievement award, so I started exerting a little more effort than usual. Initially, I was motivated to achieve the goal, primarily because of my mom's belief in my abilities, but after I met the goal and obtained the certificate of achievement, it didn't seem that relevant as so many others were also awarded the same certificate. Reflecting back, my biggest regret about grade 12 was switching from the academic English course in a classroom with a very challenging teacher to the applied English course in an online setting which was almost too easy. Grade 12 English was a required course to graduate high school; the academic English course was required for university and the applied English course meant the only option was college. Up until grade 12, I had met all the academic course requirements to go to university, but I was unable to receive the support I needed from the academic English teacher. So, I had to either risk failing the academic course and not graduate at all or take an easier course that also helped me achieve the Ontario Scholar recognition, which ironically in the end really did not mean much.
>
> Although Mom's intention was in the right place to help me succeed, she was actually promoting a fixed rather than a growth mindset in me. I think at the time my brain wasn't fully developed so I did everything based on extrinsic motivation, but I am now realizing how rejuvenating it is to do things that I want to do and that are good for me, so I guess my brain is now fully developed. Growth mindsets are developed by encouraging individuals to master experiences, not by forcing upon them achievement-based performance goals. Therefore, it is also important that students are intrinsically motivated to attain their own goals, rather than the goals of others.

Molly's grade 12 experience

> The majority of my high school was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, which meant the environments included online, in-person, and hybrid, combining online with in-person settings. It also meant taking eight, four, or two courses at a time with different levels of intensity. There were no exams during this entire period which will likely create more challenges for me in university. Although at the time it was nice not having exams, the stress of achieving super high grades in grade 12 for competitive university programs really took its toll on me with my level of anxiety going through the roof on numerous occasions. Some teachers indicated they wanted to prepare us for university by experimenting with different test taking strategies, but the focus was on grades rather than the process to retain the information, study for the test, and actually take the test. It did not help when teachers would tell me not to worry because I already had high grades. This was not the type of support I needed when in one course my grades ranged from 65 to 95% because of the state of my anxiety when completing timed tests. It was not until other students and I voiced our concerns to the guidance counselors and the Vice Principal that student support started becoming more important than teacher driven test-taking experiments, which were clearly not working.

Matt and Molly's experiences indicate that students with and without learning differences possess a wide range of learning needs. The needs are not always apparent so teachers must be willing to look beyond achievement-based performance and consider the efforts of students, intrinsic and external motivations, value of goals, and environmental factors to really determine if mastery-based learning is occurring. However, teachers also faced challenges in fulfilling these obligations. In Deci's et al. (1991) research on factors affecting motivation and education, they found that the degree to which teachers are autonomy supportive versus controlling had an impact on students' motivation and self-determination. Teachers who felt pressured by administrators to ensure students were performing to a certain standard, or experienced pressures from parent groups, or other external forces outside the school system, were more controlling of their students. The controlling behavior of teachers negatively affected students' self-determination and motivation to learn. However, when teachers were autonomy supportive, they adopted a student-centered approach that began with understanding the child's motivational tendencies and identifying ways to foster engagement. Deci et al. (1991) suggested this includes promoting self-determination by "offering choice, minimizing controls, acknowledging feelings, and making available information that is needed for decision making and for performing the target task" (p. 342).

Yeager and Dweck (2020) also highlighted the role teachers play in developing students' mindsets, but believed there was more research to be done to understand which teacher practices promote students' growth mindsets, and how to address teachers' mindsets about themselves and their students. They also recognized that changing teacher behavior through professional development alone can be challenging. Therefore, Yeager and Dweck's recommendation was to first focus on students' growth mindset with evidence-based interventions and support teachers in administering these interventions to their students. The hope was that teachers would see the benefits in having a growth mindset through their students and want to develop their own mindsets.

In her book *Mindset*, Dweck (2016) described the mindset of Dorothy DeLay, a teacher from the Juilliard School of Music. DeLay was unlike the other teachers who automatically weeded out students when the teachers did not automatically see talent and did not want to bother with the students. DeLay expressed

that, “If students didn’t play in tune, it was because they hadn’t learned how“ (p. 199). She intimated that it was the teachers’ role to teach everyone, but unfortunately teachers with fixed mindsets may not want to waste their time on students who they believe are born with certain abilities or talent that cannot be changed. A growth mindset teacher from one of the worst high schools in Los Angeles reflected on how to teach students with learning challenges by asking himself, “How can I teach them?” not “Can I teach them?” and “How can they learn best?” not “Can they learn?” (p. 64).

Concluding Remarks

The journeys of Mom, Matt, and Molly have illustrated benefits and challenges of varying learning environments and instructional strategies. Their experiences also imply it may be difficult to determine which students have a fixed or growth mindset, or are intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn. A combination of theories may need to be considered. The climb to developing growth mindsets may seem unconquerable for teachers with a fixed mindset. However, Mom says this is not an impossible target, as she shares an observation of Matt and Molly in each of their own first teaching experiences:

> As I passed the dining room table, I overheard Molly tutoring her grade two student; she exclaimed ”wow, that was amazing. I can see how much you practiced and how far you have come along. You should be really proud of yourself.” And then as I approached the basement, I heard Matt energetically modelling and then simplifying a fancy drum roll with a student, who was once a challenge to keep focused. Matt told me his secret was building relationships through the student’s interests.

If Matt and Molly, with no previous teaching experience, can have such an impact on their students, just imagine what can be accomplished with ongoing research and the development of growth mindsets in students as well as teachers.

Instead of creating more IEPs that compel teachers to implement strategies which benefit only one learner at a time, maybe when teachers identify the strengths, interests, and motivational tendencies of all learners, they will be able to design instructional practices that benefit all learners in inclusive classrooms.

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Exporting Educational Change: Unexamined Assumptions

Lori D. Rabinovitch

Abstract

This paper takes a philosophical look at what it means to talk about educational change in the context of the global proliferation of Western secular liberal democratic values. A handful of challenges, contradictions, and incoherencies that potentially impede the success of educational change projects in developing countries are examined with a view to furthering discussion about what vision of the learner and society they promote, either implicitly or through taken-for-granted assumptions. Politics, leadership, and timelines become impediments to real change. Brief reference is made to these concepts. The author provides examples from 10 years of international curriculum work on several continents in an attempt to highlight some of the latent irregularities that impede the progress of educational change endeavors.

Background

Countries around the world are increasingly seeking expertise and financial support from international organizations to help them construct and implement reforms of their entire education systems. This is occurring at a time when many previously colonialized countries enjoy independence, have implemented compulsory schooling, and are now addressing outdated and inappropriate curricula that reflect an earlier period in their histories. International education organizations have recently experienced an exponential growth in the number of requests from developing nations for expert assistance in the field of curriculum development.

At first glance, these well-intentioned partnerships represent a pivotal moment of change. But is the confluence of differing circumstances too great for any real change to occur? Which values will dominate these interactions, and what vision of society will be constructed? For example, what happens when religious belief systems meet individualist secular interpretations of the world? Under such conditions, is educational change possible?

As we in the West become increasingly embedded in the humanism of individual rights and the metaphysics of veganism, developing countries are struggling more with the luxury of feeding their populations than with the extravagance of choice. Hegemonic values shared by international organizations are initially unquestioned within these partnerships because they are ubiquitous and because they represent freedom and wealth. Eventually, disseminating values that were not locally derived or articulated, creates separations and contradictions. The end result is often a failure of change on the ground.

Three brief examples, based on personal experiences, are included in an attempt to illustrate these viewpoints.

Educational Change, Curricular Approaches

It is not a new idea to say that one intended purpose of the institutionalized education of our children is, in part, to indoctrinate them into the social norms, values, and beliefs of a given society.

Together with these parochial values, the relationship between knowledge and learners has been embodied in educational change through successive transformations and iterations of curricular approaches. This section briefly surveys educational change and a few curricular approaches and their attendant values; this is significant for understanding the broad currents traversing the international education sector, and for attempting to interrogate the limits and impacts of choices being made, and models being promoted. Strongly held beliefs about education's foundations are carried forward, conflated, and compounded with each potential curricular approach.

The early success of compulsory schooling is traditionally paired with a content-based curricular approach to education. Implicit in this model is the notion, inherited from the Enlightenment, that the world is knowable, linear, and decipherable. Science, but more generally the scientific method, becomes the standard for every curriculum decision from content to method, from practice to evaluation. A strong emphasis on sameness and comparison, on categories and labels, supports the measurements by which educational success is judged. In this scientific model of schooling, there is little explicit discussion of the values being promoted. Autonomy, individuality, and the concept of self are all based on a taken-for-granted liberal worldview. Truths exist unquestioned, and one purpose of education is to learn about, and often memorize, these truths. Almost no attention is paid to the notion that certain facts, words, behaviors, or lines of enquiry and research, serve to privilege some segments of large diverse populations while disadvantaging others. Formal educational settings—schools—are microcosms of, and training grounds for, the real world. This is why schools generally promote certain types of behavior such as punctuality, neatness, respect for authority, uniformity, and even dress codes. Traditional foundations permeate the everyday realities of contemporary educational reforms and curricular approaches, even where more progressive claims are made.

Curricular models such as the whole school model, combined with open classrooms and the communicative approach, represent departures from an almost factory-like model of learning. Adopting postmodern concepts, the open-endedness of relativism and interpretation temporarily replaces the absolutism of truth. Children are seen as individuals, each with their own family history, culture, language, and religious practices. Issues of identity are taken seriously both pedagogically, in terms of how children are taught, and also from an evaluative perspective. Expressive freedom is difficult to manage inside the institution of schooling; a cumbersome dichotomy leads to the coexistence of contradictory values: establishment expectations mixed with individual liberty. Psychology and sociology inform educational change. There is a non-coherence of approaches and theories, leading to individualism transcending the search for truth (Appiah, 2005).

A more contemporary direction for educational movements is towards human rights, towards an immense belief that every child on the planet deserves—and has the right to—formal schooling. Education for all becomes the catchphrase of international agencies; literacy and numeracy are priorities.

Where metaphysics and religion once implicitly justified education's larger purpose (Ferry, 2005), humanist educators seek purpose in the persistent recognition and fulfillment of individual needs. Our modern moral universe is dominated by a philosophy of the rights of humans, and this infuses educational projects. The humanist education project is creative but difficult to evaluate because there is no single vision for a meaningful life. Each person is the author of their own life, and there are no longer absolutes by which to judge meaning and situate truth. Postmodernism and relativism are brief in popularity and are transitory influences on educational change.

Technology begins to alter educational approaches, as well as access to formal schooling and institutions of higher learning. Information is ubiquitous and the Internet is everywhere, providing answers to every question. Huge swaths of the population regularly, and with almost no critical analysis, collect tiny tidbits of information. Literacy becomes a truncated version of itself to accommodate the character limits of on-line websites and applications. Important information becomes abbreviated, diluted. The public is seemingly well informed about a myriad of topics, but not educated by any previous standard. Concurrently, some employers become concerned that prospective employees have graduated from schools with scant knowledge and even less practical awareness of how to effectively and appropriately act in specific situations.

A pragmatic curricular approach that combines traditional content-driven education with action-oriented goals develops around the notion of competency, or situation-based learning. The rationale is to ensure that people who receive formal schooling are capable not only of knowing something, but also capable of applying their knowledge. A socio-ethical component of competency development in every domain underscores the importance of normativity in action. Concepts of social justice, human rights education, and value formation are attached to subject matter. Educational institutions promote cultural cohesion. What we do and how we act serve to construct a social order within and outside of institutions through the application of competencies in school-based or real-life situations.

Many regions of the developed world are seeing their homogenous populations evolve into pluralist, multilingual groups of peaceful cohabitants. The school, formal education in general, is under pressure to establish common denominators. People from disparate backgrounds read the world differently but come together to learn how to reason, analyze, and make choices. Educational institutions become microcosms of the broader society but with more control over inputs and outcomes. Conformity to collectively established rules and norms is a goal of institutional education but without the traditionalism of sameness. People learn about freedom of choice, within established constraints, by taking into account a plurality of values and this creates what Sen (2009) calls capabilities. A dialogic model of democracy is the focus of procedural institutional choices and strategies. People are educated to make choices, to weigh options across a multiplicity of norms, and to understand freedom as more than personal satisfaction.

Global partnerships and trade agreements join together disparate sectors, with unfamiliar forms of cooperation across the world. Application of, and access to, these arrangements requires new linguistic configurations. Vocabularies evolve to integrate changing scientific findings, new technologies, and different forms of organization. Global conversations generate sophisticated terrain. Traditional educational models of literacy and numeracy no longer account for the complex web of moral, ethical,

social, cultural, political, and economic factors that permeate every interaction. Market economy decisions dominate. The market is guided by self-interest and individual goals; the peaceful coexistence of groups across differences requires social cohesion, shared narratives, and community goals. Contradictory impulses are animating the world. Are entire populations being marginalized? Judith Butler (2015) writes about "de-constituting" the person through nonrecognition. Developing countries are only now reforming the content of colonial education systems, while inadvertently retaining traditional structures, methodologies, and hierarchies. Many are yet to address issues of poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. Will the general populations of developing countries be equipped for large-scale decision making that requires, for example, an understanding of global markets or the application of artificial intelligence? As Butler suggests, perhaps globalization can be understood as the new colonialism, equally adept at the structural marginalization of whole populations. Are there educational changes and curriculum development models capable of altering this trajectory? This is the preoccupation of leaders in the developing world; this is why increasing numbers of politicians in emerging economies are approaching international agencies with an urgency to reform their education systems.

International Development Work

It is almost always the case that developing nations seek help from international aid agencies located in Western liberal secular democracies, agencies peopled by education consultants with advanced university degrees from large metropolitan cities with heterogeneous populations. This seldom-stated description of the helping industry is not incidental to the outcomes produced through these interactions. Again, with acknowledgment of the obvious limitations caused by generalizations, many developing countries are governed by a small elite group of citizens who also hold advanced university degrees from Western institutions of higher learning. But the vast majority of citizens who comprise the relatively homogeneous populations of developing nations reaching out for assistance from international agencies, are bound by unquestioned and often deeply religious belief systems.

By the 1800s, Western philosophers treated religion as an obscure and obsolete concept (Habermas, 2012). Today, the presence of religion is once again significant. A philosophical interrogation of how religious or comprehensive worldviews overlap with secular worldviews through the process of international curriculum development work is both important and necessary. With increasing regularity, belief systems intersect in public spaces and geographic locations.

Most Western liberal democracies have moved relatively effortlessly from religious foundations to secular humanism. Shared values are socially constructed in public spaces, including educational institutions. Specific types of civic values are nurtured, and certain forms of communication are taught. Discourse ethics, as a type of communication, allows people to shift from disparate private belief systems to established public practices of mutual respect. Pluralist societies with national secular agendas require narrow and shallow comprehensive doctrines primarily built around issues of social justice. Martha Nussbaum (2013) points to the importance of learning critical faculties such as oversight, respectful dissent, compassion, debate, and analysis. By promoting moral principles, these ways of knowing become integral to the functioning of healthy democratic practices.

Because of the relatively seamless transition from the domination of homogenous religious values to secular market economy thinking, it is easy for developing nations to regard the West's ostentatious affluence with the hope of re-creating it for their own populations. Requests to emulate science and technology-based education systems that dominate certain regions of the world, often result in contradictory categories of knowledge and approaches to learning overlapping with one another. Whole populations understand the world and attendant roles and responsibilities through historically agreed upon myths and narratives. Ritualistic behavior is structured around closed belief systems and a worldview that nourishes the collective and binds it together. Self-referential questioning separates people from group belief systems (Habermas, 2012). Post-metaphysical thinking deconstructs religious content and translates it into forms of thinking unbounded by religion. Western thinking is very fluid and changes with self-understanding. This is different from religious communities that owe their certainty to an external power.

Is it helpful for one region of the world to export categories of knowledge, however successful they may have been for a given population, and expect the same results to occur across the world? For example, oral cultures represent knowledge differently from written and print cultures. Traditional forms of representation not only alter visual images of knowledge, but also what can be known. Although it is true that new resources lead to new learning, it is also true that new learning disrupts taken-for-granted values and assumptions. Are international education agencies equipped with the theories, methodologies, and practices to account for such a complex web of interrelationships?

In a book about the concept of systems, Clifford Siskin (2017) points out that modernity is mediated through the proliferation of systems. The systemization of knowledge is now ubiquitous in technologically advanced societies where new knowledge continues to be generated, organized, and transformed as a result of its juxtaposition to other forms of knowledge. Children born into Western market economies are exposed to the pervasive use of technology almost from the womb. In many instances, technological literacy is more highly developed than classical literacy. This continuously shapes and reshapes the knowledge landscape. To transport these ideas around the world is less about curriculum reform than it is about altering comprehensive belief systems.

Is it advisable, or even possible, for international education agencies to successfully transform curricula whose structure, content, and form emanate from such a different way of seeing the world? In today's education sector, understanding curriculum as a holistic enterprise points to the wide diversity of elements that combine together to orient an education system. Programs of study, pedagogical resource materials, teaching strategies and methodologies, even taken together, play an almost minor role in the significance of institutionalized education for a society. As Habermas (2012) explains, how we access the world, interpret knowledge claims, and form attitudes towards intellectual experiences, are internalized ways of being. They may be taught but not explicitly through curricula. Rather, they are systematically and repeatedly embedded in publicly debated topics of discussion. Everyday vocabulary, important questions, acceptable forms of dialogue, are not incidental to how citizens are raised from their earliest days. These pervasive encompassing forms of education function at a more primordial level than formal schooling.

To enter a developing nation and attempt to reform their formal education system without also considering the existing range and depth of concepts, norms, and beliefs binding together vast segments of the population, is to risk a new burgeoning era of colonialism. Indigenous populations have historically been made to feel alienated within their own communities as a result of practices and norms imposed from societies outside their own, however well-intentioned the goals on both sides.

Critical thinking and open forms of communication foster shared aspirations. But each society must develop its own dreams of the good life. Market shares and machine learning are only a few narrow measures of success, despite their proliferation in the media. Perhaps the question being addressed through international development work is not how to reform the curriculum of a developing nation, but rather how to spread opportunities in general more equitably worldwide. Exporting a curricular approach because it functions successfully in one country, a success based primarily on the fact that it was generated through that country's worldview, does not result in a more balanced overall distribution of wealth and resources.

Turning Point for Educational Change

It is worthwhile to think about education and change as co-mingled concepts.

In a recent book on the notion of uncertainty, Nowotny (2016) writes about our current need for systems that are complex and adaptive; the 21st century will be characterized by innovation. Paradoxically, the data-driven world in which we now operate requires a high level of stability so that algorithms can be created and applied before unanticipated events render them useless and unprofitable. Data-driven decision making predicts future behavior based on past behavior, even taking into account the unpredictability of human conduct. In much the same way, we promote educational change and curriculum reform because the human condition is one of constant evolution and change, even if in practice education remains a conservative domain. Just visit a new city and stroll through the streets looking for schools. With no guidance or signposts, schools are almost always identifiable; they are structurally recognizable. Does resistance to change literally permeate the walls?

Education systems everywhere, in recent years, have benefited from the disbursement of significant economic measures and the allocation of expertise around concepts and ideas deemed most relevant for the 21st century. Developing countries are often somewhat divided when asked to express their educational needs because, while they desire access to the economic success visible on the world stage, they also understand the limits of their own resources and the needs of local populations. The author's firsthand experiences, combined with several years of anecdotal evidence collected during periods of international development work, reveal these contradictions in leadership aspirations at the national level. The varied and irreconcilable needs and values represented by disparate social spaces highlight the harm hegemony can do to real and persistent basic requirements. International experts, speaking from a Western liberal democratic viewpoint that takes for granted social movements such as anti-racism, feminism, equal rights for all sexual orientations, environmentalism, secularism, and so on, may not even see the everyday necessities being glossed over by concepts never locally debated, constructed, or fought for. It is also significant that many international education consultants have secular backgrounds or, if

religious, have learned that in secular societies religious practices and discussions are reserved for private spaces. In many developing countries, religion is a unifying factor. It is not private but public and its attendant practices and beliefs are quite literally written into state-sanctioned educational materials. When one set of educators believes that religion answers an entire category of questions and their partners in the same educational reform project are steeped in the humanist values of secular liberal democracies, the attendant differences are not insignificant. The result of combining international expertise and financial aid with local needs and practices often creates a confusion of values and norms, and an impasse where educational change is the goal.

The project of democracy is another area where differences are glossed over, and assumptions are made about what is best for a given group of people. Democratic procedures support pluralist values and make room for divergent practices and belief systems. Although the language of democracy is becoming internationally pervasive, the actual mechanisms that must be publicly constructed, if ambiguity and difference are to be peacefully integrated, require a long period of gestation. In Western liberal democracies, even with the language and tools necessary to debate complex issues, we are continually steeped in argument and debate about the dominance of traditional values versus a public framework for social justice. Imagine the introduction of an educational reform project that takes for granted the end result of such debates, but where no such debates have taken place, and scant background knowledge is available. Democracy and justice require high levels of literacy. It is deeply problematic when whole segments of the population are excluded from public reasoning but subject to its decisions (Sen, 2009). Traditional models of education promote, usually implicitly, a model of democracy based on the commonalities and shared identities of a population's vision of a society and its values. A republican model of democracy recognizes the normative aspects of collective action with its attendant translation into school as a form of common culture and social cohesion. A potential risk is sameness, uniformity, and loss of authenticity. A liberal model of democracy promotes multiculturalism, diversity, pluralist values, and emphasizes the dignity attached to human rights for all individuals and special interest groups. A potential risk of liberal democracy is that an overemphasis on individuality limits notions of social justice and peaceful coexistence across differences (Rabinovitch, 2005). As Robert Dahl (1998) explains, certain qualities are present in every model of democracy but differences between models are manifested in disparate practices. It is important to learn more about what model of democracy is dominating an educational change process and to analyze whether the concepts of autonomy and citizenship associated with this model are coherent with, and capable of underwriting, the needs of a particular population.

Notions of evaluation, categorization, comparison, classification, and ranking plague Western educators as they argue about objectivity and subjectivity, right and wrong, or even whether there is such a thing as a true statement. Uncertainty has become the new norm for the peaceful coexistence of both people and ideas (Nowotny, 2016). In developing nations, certainty is still a much sought-after goal. Having a trusted means for measuring and comparing learning is a stabilizing factor and provides a country with targets and indicators. Without the attendant belief that all students are potentially eligible to receive work qualifications, as is the belief system in Western liberal democracies, developing countries rely on

technical measurements that create specific kinds of consequences. Differing perspectives about the evaluation of learning are almost incommensurate.

Hegemony

Recently, and as a direct result of on-line schooling during the Covid-19 pandemic, signs proliferated on the leafy front lawns of middle-class Toronto neighborhoods extolling the virtues of face-to-face education and opposing the continued use of a hybrid model of schooling that combines on-line with in-person interactions. At exactly the same time, international education organizations were developing a new hybrid project, specifically aimed at developing countries, that would allow children in remote villages to access daily on-line educational experiences. This simple example not only points to huge disparities in access to schooling around the globe, but also to our deeply held liberal values in the West about the right to, and definition of, quality schooling.

The construction of knowledge comes about through widespread and shared access to formal and informal models of education. But the usefulness of knowledge is enhanced through cross-cultural exchanges, openness to interpretation, and the awareness that social factors contextualize knowledge differently for people across the world. Persistently and very obviously, the Western democratic liberal traditions of scholarship still guide the production of knowledge, its vocabulary, its structure, and—most significantly—what is being valued and shared. Hegemonic approaches to social issues, including education, contradict our perceived need for institutions that promote pluralist values and norms. But a wide range of interest groups can be unwieldy to govern, and even more difficult to educate where the needs of learners are diverse. Hegemony blankets divisions and artificially unites. It creates an adequate level of sameness for governance to succeed. Specific needs, emanating from cultural, linguistic, or religious differences—as well as economic disparities—cannot all be accounted for. The needs are too vast and the demands too numerous for institutional authority. Therefore, despite local initiatives, country-wide reforms, and global funding, schooling remains relatively unchanged around the globe. As Laclau (2000) puts it, hegemony fills gaps.

At a practical level, the educational change process is often led by the selection of a particular curricular model. It matters very much which curricular model or approach is adopted by a country or region because, embedded within this approach, are values about how a certain kind of citizenry is nourished within a vision of society. Curricular approaches, or models, develop over time and their evolution often reflects broader changes occurring at some invisible location outside of an educator's vantage point and entirely separate from the practices of formal schooling.

Curriculum Reform Projects

As it eventually became known, Quebec's "Pedagogical Renewal" project was an attempt to replace the *Régime Pédagogique* that was in place during the second half of the 20th century. The *Régime Pédagogique* was an objectives-based curricular approach that included very specific targets designed to measure fragments of information accumulated and collated over predetermined timelines. The new curricular approach, adopted by the government and implemented incrementally in all publicly funded institutions of learning, was meant to swing the pendulum of education in another direction. Competency-based learning incorporates the content of traditional programs of study but organizes it at the service of active student-centered learning situations. During the period of implementation, it was often the case that educators—both administrators and teachers—learned to use new terminology without actually altering their fundamental understanding of the relationship between the learner and knowledge, between students and teachers. Thus, even in an environment where curricular changes were specifically constructed to address perceived problems in the education system, they did little to influence what occurred during the everyday application of school practices. Underlying belief systems about the representation of knowledge, how learning is measured, and perhaps most importantly, which knowledge has value, represent an almost impenetrable shared foundation. For these reasons, real change was minimal and, in many institutions, nonexistent.

Foundational belief systems are durable and inflexible at an unconscious level. Although Quebec's population has largely purged religion from its public spaces, the hierarchical relationships taught by the Church are well embedded in the psyche of its citizens. It was enlightening to observe how closely teachers adhered to traditional classroom practices even while ostensibly experimenting with innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Actions often originate from unquestioned and deeply held belief systems. As well, they are secured in place with spoken and written words absorbed from infancy. Particularly in contemporary secular societies, few people critically examine the relationship between their public actions and their privately held beliefs. The agreed-upon assumption is that religious thought has been expunged, or at least privatized. In reality, many traditional religious beliefs permeate everyday actions even while vocabulary indicates otherwise.

If this is the context for an innovative and significant liberal democratic educational reform being implemented, with fluctuating levels of success, then the terrain into which these reforms are being exported, is even more intricately complex. Below are a few examples where contradictory sets of concepts intersect to create dilemmas for educators on both sides of the curriculum reform projects.

To begin with, in many developing countries, several first languages are spoken from region to region, with a single official language—often the language of the colonizer—tying together institutional practices. International education agencies offer theoretical ideas, training, and support materials in a given country's official language, but this is rarely the first language of the educators tasked with constructing and implementing an education reform for their country. Embedded in languages are concepts and beliefs about how the world is structured. A group of educators proficient in the official language will be capable of reading and understanding support material without necessarily interpreting its more profound implications and nuances. For example, an unquestioned assumption embedded in

Western liberal concepts is that science and reason lead to truth. In religious cultures, truth is a question of faith. Educational reforms are being introduced into these complicated public domains without the requisite examination of overlapping worldviews.

In some developing nations where the population is deeply religious, the educational leadership clearly articulates their desire to create a secular curriculum that would affirm all religions as equally worthy, which is a decision modeled on contemporary Western social movements. At the same time, only the tenets of their own religion appear in curricular materials, their own religious calendar prescribes holidays, and the Ministry of Education stops all official work during their major holy days. When consultants from international agencies ask about these embedded practices and assumptions, officials do not even have a framework from within which they can understand the question itself. As Appiah (2018) observes, religion is about faith, identity, and community. In a theocratic society where religion is what binds a population together, adding the word secular to official documentation alters very little in practice.

Prominent citizens of developing countries often constitute the personnel responsible for curriculum reform projects. Generally, these educational leaders are Western educated and fluent in the official language of the reform. As a result of living in wealthy nations and experiencing firsthand the freedoms and prosperity of progressive liberal democracies, at times these educators demonstrate an ambition to return to, or reproduce, that way of life. Anecdotal evidence from international education consultants indicates that such aspirations are often not commensurate with the overall skill levels and competencies of a population. As well, a leader's objectives may not correspond to the needs of the general population. The resulting gap creates another roadblock to the successful implementation of curriculum reform projects—confused and unrealistic timelines. Ambitious educational leaders are anxious to demonstrate the results of a successful educational change process, both to their own populations as well as to players on the international stage; simultaneously, personnel on the ground may be struggling to meet the exigencies of a rapid timeline for a complex mix of reasons including: lack of language fluency, a necessity for more training, a clash in foundational belief systems, the requirement to supervise vast geographic regions, disparate levels of needs across the nation, insufficient resources, and self-doubt about their own abilities to enact nationwide change.

In recent years, there has been an exponential increase in the number of requests from developing countries for assistance with their educational change processes and projects. In part, this results from an acknowledgment that colonial curricular systems and materials do not meet the needs of a country's population. As well, with the proliferation of technology and social media, people have access to global market commodities and are eager to share in these promises. Because the rationale of international education agencies is to facilitate curriculum reform and restructuring, they immediately offer their services and expertise.

It takes years of debate and dialogue for a given population to analyze the educational needs of its citizenry. The process is lengthy, in part, because participants are learning to distinguish between the formal and informal organizational structures of education, and the content of a curriculum. An organizational system is about equality and access. How knowledge is organized and prioritized

highlights a country's norms and values. These are complex concepts and require time, vocabulary, widespread involvement, and a familiarization with the rules of consensus making. Without citizen participation, even a so-called reformed curriculum may simply reflect concepts exported from international consultants.

International education organizations and international monetary organizations need each other. A cursory examination of a few websites indicates the areas for which data is collected. Indicators of success are measured in brief increments. In reality, often an entire generation of students is needed before researchers are able to draw conclusions about an educational reform process. In Quebec, a change in political leadership a few years after the launch of a province-wide curriculum reform resulted in immediate changes to some of its important tenets. Insufficient time had elapsed since the reform's inception for concrete improvements to be measurable. In its diluted form, many educators, as well as the general public, characterized it as a failure.

Liberal democracies are deeply influenced by market economies. Markets are volatile, measurable, and immediate. Increasingly, and with growing urgency, people are intolerant of waiting for the results of almost anything for more than a few seconds, let alone a few decades. Education is a long-term project. Educational change in a stable environment is a minefield of resistances and openings. Exporting educational change projects and curricular approaches across the globe is layered with well-intentioned hubris.

Personal Examples

Included in this section are three lived examples from my tenure, over the past decade, as an international education consultant. In each instance, not only did actual practices contradict some of the values espoused by the curriculum reform under development, but my own assumptions about the broader value-terrain in which we were operating. I was part of a team exporting ideas about educational change. These ideas were constructed in a Western, democratic, secular, and egalitarian context. The following three examples taught me that helping countries rewrite their official documentation is the easy part of international curriculum development work. Digging deeper, I discovered the more complex terrain wherein the assumptions of all contributors were embedded.

It is expensive and time consuming for international agencies to send a team of consultants to support curriculum development work around the world. During a trip to a country for which a team of three consultants had been transported from Canada and Europe, an official visit from the Pope overlapped with scheduled work sessions. Traffic was diverted and roads were closed for the papal parade and open-air prayer meetings. However, it was not the inconvenience of city travel that restricted productivity; the country's president declared several consecutive days of national holidays during which almost every member of the Ministry of Education, as well as most teachers registered for the curriculum development workshops, were lining the streets and praying with the Pope. The team's abbreviated timeline resulted in only a cursory presentation of the concepts under investigation.

Unexamined assumption of international education consultants: Religion is a private matter and will not be given priority over organized, time-sensitive, and costly work sessions.

Immediately upon our arrival in another country, the head of our team of international consultants was asked if he would find a replacement for me. This request came from the Deputy Minister of Education responsible for the country's curriculum reform project. The request was made, not because he was unsatisfied with my expertise, work methods, or interpersonal communication skills, but because I was a woman. Although the team leader refused the Deputy Minister's demand, I was left to work alone for most of our visit, accomplishing significantly less than my male counterparts.

Unexamined assumption of international education consultants: Women and men are equal, and should be judged on their merits and contributions to the work process.

While working in another country (which shall remain unnamed for the purposes of this article), each work session began with a prayer. The entire Ministry of Education and all of the country's schools were closed for religious holidays. Despite evidence of a homogenous religious belief system across the country, the Ministry of Education representatives wrote a new curriculum orientation document that included the following contradictory statements:

> This country is a secular state and therefore every citizen has the right to associate with any religion representing their beliefs. Learners will be able to believe in the oneness of God and to understand that there is only God alone, and this God should be worshipped and no other creation.

Unexamined assumption of international education consultants: A secular state is one in which national public institutions and shared cultural practices, including education, are separate from private religious beliefs; private religious beliefs may or may not espouse the oneness or singularity of God, or any God at all.

Postscript

The Minister of Education for Ghana, Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, recently traversed his country visiting schools and speaking in classrooms. At the end of each visit, he asked the students if they had any questions. Across the country, not a single child responded, not a single child asked a question. Many students copied down his words in their notebooks. He finished the tour by asking his own questions about why these children do not understand the role they play in the construction of knowledge, or how to use their voices to enter public conversations. Are they implicitly learning passivity in the face of perceived authority? Do they hear his words as formal and institutional, and therefore having no personal relationship to them?[1]

Western secular school systems try to encourage critical dialogue. Children are praised for asking questions and, if done respectfully, for challenging authority. These are some of the characteristics that children need to learn for democratic exchanges to occur. Is this one of the unexamined assumptions being implicitly exported through international education reform projects, and which turns out to be incongruent on the ground?

Note

1. Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum addressed the African National Commission for UNESCO, September 12, 2022.

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Uncovering Embodied Community Cultural Wealth: *Hung dee moy* Brings Forth New Possibilities

Sumer Seiki

Abstract

In this paper, educators unpack their community cultural wealth, also known as *hung dee moy* 同姊妹, a Toisanese-Chinese sisterhood support system. I narratively inquire alongside my participants Felicia and Mary, uncovering their embodied experiences of *hung dee moy* knowledge, passed from their mothers to them and onto the next generation. In attending closely to their experiences as expressions of *hung dee moy*, their narratives illuminate the interconnections between micro and macro contexts, showing how patterns of race-based exclusion and interpersonal and institutional racism affected generations of Toisanese. Participants highlight the power of *hung dee moy* to cultivate collective strength through intergenerational resistance. This paper discusses the process of uncovering generational wealth and holds the possibilities of others articulating their ancestral knowledge.

Background

> I sat with my participants Mary and Felicia at the research table again. Felicia asked me to research her mother's *hung dee moy,* a sisterhood. Both Mary and Felicia's mothers were from Toisan and subsequently worked together as cannery laborers. I shared the prior research interview transcripts with them and explained it was likely Felicia and Mary had their own *hung dee moy* sisterhood. I asked them, "did you learn how to create a *hung dee moy* sisterhood from your mothers?" Mary completely disagreed with my offering and immediately responded, "No, I don't think we're *hung dee moy*." Then, Felicia leaned forward across the table, looking Mary directly in the eyes, "No Mary, we are *hung dee moy*." (Paraphrased from field notes, April 10, 2017)

And so began our inquiry into Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mothers *hung dee moy* to better understand through unpacking the stories they carried. *Hung dee moy* 同姊妹, or Toisanese clan sisterhoods, are a relational support network characterized by Lee in his book, *The Eighth Promise* (2007). *Hung dee moy* sisters can be born into the sisterhood or married into the sisterhood; they do not have to be blood related but are linked through the family. Regardless of how one joins the sisterhood, one's membership into the *hung dee moy* is never revoked—it is a permanent relation. Loyalty bonds within the *hung dee moy* are crucial. They are as strong as familial bonds; in fact, they redefine family. This article explores a specific type of *hung dee moy* in the diaspora and mainland and offers readers an opportunity to explore their own community cultural wealth.

Educators like Felicia and Mary bring important knowledge and insights "that are not learned in their formal schooling, but instead emerge from their own histories, families, and communities as community cultural wealth (CCW)" (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018, p. 11). Documenting complex familial knowledge is important to name and share because the invisibility of CCW is pervasive and often the untold perspectives, experiences, and histories would remain shrouded in silence (Passos DeNicolo et al., 2015, p. 232). Hence, the articulation of CCW is crucial since it names the assets and strengths of all peoples. Moreover, CCW research identifies the contributions within the experiences, skills, and knowledge practices. In this study, I explore the *hung dee moy* practices that are a part of Felicia and Mary's CCW. These stories are a part of Felicia and Mary; they are a living part of their relationship. Their story may resonate with some of your own CCW, including relational practices or intergenerational stories. It is the expressed hope of both Felicia and Mary that each of us can unpack the CCW treasures we carry. Yet, it is important to note that these CCW stories are culturally and historically specific to a time, place, and people; they are a part of Felicia and Mary.

In fact, exploration of this sacred sisterhood is timelier than ever with the rise of anti-Asian hate in the form of scapegoating, perpetual foreigner stereotypes, and increased violent attacks on Asians and Asian Americans (Sawchuck & Gewertz, 2021). Unless researchers begin to document the vast collection of often overlooked embodied CCW knowledge, Asian American educators and other educators of color will continue to be framed in deficit (Burciaga & Kohli, 2018). The more we can articulate and preserve Asian American CCW, the more we can make visible such assets and treasures, actively countering deficit frames. Urgency frames this study as these ancient *hung dee moy* CCW practices are not written. By the third and fourth generations, more and more Toisan American daughters of the diaspora know less and less about *hung dee moy*. A lack of articulation of these practices and lack of documentation of how these practices are embodied are lost with each generation. The purpose of this study is to reveal the *hung dee moy* knowledge of Felicia and Mary's embodied treasures woven and expressed in their narratives. Examining these participants' experiences helps to create a portrait of their individual and collective intergenerational agency and makes visible an ancient practice that is still in use today.

Narratives capture experience and can be a means through which embodied knowledge is articulated into language (Craig et al., 2017). Using narrative inquiry is a good way to explore such experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) because it "is part of a research genre that can uncover multiple elucidations of knowing" (Craig et al., 2017, p. 331). In fact, at the heart of narrative inquiry is a relational ethic; the researcher—deeply human, genuine, respectful, and in relationship to the participants—explores significant and meaningful aspects of the participant's lives (Kim, 2016, p.103). Thinking with stories is relational, and researching with participants can bring forth CCW-embodied knowledge. These CCW narratives serve as a counternarrative, told from an asset perspective, reframing dominant narratives and challenging deficit myths. Using critical theory as a lens to see the dialectical relation between structure and agency, I interrogate how the participants' experience *hung dee moy* and how such practices resist structural oppression. By articulating and revealing institutional oppression, we can recenter educators of color assets (Yosso, 2005). Given this context, I narratively inquire alongside Felicia and Mary, exploring their experiences of their mothers *hung dee moy* and the possibility of their own hung dee moy. This work deepens insights into the community cultural wealth of Asian America and the

process of unpacking such knowledge. Through sharing this journey, I seek to make the embodied wisdom of hung de moy visible. I do so because we must claim our place and push against the "historic erasure" of Asian American contributions (Sawchuck & Gewertz, 2021).

This project seeks to serve as a proactive representation, allowing Felicia and Mary to characterize their own community cultural wealth as Asian Americans. Additionally, I seek to expand the types of recorded *hung dee moy* practiced within a new context of the United States. I start by sharing William Poy Lee's characterization of *hung dee moy* as he recounts his mother's experiences with her mother's *hung dee moy* in China.

Hung Dee Moy 同姊妹

Hung Dee Moy as a cultural practice came from the Toisan region (**台山**), also known as Hoisan, or Taishan in Guangdong province (**廣東**) of China (Leung, 2015). Historically, the survival of the family, as well as the whole Toisan village, required collectivism; everyone was needed. Since there had been no mechanized farming equipment until the twentieth century, planting and harvesting was not accomplishable by any one individual. The division of labor between women and men's work increased productivity and allowed for village community-sized tasks to be accomplished, such as building levee walls and canals (Lee, 2007). The *hung dee moy* tasks were a part of the division of labor. The sisterhood managed a variety of tasks, including physical and emotional labor in their daily life. Physically, they oversaw farming crops, raising chickens, and maintaining family health (Lee, 2007). Emotionally, elder aunts (*ye-yehs*) and mothers were in charge of rearing children, their own and others, teaching them social rules, and maintaining customs and rituals. Lee explains these sisterhood practices of the Toisan people exemplify an ancient cultural survival system and the practice of *hung dee moy* is part of the Toisanese resilience and infrastructure of the larger collective.

Hung Dee Moy Embodied Pedagogy

The *hung dee moy* has a complex structure. Beyond collective survival, the sisterhood was organized to accomplish their purpose of members feeling a sense of belonging. The organization of the sisterhood reflected the goals, and each sister had her respective role in this matriarchal system. *Ye-yehs* were the power centers who made decisions and guided younger sisters (*moy-moys*) through example and in a relational context; rarely, if ever, was a practice manual ever provided since the teaching was always meant to be embodied (Lee, 2007, p. 14). Embodied knowledge "…is not simply knowledge of the body, but knowledge dwelling in the body and enacted through the body" (Craig et al., 2017, p. 329). *Hung dee moy* practices were engrained in *moy-moys* through both observation and direct mentorship in tasks or managing relationships. Based on age, status, and skill, *ye-yehs* would teach and pass customs intergenerationally and relationally, tailoring them to the individual sister. Teaching centered on action

in the context of a task or relationship, such as cooking soup for new mothers. As a result, women embodied *hung dee moy* knowledge through this style of instruction. Embodiment of these practices allowed sisters to be flexible and carry *hung dee moy* practices to wherever they moved. Lee also describes how the *hung dee moy* sisterhood maintained the group.

Hung Dee Moy Ji-Ji-Ja-Ja Communication

A part of group belonging was experienced through being heard in the collective discussions and decision making. Sisters would use *ji-ji-ja-ja*, a conversational method named for the sound the women would make as they conversed, much like the English term "chit chat." *Ji-ji-ja-ja* was used to build relationships, share information about lives, work out conflict, and discuss family problems (Lee, 2007, p. 313). *Ji-ji-ja-ja* can seem circular, even repetitive, as speakers explore the topic, repeating it over and over. The repetition allows time for all group members to process and understand the topics. They maintained relationships through these processes and upheld traditions through demonstrations of loyalty to the whole group collective: sharing labor, babysitting, discussing news, and sharing meals. In part, they also created belonging through these forms of socialization. Through these regular customs and frequent holiday celebrations, mentoring was a natural and consistent part of their rituals.

Methods and Data

I share a process description of my use of narrative inquiry as it offers both the researcher and participants a narrative space for telling and retelling experiences they have lived and are living. The narrative space is shaped by the meeting of storied lives (Kim, 2016). In the narrative space, we can examine the interplay between the personal and social stories of teachers, students, communities, institutions, policies, and researchers, creating an intersecting network of life threads interwoven in a particular space and time. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) explain, "the focus of narrative inquiry is not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural, and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" (pp. 42–43). Thus, this method allows for tracing generational barriers Asian Americans face within an institutional structure and historical context.

It is also essential to understand how each storied experience exists within narrative inquiry's three dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Temporality involves the concept of continuity of experience, an understanding that though we live in transition from past to present events, we carry our stories with us through time. Sociality incorporates personal, micro-level "feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions" with macro-level "existential conditions, the environment, surrounding factors and forces, people and otherwise . . . " (p. 69). The third commonplace grounds my study through the particularity of location. Narrative inquirers can use these three common places to explore identities, and they guide my multidimensional inquiry into these educators' stories (Clandinin and Connolly). Questioning, wondering, and traversing along these dimensions, narrative inquirers shift forward and back in the dimensions of time, personal situations, and

the larger social influences, seeking to understand participants' lives more fully (Clandinin & Connelly) and make CCW visible.

Felicia and Mary have been research participants in two prior studies (Seiki, 2011; Seiki, 2019). Both participants self-identify as second-generation Toisanese Americans and Asian Americans. Both were born in the baby boomer generation and grew up in the Central Valley of California. They had working-class immigrant parents; their mothers worked at a local cannery together from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. The United States Chinese Exclusion Acts, redlining housing restrictions, and open racial hostility significantly affected their parents and childhood racial experiences. I interviewed Felicia and Mary multiple times over the past 12 years. In 2009 and 2010, I interviewed Felicia and Mary and 18 other San Francisco Bay Area educators about their career and life experiences for my dissertation research. I conducted three follow-up interviews with Felicia and Mary between 2016 and 2022. Felicia and Mary's joint interviews were three sets of approximately 180 minutes. I also conducted shorter hour-long to five-minute clarification interviews individually.

In addition to the interviews, I also include in the study: field texts, artifacts, immigrant annals, and Felicia's writing. In the analysis of the narratives, I used historical public health and residential policy documents from San Francisco Bay Area public records to contextualize and corroborate their experiences. I utilize these documents and historical maps to more fully describe the narratives' temporal, social, and place-based context. Each participant's narrative, and the unpacking through analysis, make visible both the subtle and not-so-subtle ways their sisterhood lived and worked together collectively as a community to survive and thrive within the new environment of the United States. Using my data presentation and analysis rhythm, I present interview excerpts, writing, and field notes, which I then analyze through unpacking within the three-dimensional space. I show Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mother's *hung dee moy*. I reveal how they use their *hung dee moy* CCW to navigate overt racism and anti-Chinese immigrant policies. As we explore their experiences, we find ways to share embodied and sometimes hidden knowledge.

Findings

In this section, I present Mary and Felicia's writing and narrative reflections. Each long quote or writing is indented and single spaced; they share stories of their mothers *hung dee moy* practices. I compose these findings within the characteristic *hung dee moy* conversational practice of *ji-ji-ja-ja*. As each sister shares their point of view, each listening to the other, offering their analysis and ideas about their stories, they think together in a nonlinear process (Lee, 2007). I present their quotes and writings to show the ways *ji-ji-ja-ja* is used to tease, explore, and analyze their experiences of their mothers' *hung dee moy*. I do not use traditional headers as their conversations flow from one topic into the next. It may be uncomfortable as the writing style will not be in a traditional academic canon, but a hybrid between a *ji-ji-ja-ja* style and research findings.

In the dialogue below, each participant reflects on why their mothers were a part of the sisterhood and what practices they observed and experienced as *hung dee moy*. In the safety of their *ji-ji-ja-ja*

conversation, Felicia and Mary can share their intuitive understandings and process their insights so both can come forth. Felicia and Mary's topics below include this thread order: their mothers' experiences of immigration, the importance of the *hung dee moy* sisterhood and supporting each other, living in the diaspora, cultural loss, and practiced sisterhood values. Below is the first thread—their mothers' experiences of immigration.

> Felicia: If you look back at your mother and my mother, you see they never went back to China. They knew they could never go back [they could not afford the boat trip home]. So the only thing they could hold on to was what they had. It was these little traditions and things because that was the only connection they had to their home, which they would never see again. When I think about it, it makes me so sad. (Interview Transcript, April 10, 2017)

Unpacking Felicia's comment reveals the depth of separation from their homeland in immigrating to the United States. Felicia shares the emotional toll of loss as part of the disconnection. A lack of both a phone connection and the ability to travel made her mother's traditions critical. Not only was it a way for her mother to connect to home, but such traditions were also a way to re-create home in a foreign land.

Directly after Felicia's comment, Mary recounts her mother's immigrant experience coming from China to the San Francisco Bay Area. She connects to Felicia's topic of immigration experience and adds her own insights.

> Mary: [I always tell of my mom's experience when I give my Angel Island Immigration Tours]. I'm up on the stairs [of the immigration building she was forced to live in]. I always stop at the stairs, and I say this is my wall. This is why I give these tours to honor my mother. Seventeen years old, not speaking a word of English, never ever seeing her mother again, and then [the immigration officer's] segregated her and always separated her from the people she came with, her brother . . . She had to be brave. The sacrifice that my grandfather had to buy 4 round trip tickets [just in case one of his children was deported back to China]. So, I go through each one of those words. I'm choking up [with emotion] and they're [the tourists] choking up. This is [what] the wall . . . tells me. (Interview Transcripts, April 10, 2017)

Unpacking Mary's comments, through temporality, sociality, and place dimensions, I find the macro national context of racism and xenophobia in which her mother immigrated. The pervasive view of Chinese at the time was that they were perpetual foreigners that were racially unassimilable and threatening (Ngai, 2020). This mounting racial hysteria led to the enactment of anti-Chinese federal laws known as the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan, 1991). Longstanding racial hostility, the Chinese Exclusion Acts officially spanned from 1882 to 1943 and lasted far longer in practice through state and local policies. Racialized housing covenants within California and San Francisco excluded Chinese from living outside of Chinatown until the late 1950s (Brooks, 2009). Angel Island Immigration Station, which Mary references above, was built as part of the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan, 1991) and served as a detention center from 1910 to 1940. It was known for dehumanizing policies, from forced separation, unjust interrogation and deportation, and meager provisions of food and housing. Many Chinese immigrants, including both Mary and Felicia's parents, were held at Angel Island. In the excerpt above by Mary and during my earlier interviews with Felicia and Mary (Seiki, 2011), they spoke of their parents' harrowing experiences at Angel Island. Felicia and Mary's experiences of their mother's immigration as isolating and hostile reveal the backdrop for the need to collectivize and share these important (her)stories.

Below, I include an excerpt of Felicia's memory of her mother. Felicia wrote this memory decades ago and handed me a copy of her typed pages, a personal communication from April 10, 2017. In the story she captures her mother's small-town context, her Central Valley cannery working life and the loss of her husband.

> She [Felicia's mother] rested on the concrete stoop that her husband had constructed for her. "Now you won't have to stand while you wait for your ride," he proudly announced. He was always doing thoughtful things for her like planting a Chinese date tree in the backward so that she wouldn't have to buy them for her soup or taking their seven kids to the motor-movies every Friday night so that she could have some time for herself. The sudden backfire of a distant car returned her to reality, and she was again wrapped in her troubled thoughts. She longingly looked towards the far away horizon as if waiting for a ship to carry her away.
>
> In a few moments her sister-in-law would tear her away from her vision, her ship. Her sister-in-law would take her to another day in the cannery. She would reluctantly board the old, dented, beige Ford that would carry her to another exhausting day of separating, cutting, and peeling tomatoes. The 100°F temperature in the cannery was stifling and unbearable. She was trapped in an oven. No matter how much she gasped for fresh air, there was never enough in the enormous warehouse of perspiring workers. The mixture of sweat, rotting tomatoes on rubber gloves and aprons, and blood from fingers accidently cut sickened her. There was no escape. Every evening she returned so fatigued that she could not nurture her children.
>
> A thin woman, so small against the constantly changing sky. A strong, determined soul in a diminutive 4'11" frame. Her shoulder-length black hair, streaked with gray and tied in a bun, disguised the fact that she was only 39 years old . . .
>
> Two weeks, just two weeks ago her husband had died. "Why did we come to this country? she lamented to herself. "I can't even speak English!" "How will I take care of the children without him?"

Felicia's memories of her mother's experience reveal the reasons why a *hung dee moy* could be vital; she could withstand the working conditions, the loss of her husband and maintain her large family within her sisterhood community support. She was not alone and had many people to help her remain afloat. Felicia further reflects in the interview and links the ways that the *hung dee moy* was a support system during the context of the story above.

In this recounting, Felicia tells Mary and me about the ways the sisterhood support practices of elder *ye-yes* caring for the young of another sister occurred in her own life.

> Felicia: When my father died . . . your [Mary's] mother and father they were . . . the ones that told us what to do. My family was so poor and we didn't have a lot of supervision because my mom was working in the cannery . . . I don't know half the stuff she [Mary] knows about customs and red envelops and all that kind of stuff. You know my mother was at the cannery and she didn't have time to transmit that information. But when my father died your [Mary's] parents were the ones that knew all of the [funeral] customs, what's proper to do, way back from the village in China. We didn't know, all of us were under the age of 15, we didn't know what to do. And they [Mary's parents] came in and it was kind of like, you need information about customs and social skills. We went to your [Mary's] mother and father. When someone died we had to put things in envelopes . . . .You know because I still don't know why I did all this stuff.

Mary's parents acted as teachers of funeral practices and, in invaluable ways, helped parent Felicia and her siblings. The collectivization of parenting is revealed here. Additionally, the cultural traditions shared provided a sense of belonging to larger traditional practices. In telling this story, Felicia reinforces the need and the practices of the *hung dee moy*. Next, Felicia and Mary explore in *ji-ji-ja-ja* more reasons why they think both their mothers created their sisterhood.

> Felicia: . . . The sisterhood was their way of reinventing their family because they lost their family.
>
> Mary: Some who came over were paper sons and daughters. So, they didn't even know who they were . . .
>
> Felicia: And you had to play that game and in order to play that game you had to lose a lot of yourself . . . how do you save it ? how do you keep it in yourself? You have to do it through staying with someone else who has experienced the same thing as you did, because it's all lost.
>
> Felicia: And when you think about it, how brave [both our mothers were to immigrate]. How scary and brave.
>
> Felicia: I realize how important this community in the Central Valley had meant to my mother because she had lost everything else.
>
> Felicia: Everything. She [my mom] lost her language. She couldn't communicate. When I go to Italy I feel so stupid, people look at me as if I'm stupid. I know I'm not stupid but I can't communicate. She couldn't communicate [in United States]. So, you know and of course immigrants are treated . . . . [as if] they were nothing. She came from a daughter from whom her mom loved her, because she talked about missing her mom. To all of a sudden becoming nothing . . . [Felicia's mother had] . . . to latch onto people who experience what . . . [she] did. It's a logical thing that they formed this sisterhood.

In the excerpts above, Felicia and Mary explain the purpose of their mothers' sisterhood, which was likely formed to re-create a family support network. Mary and Felicia make empathetic temporal shifts from the past to the present as they think about their mothers' immigration experience and the losses they had to face as Chinese laborers during the exclusion acts. They show in their stories the reasons for their mothers' sisterhood were to maintain a sense of belonging and collective survival. Examining the temporality, sociality, and place dimensions, I can see the need to create this sisterhood is also grounded in the context of the larger socioeconomic macro-level pressures. Felicia and Mary's parents and family immigrated during a time when they faced open hostility toward Chinese laborers through the Exclusion Acts, state, and local policies.

I can also see the access of community cultural wealth to re-create support systems in a new context with new people. The cultural rituals and practices provided a sense of identity as well as gave them humanity, which was in contrast to their immigrant experiences. Additionally, these traditions allowed them to process their grief, loss, and trauma and offered innovative ways to circumvent dehumanization. Chinese and many Toisanese Americans in San Francisco resisted immigration restrictions and innovatively created a covert system of *paper* sons and daughters to get around the Chinese Exclusion Acts (Chan,1991). This strategic system allowed a way to circumvent the Chinese Exclusion Acts. Chinese seeking to gain entrance into the United States could have falsified relative papers, claiming to be a "son"

or "daughter." Alliances like these allow distant family or friends to enter the country as "sons" and "daughters" of current Chinese residents. Often, paper sons and daughters were kept in secrecy for fear of deportation. Alliances like these were also part of their relational network system and part of their collective survival. Growing up in the midst and aftermath of racialized trauma for generations, Felicia and Mary watched their ethnic enclave communities, families, and mothers resist and survive through forming alliances and collectives, an intergenerational practice, part of their CCW.

In this next subsection, Mary and Felicia explore more of their mothers' sisterhood through piecing together their experiences as daughters. Pulling memories of their mothers' *hung dee moy*, they come to note that their mothers' *hung dee moy* differed from Lee's (2007) mother's experiences in China.

> Mary: [Our mothers' Central Valley Cannery] job provided that opportunity for them . . . . [when] the cannery was closed. That's when they would knit and socialize and teach each other [to cook, shop, sew, etc.].
>
> Felicia: Yeah. Yeah.
>
> Mary: During Chinese New Year everybody would bring dim sum and that was Chinese [Toisanese] culture. [The practice was] I would make a box of dim sum for you and then I'd bring it to you and [then] we'd [reciprocate and] bring back some to you. So that's when all the recipes are being exchanged during the holidays.
>
> Mary: When they would collect unemployment [during off Cannery season] everybody would [ask] how much did you get? Unemployment is determined by how much you earned; during the summers when they packed cherries, some people were faster and that was factored into the unemployment checks. [The sisters asked,]" Can Mary come and translate for me?" Our generation [Felicia and Mary's] was used as translators to help . . . . That was another avenue of a sisterhood.
>
> Felicia: It was a total survivor's support system because they didn't know how to deal with the language, where to buy the cheapest yarn, no one could read the [knitting] patterns . . .
>
> Mary: [*finishing Felicia's sentence*] No one drove. We were all in the same neighborhood on the South Side. That's all they could do, they couldn't drive, they didn't know the language.
>
> Felicia: In a way it was isolating. [They] were back in [their] own village. The emotional, cultural supports were all within this group.

In the interview excerpt above, Felicia and Mary shared the structure and processes of their mothers' sisterhood. Expanding and building on Lee's characterization of *hung dee moy* as a Toisanese practice of immigrant women in the United States, in the narrative we see their mothers had left their families and country and relocated to a rural Central Valley city in California. In this new country, these women pulled from their cultural wealth and forming and maintaining a village clan or *hung dee moy* sisterhood to survive the macro-level political and socioeconomic hostility, language and work barriers, and pressures of raising a family in a foreign country. In creating a sisterhood, they collectively survived these barriers, working together and navigating the system at the local cannery, teaching each other cooking, gardening, and sharing insights—spanning topics like shopping thriftily to the welfare system—to survive. As Felicia recounts, they also formed an emotional support system in their sisterhood in contrast to the external

hostility; in this sisterhood they re-created their lost home, village, and family. It was also in this place they could belong despite the anti-Chinese hostility.

Felicia and Mary were never overtly taught these skills in isolation; rather, the sisterhood practice is learned in relationship over time, in the living and being together they observed within the community. There was no direct teaching on reciprocity or loyalty; their mothers did not have English words to teach their daughters these concepts. Rather, their mothers pulled them into the sisterhood to learn and embody the practices, the ways a *hung dee moy* traditionally taught in living alongside. When their daughters were old enough—Mary was asked to be a translator—they became participants in the sisterhood. As participants and observers of their mothers' embodied practices, they learned like any cultural practice—*to do as I do*. Felicia and Mary learned their mothers' ways of cultivating and maintaining relationships through learning to sacrifice, give, and receive support alongside their mothers.

The structure of loyalty was a key element of collective survival. As each woman contributed to the whole, they received from the whole. Each woman was not pressured to have to worry about taking care of herself all the time, because the whole of the sisterhood would take care of her and her family. Each individual sister could contribute what they were good at, their part of the dim sum Chinese New Year treats, and, then through reciprocity, pass them along to the others so everyone benefited from the whole. This functioned with food, skills such as knitting techniques, welfare information, translation assistance, transportation access, and more.

Mary added to her observations of the functioning of the sisterhood. Mary explains that all have roles in the sisterhood and each sister contributes teaching and sharing from an area of strength, making the collective stronger as a whole. In an interview in 2018 she said, "in the sisterhood there are experts and novices, [some] people . . . are experts in some areas. Some could drive, speak English, worked at cannery longer . . . then [the] sisterhood brings in younger immigrants." Mary notes that her mother's *hung dee moy* kept the same training practices as those characterized by Lee (2007). Mary also recounts that she saw differences in *hung dee moy* membership practices. Sisters are added based on the cannery laborer connections to the *hung dee moy*; no longer are family clan ties required for membership. This difference shows an expansion and an innovation in their mother's *hung dee moy* practices. Additionally, the sisterhood is ongoing—new novices like Mary and Felicia or new immigrants are being added into the sisterhood, and, in so doing, they expand their knowledge access and share alongside each other. With each new sister addition came new skills and ability to add to the whole group. Through conversation flowing back and forth, they tossed out ideas and examined them, in a characteristic *ji-ji-ja-ja* sisterhood style (Lee, 2007, p. 17).

According to Lee (2007), Mary and Felicia were born into this relational network, yet Mary and Felicia were not always consciously aware of their positionality within their mothers' *hung dee moy*. In fact, they disagreed if they were *hung dee moy*, as shared in the opening of the paper, and here again. "No, I don't think we're *hung dee moy*." Then, Felicia leaned forward across the table, looking Mary directly in the eyes, "No Mary, we are *hung dee moy*."

Unpacking this tension, it could be that Mary and Felicia were unknowingly a part of their mothers' *hung dee moy*. Second-generation immigrants, like Felicia and Mary, often experience cultural loss and cultural incongruity, not being able to relate and understand their parents' customs (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Moreover, embodied community cultural wealth can be an unconscious knowing that needs to be narratively told, retold, and explored. To further understand their place in their mothers' *hung dee moy*, Felicia and Mary use *ji-ji-ja-ja* to further tease and explore if their mothers actually were including them as part of their *hung dee moy*.

> Felicia: I think it was because of our connection with our mothers, we helped each other out and you helped me.
>
> Felicia: I think it's interesting for Mary and me—because of our relationship from [living in the same Central Valley City], she's like my sister. Even though we're not really related she's more like my sister than my sister is sometimes. It's kind of interesting in how and how it all comes from being from that same area, I think. I always remember Mary was in the same high school as me and was one year older so we … associated . . . [in] a Leadership Conference and I remember because of you [Mary] I got in.
>
> Felicia: And because of Mary and our connection, she got me a job at [a Middle School]. She didn't even know me; she only knew that our parents knew each other. Now I'm sick of you [joking].
>
> Mary: We were on the South Side. She [Felicia] was in the Central [part of the Central Valley City].
>
> Felicia: Which is the poorer of the poor.

As Felicia explained, they began to help one another out of loyalty to their mothers. As daughters, Felicia and Mary knew that the way they treated each other would directly reflect on their mothers. In order to both honor their mothers and each other, they chose to be loyal. Loyalty is a key concept of *hung dee moy*, as loyalty bonds are as strong as blood relatives within the sisterhood and loyalty is expressed in willingness to help one another (Lee, 2007). In this incident, Felicia acknowledged how Mary had helped her out twice, many decades ago in the early part of their relationship, when they were *moy moys* in the *hung dee moy*. Mary's loyalty and generosity to Felicia were *hung dee moy* practices and had built trust, such as when she helped Felicia get into a high school leadership program and again at the start of her teaching career in the San Francisco Bay area. Mary embodied these *hung dee moy* practices, which facilitated her ability to use them in the different school contexts Felicia describes.

As Mary and Felicia recounted these stories and engaged in analysis, they saw their part in this inter-generational practice. Through focusing on their mothers' sisterhood, they could see the ways their mothers were influential in forming the bonds between them. Both Mary and Felicia have come to know and finally agree they are *hung dee moy*; they are a part of a larger legacy of sisters.

Significance

Mary and Felicia offer new insights through unpacking their experiences of their mothers' sisterhood, expanding on Lee's characterization. Their mothers gifted to their daughters, Mary and Felicia, embodied relational knowledge, practices, and pedagogy to thrive and survive despite interpersonal and institutional oppression. The embodied practices of the *hung dee moy* live within them. They also articulate the values of generosity, humility, all a part of a greater purpose of belonging and survival and show how each sisterhood is nuanced and evolves according to the sister's context. In so doing they provide proactive representations revealing a wealth of resistance and navigations capital, part of their CCW.

Mary and Felicia revealed from their experiences that their mothers had a workplace based *hung dee moy* and new sisterhood membership styles. Through the narratives of Felicia and Mary's mothers' sisterhood practices, we find Toisan diaspora *hung dee moy* to be unique to their context. In sharing and analyzing these narratives of collective resistance, we seek to promote a collective consciousness within our communities and schools. This first generation of immigrant Toisan women, as well as their daughters' generation, used cultural wealth, imagination, and action to survive and thrive in exclusionary racial and linguistic hierarchies. In turn, this sisterhood revealed that relationships strengthened their resistance in each generation. Each generation created and maintained relationships over generations that functioned as a sacred place of belonging, which consequently helped them to change their daughters' lives. From their relational and collective space of belonging as a nontraditional family of sisters, a form of resistance is created to survive and thrive despite the dominant narrative about Toisanese Americans and women. Each sisterhood's work is steeped in generational knowledge and cultural wealth, and their shifts impact subsequent generations, including my own.

As I reread through these transcripts and unpacked this research, I came to see the ways both Mary and Felicia were including me in the *hung dee moy* practices. My hope is that readers and Toisanese women will pick up this work and sit with their grandmothers, mothers, and aunts to further unpack this rich treasure. The *hung dee moy* continues to provide a sense of belonging and survival with each generation that gathers new sisters to employ its practices.

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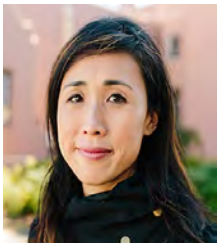

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How Does It Feel To Be a Design Thinking Teacher in Changing Times in Nepal?

Bhawana Shrestha, Mahima Poddar, and Samaya Khadka

Abstract

Design thinking is emerging as a popular student-centric teaching approach in Nepal. However, limited research has been done to understand how teachers feel about using these approaches in their classrooms. In-depth interviews with five design-thinking teachers revealed that cultural context plays a crucial role when new teaching approaches are used. The pedagogical and mindset shift required by teachers when exploring new teaching approaches directly affects their emotions, resulting in varying levels of joy or frustration. Critical reflection helps teachers manage their emotions, which is crucial in navigating challenges and emotional exhaustion.

Introduction

Students of all ages learn from their teachers. They not only learn the academic content, but also model their teacher's behavior and emotions. Teacher and student emotions are intrinsically related, and independent from their instructional behavior (Becker et al., 2014). The role that caregivers and the social environment play in helping young children deal with their emotions is significant (Rybak et al., 2010). During childhood, most students learn how to deal with their emotions by mirroring the behavior of those around them. Research suggests that good teachers are the ones who demonstrate emotional understanding and competency—as opposed to simply reporting on standard measures (Turculeţ, 2015). An analysis of how teachers react to emotional situations in classrooms, and what kinds of emotions they feel in the classroom, can help us design teacher training programs that allow teachers to manage their emotions effectively. This, in turn, results in the students learning how to deal with their own emotions effectively.

Even though teacher emotions form a primary component of student learning, they seem to be overlooked. In the Nepalese context, the primary focus is on teachers' ability to help students learn and their ability to manage classrooms. Understanding teachers' experiences in facilitating student learning is often not prioritized. Yet, the responsibility of introducing 21st-century learning in classrooms is mostly initiated by teachers. Student-centric learning methods are becoming quite popular in Nepal and as student-centric ways of teaching and learning are introduced, the role of teachers and facilitators has become very different from what it used to be. Since student-centric ways of teaching and learning require teachers to adopt a fresh mindset, our research will focus on the various kinds of emotions that teachers experience as they move through newer ways of teaching and learning.

"Design Thinking is generally defined as an analytic and creative process that engages a person in opportunities to experiment, create and prototype models, gather feedback, and redesign" (Razzouk & Shute, 2012, p. 330). Design thinking is a process in which students try to solve problems that affect people. The key element in design thinking is empathy where the students try to see how the problem affects the person on the other end (Flannery, 2018). Design thinking is often also known as a people-oriented way of solving problems that begins with human needs and offers creative solutions (Tu et al., 2018). According to the Institute of Design at Stanford, design thinking is a five-step process: Empathize > Define > Ideate > Prototype > Test (Plattner, 2010).

Role of Teachers in 21st-Century Learning Methods Such as Design Thinking

As we move on to newer ways of teaching and learning, the teacher's role starts to greatly vary from what it is when traditional teaching methods are used. There are major differences between traditional teaching methods and design thinking: in traditional teaching, instruction is the primary source of teaching for educators, whereas in creative thinking teaching courses such as design thinking, educators have to be diverse and flexible, and adopt creative thinking strategies to teach students. Creative thinking teaching also requires teachers to take on the role of mentors or helpers and focus more on their interaction with students (Tu et al., 2018).

Teachers are now facing a time of transition as they adjust to a fast-paced environment and rapidly changing technologies and student needs (Jan, 2017). Implementing creative teaching and learning strategies like design thinking poses various challenges for the teachers as it requires both a pedagogical and mindset shift from traditional ways of teaching and learning (Retna, 2015). Since teachers are the most important stakeholders with the highest responsibility for implementing curricula such as 21st-century learning projects, it becomes crucial to make space for teacher emotions.

Teachers and Teacher Emotions in the Classroom

Knowing about teachers' emotions is crucial to understanding teachers and teaching (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003). Teaching is often a caring profession with a strong moral purpose and a responsibility to young people. Due to the moral obligations associated with teaching, and because of the teachers' responsibility to care for their students, the classroom becomes a space where varied emotions are experienced (Chang, 2020).

Various cognitive reappraisal theories suggest that our emotions are determined by our beliefs and evaluations of the situations that we encounter in life (Chang, 2020). It stands to reason, then, that teacher emotions are based on their evaluations of their experiences and encounters in the classroom. Schutz et al. (2006) contend that, "emotions are socially constructed, personally enacted ways of being that emerge from conscious and/or unconscious judgments regarding perceived successes at attaining goals or maintaining standards or beliefs during transactions as part of social-historical contexts" (p. 344).

In Nepal, design thinking is now widely being adopted as a medium to introduce 21st-century student learning through short- and long-term programs and workshops. The research focuses particularly on the

emotional experiences of design thinking facilitators as they help their students and participants learn in different and more interesting ways.

Methodology

We conducted in-depth interviews and reviewed research reports to assess the experiences of Nepalese design-thinking facilitators. Considering the limited number of design-thinking teachers in Nepal and the wide range of emotions involved in the teaching process, we opted for in-depth interviews to gather the most comprehensive data possible. In this manner, we managed to gain insights directly from the source, as one-on-one interactions increase the likelihood of a respondent opening up (Showkat & Parveen, 2017).

Previous research has indicated the complexity of measuring emotions in design-based learning and showed the importance of in-depth interviews as an important method of measurement (Zhang, 2021). Also, previous research has indicated that emotions are not independent of individuals or their environment, but rather that they are highly guided by the interaction between the individuals and their environment. So, measuring teacher emotions requires an analysis of both the psychological aspect of teacher emotions as well as the contributing role of environment in their emotional experiences (Cross & Hong, 2012). Quantitative data has been criticized for being limited in its scope as it can only measure the frequency and intensity of emotions, rather than adequately representing teacher beliefs (Jiang et al., 2019). So, in order to understand the personal beliefs that teachers had about emotions and their environment's contribution to it, qualitative research methods like in-depth interviews seemed a reliable option for us.

Over a period of four months from May to August 2022, we conducted interviews with five teachers who use design thinking as their teaching methodology. Their experiences were varied. We interviewed teachers from different organizations, genders, and ages to encompass diverse experiences. Table 1 is an anonymized overview of the respondents. The guiding questions for the in-depth interview were prepared to simply explore the basic positive and negative emotions they experienced while teaching. Once the data was collected, transcription and analysis were completed. During the analysis, some common themes were pinpointed.

Table 1

Anonymized Overview of the Respondents

Respondents	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	Background
Respondent 1	Male	30	Higher Education Faculty Member for four years	Marketing and Entrepreneurship
Respondent 2	Male	26	Middle School Teacher for five years	Science and Multimedia

Respondent 3	Female	27	Higher Education Faculty Member for four years	Gender and Equity
Respondent 4	Male	32	Researcher and teacher trainer for six years	Digital Citizenship
Respondent 5	Male	26	Higher Education Faculty Member for four years	Entrepreneurship

Findings and Discussions

Teaching and Learning Empathy Is Challenging

Empathy is the first and primary step in the design thinking process. Nepalese students seem to experience some difficulty in fully understanding the nuances of empathy. Teachers reported challenges in helping students get through the first step in itself. Instead of deeply empathizing with the end user, students tend to consider the problems superficially and recommend solutions, instead of really getting into the root cause of problems. Great effort is therefore made to help students understand the notion of empathy. Respondent 1 shared,

> *I think empathizing is the part I least enjoy because of the frustration associated with it. The students need to develop any of the solutions keeping the end user in mind and they find it challenging to do so. Students sometimes have the tendency to settle quite early into the problems confusing the symptoms of the problems with the problems themselves. They don't explore the problems further. Guiding the students through the process of empathizing can be frustrating and challenging for one as a teacher.*

Referring to Singapore, Retna (2015) argues that in social cultures where academic achievement and examination success is highly valued, implementing design thinking comes across as difficult for teachers, as it first requires a shifting of mindsets. The results of the Nepalese study echoed this notion. Students rushed to find solutions, instead of taking their time to understand the problems from the end-user perspective. Though 21st-century learning methods are being implemented at a rapid rate, Nepal is still in a transition phase of education wherein students have been conditioned by traditional ways of teaching and learning. Respondent 3 shared,

> *What we have noticed over many cycles of facilitating, mentoring, and coaching students is that, in Nepal, students really wait for instructions from the instructor. They wait for the green [light] and some form of validation from the instructors before taking decisions about whether their decision is okay or not. This never really allows the instructors to take on the role of facilitator or supporter but they have to keep on juggling between the hat of facilitator and teacher.*

Shifting to newer ways of learning requires great effort on behalf of teachers. While some respondents found the planning component to be more intensive than the execution of the methodology in the classroom, others found it to be the opposite. However, all the respondents were in agreement that older

teaching methods were so entrenched in the classroom and that students were so accustomed to them, that despite great effort to effect change, teachers might not always succeed due to factors beyond their control. Numerous factors contribute to students' success, including personal events, interaction with peers, parents and teachers, and the larger systems that surround them, such as school districts, neighborhoods, the local economy, political policy, and multicultural relations (Bertolini et al., 2012).

Teachers' Emotions Are Directly Proportional to Students' Outcomes

Teachers' emotions were largely based on how well students performed. The teachers experienced pleasant emotions and considered themselves successful when students were able to achieve the desired outcomes. On the contrary, poor performance from students made the teachers feel that they were not achieving success. Students' creativity and their ability to come up with unique ideas were something that gave educators a lot of joy. For instance, respondent 5 expressed that, *"the feeling of elation comes when I ask students to work on design thinking activities and they understand it exactly, and come up with unique ideas from a fresher's perspective."* Prosen et al. (2011) also argued that teachers' levels of joy are largely contingent on the quality of their students' performance in the classroom.

On the other hand, when the facilitators feel like their students are not engaged, that can also create negative feelings for the facilitator. For instance, respondent 2 shared,

> *...there will be some students who are very resistant to ideas at the beginning and even til the end. While working with these students, I put in a little more effort but when the effort is still ignored, a feeling of anger mixed with a little sadness is triggered as an immediate response. I question myself like why are they not paying attention to it? This also develops a feeling of fear as I worry if they do not like it at all and what if they fail to learn anything from the session.*

They further added that when participants in his design thinking workshop fail to engage with the content designed by him, he questions his own abilities. For instance, the facilitator shared,

> *If I could not get the participants to work during my design thinking classes, I think that I am doing something wrong. Of course, there is a chance that the participant was there due to some external pressure or force. But if the participant is not enjoying the session or not engaging in it, I also consider it to be my responsibility.*

While it is natural to experience pleasant emotions when your classroom goals and objectives are met, and to feel negative emotions when they are not met, it might not be healthy to question one's own abilities purely based on student success rates. It has been suggested that teachers' emotions are essential in determining students' achievements (Frenzel et al., 2021). When teachers do not believe in their abilities to manage the classroom, they find it extremely difficult to persist during more difficult times. This eventually makes it all the more challenging for them to fulfil their initial goals (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000).

Even as 21st-century learning projects are prioritized, it is important for teachers to realize that there are factors outside of the teacher's control that affect student learning and motivation. Teachers are important resources that determine student success, yet when given the significant responsibility of changing students' perspectives, they too can feel overwhelmed.

Teacher-Student Relationships Contribute to Student Outcomes

In Nepal, teachers are usually revered as "Gurus" and this perspective of considering them as experts and elders puts students in a position of deference (Sharma, 2022; Widmann & K.C., 2013). This sort of positioning creates an implicit barrier between teachers and students, which often leads students to feel intimidated and unwilling to authentically express themselves in the classroom. This can result in teacher-student relationships that lack warmth and communion in the classroom.

Yet, in the experiences of all the design thinking facilitators, their relationship with their students was quite fluid and friendly. The lack of hierarchy between the teachers and students in design-thinking classrooms was seen as a welcome change by the students and helped the teacher-student relationship flourish. The more teachers can demonstrate warmth and agency to students, the more students can experience joy in the classroom (Mainhard et al., 2018). The quality of the relationship between teachers and students also has an impact on teachers'' emotional experiences during instruction. Closely connected relationships between teachers and students can help teachers experience more joy and less anxiety and anger in the classroom (Hagenauer et al., 2015).

Respondents shared that the design thinking approach helps strengthen the teacher-student relationship, with the teachers feeling more affection towards students. Respondent 4 mentioned,

> *I have grown up seeing that students feel a lot of contempt and anger towards their students in general classrooms. This doesn't necessarily exist in design-thinking classrooms. In a general class, teachers also experience a lot of anger towards students because the students are not listening, and it is difficult to grab their attention. …. The student assessment that happens in general classrooms can create a lot of animosities.*

Similarly, respondent 1 shared that*, "there is also clear sharing of emotions that happens between teachers and students in design thinking classroom which makes the bond stronger."*

Findings indicate that a positive teacher-student relationship can increase students' confidence, motivation, and engagement in the classroom (Coristine et al., 2022). A healthy relationship between teacher and students is helpful for the two primary stakeholders, and 21st-century learning projects like design thinking help build such a relationship. A teacher's less commanding presence in design thinking classes, along with the close guidance they provide and the low student-teacher ratio, helps foster a healthy teacher-student relationship. This system could be applied to other classrooms as well.

The Importance of Considering Emotions

One of the common themes that was found among all the teachers using the design thinking approach was that they all agreed on the fact that emotions are perceived and inadvertently shared in the classroom. Two of the respondents mentioned that the energy of the students permeates the entire classroom. So, if the students' energy is high and they are enthusiastic, the teachers and facilitators also participate with the same level of energy and enthusiasm in the classroom. However, if the students are low in energy and feel like unwilling participants in the classroom, then the same low level of energy affects the teachers. Previous research also indicated that one of the ways a teacher's emotions can affect the

classroom is through the phenomenon of emotional contagion where teachers and students mirror each other's emotional states (Frenzel et al., 2021).

Yet, the design thinking teachers also shared how it is important to find ways to use this emotional transferability in a way that benefits the learning environment of the classroom. For instance, respondent 5 shared,

> *When it comes to reciprocation of emotions, I think it is a lot about doing what I can as far as I can so that students can absorb my emotions and reciprocate my energy. So, let us say that in some parts of the process, the participants need to be outlandish, I help them be outlandish by being outlandish myself first. If they need to be focused, I will model the same behavior. The design thinking process sometimes requires participants to be very focused and sometimes it requires them to be very outlandish and whatever the participants need to do, I try to help them do that by first doing it myself.*

The reciprocation of emotions in this case is used by the facilitators to their advantage.

Similarly, respondent 3 also shared how she uses the technique of immediate improvisation to deal with emotional absorption in the classroom. She shared,

> *I think what helps is the balance between planning and improvisation. As a facilitator, you need to be able to make those quick decisions. So, let's say your students are feeling low on energy and you have planned that you will teach students certain tools, then, maybe modifying the lesson plan and directing the student energy more on the reflection part that day shall be helpful. But if the students are in a very good place emotionally, maybe introducing a new tool for students might be helpful. So, depending on the student's feelings, making modifications to what will the students be taught is also helpful.*

Adaptability and reflecting on emotions are crucial to help guide the transference of those classroom emotions toward something productive.

Teachers Are Either Frustrated or Joyful

In the interviews we conducted, two of the common emotions were joy and frustration. Pleasant emotions like satisfaction and/or joy were related to student learning. When the teachers felt like their students were learning something or when the teachers felt like they were contributing to their student learning in significant ways, the process felt more joyful and satisfactory to them. Respondent 1 shared,

> *Satisfaction is usually felt towards the end of the session by both the teachers and students. As a teacher, there is a feeling that the facilitation one is doing is contributing to students' growth and students' change in mindset in some way or the other. This makes me feel fulfilled and satisfied in the job of facilitation I am doing.*

Respondent 5 shared,

> *When you see your students growing and when you see that your students are stepping out of their comfort zone, you feel happy. Learning happens when students get outside of their comfort zone. When I see participants doing that, I enjoy it very much.*

Respondent 3 shared,

> *When the students and their teams are working really well, there is also a sense of satisfaction you feel. So, there are a lot of happy and content moments. Especially at the end when things work out, and when students share their experiences, it feels good. At the moment, it often becomes difficult to see what you have learnt but after the experience is over when the student tells me that they have learnt so and so, it is very exciting. So, for me, this is thrilling.*

Teachers get satisfaction from knowing that their students have learned something. Teachers usually experience pride when their students perform well and this success is partly attributable to teachers' efforts (Burić et al., 2017). While the teachers in our research did not necessarily refer to it as pride, it could be observed that they did feel contentment, satisfaction, or joy when their students performed well and they considered themselves at least partly responsible for it. This also aligns with the Reciprocal Model of Emotions, which states that teachers' appraisal of their goal achievement determines what emotions they shall experience. When teachers determine that their teaching goals are fulfilled, they experience pleasant and positive emotions. If, however, teachers feel that they have not been successful in achieving their goals, they experience unpleasant emotions (Frenzel, 2014).

Apart from the pleasant emotions and experiences in design-thinking classrooms, there are also unpleasant emotions and experiences that occur. For instance, frustration was one of the most frequently reported emotions among the teachers we interviewed.

Frustration in the class was usually caused by a sense of ambiguity, a lack of clarity, and students' unwillingness to step outside of their comfort zone and think creatively. Given that design thinking is an iterative process, it requires continuous effort from the students to improvise and to learn. Furthermore, since design thinking is a new method of teaching and learning, it requires students to adapt to new things and be willing to embrace change. These are not insignificant responsibilities for the students, and when they are not ready and willing to put in the required effort, a feeling of frustration can spread through the classroom.

Respondent 4 shared,

> *There is also a certain amount of frustration with students as they find really hard to adopt this idea where they have to focus on human-centric design. As much as human-centred design is focused on, students eventually make it problem centred or project their ideas onto the problem than taking the perspective of the people they are designing for.*

He further added, "Since students are not used to submitting multiple drafts, iteration is also something they find difficult. Since iteration feels naturally difficult, that too creates a lot of frustration within the class."

In design thinking classes, students might begin with a high level of interest, but striving for continuous improvement might eventually decrease their interest level, and they might even start questioning their self-efficacy (Vongkulluksn et al., 2018). In fact, students can also experience ambiguity and confusion about how to move forward as they progress in their projects.

While confusion and ambiguity can create rampant frustration in the classroom, positive experiences and exposure to design thinking classes have been seen as helpful in preparing design thinking teachers to deal with unpleasant emotions. The more the design thinking teachers gain experience in facilitating classes, the more they realize that unpleasant classroom emotions are just as natural as pleasant ones, and it is vital that they are given the proper tools to cope with them.

For instance, Respondent 1 shared,

> *If you go to places where design thinking was originally initiated too, even in those places, it was clear that design thinking will be ambiguous and unclear in the beginning phase. The fact that you are accepting that emotion of confusion and ambiguity helps self-regulate the emotion. You can better prepare yourself to deal with those emotions once you know that those emotions will most likely occur. Once you know that emotions like confusion, ambiguity, and frustration will be there, you can prepare yourself to deal with those emotions accordingly. Because you already know that I will be feeling frustrated, you are better able to accept it and prepare yourself for it too. Because if you know what things are coming ahead, and if you know that it is frustration itself, then you are in a better position to face it. After repeated experiences with design thinking, the feeling now tends to remain that during the process of design thinking, frustration is most likely bound to happen during these phases so you would rather be ready to accept it.*

Apart from just considering these emotions as natural, the teachers also understood the benefit of these unpleasant emotions. For instance, respondent 3 stated,

> *Even in the moments of uncertainty, though there is fear and anxiety, there are also pleasant moments. So, in the design thinking process, there is something called the 'Aha!' and 'Oh No!' moments. In moments of confusion, when the students have certain epiphanies, it becomes exciting again. So, even during the process of uncertainty, there are pleasant and unpleasant experiences.*

Likewise, respondent 1 shared,

> *Frustration is a good frustration in a way that it will help the students push themselves further and the end result of that frustration will also be meaningful to the students. I can notice a positive impact of frustration in various teams because the outcome of the frustration in most cases leads to a sense of accomplishment. So, the outcome of the frustration also helps teachers accept frustration and deal with it.*

With more exposure to emotional experiences in the classroom, the design-thinking teachers seemed to have understood the functionality of the emotions, instead of merely being affected by them. Similarly, the teachers who had the space and freedom to reflect honestly on their emotions and share them with their co-teachers, seemed to feel more supported and understood with regard to their unpleasant emotions. They were therefore better equipped to contend with any adverse sentiments. The sharing of experiences among the facilitators might also be a crucial and helpful way to help design thinking facilitators navigate the complexities of in-class emotions.

Conclusion

There are three main insights from this study. First, when moving toward newer ways of teaching and learning such as design thinking, a shift in mindset is required, along with a shift in curricula and pedagogy. The cultural context of the educational system also needs to be considered when implementing new pedagogies like design thinking. As newer ways of learning are introduced, it is first important to assess the mindset of various stakeholders including the teacher's, the student's, and even institutional patterns, before implementing these pedagogies. Otherwise, these pedagogies risk being implemented for mere formality, rather than to meet a specific objective.

Second, 21st-century learning projects like design thinking are iterative processes based on the principle of continuous improvement. Continuous improvement does not only apply to students, but also to teachers. These newer ways of learning are exciting as well as challenging for both of them. Hence, giving both students and teachers a safe space to make mistakes and to learn will benefit them more than the mere expectation to achieve success.

Third, teachers themselves must also practice an inward tolerance in challenging moments, rather than wallowing in self-doubt. When teachers are as understanding of themselves as they are of others, they experience the feeling of satisfaction, personal accomplishment, and are motivating to their students. The opposite occurs when they are hard on themselves and do not leave room for their own emotional responses.

The research also provided two helpful ways for teachers to deal with their unpleasant emotional experiences. First, helping teachers share their emotions with their colleagues in their institution is crucial. The more they hear and learn about other teachers' emotional experiences, the more capable they feel at handling those experiences as they slowly start accepting those emotions as normal. Such collaborative reflections can help teachers assess emotional experiences that arise in the classroom and provide them with better ways to deal with such emotional experiences while maintaining their professionalism.

Second, the relationship between teachers and students seems to be a very important source of teacher and student well-being in the classroom. Moreover, 21st-century learning projects like design thinking appear to dispense with classroom hierarchies and help the teacher-student relationship flourish. High-quality teacher-student relationships are known to lower the rates of emotional exhaustion in teachers and enhance their quality of enthusiasm for their work. Teachers need to be more mindful regarding the tendency to absorb their students' emotions; and the same goes for the students. While teacher-student emotional exchange in the classroom is not a new phenomenon, how teachers use the power of adaptability and spontaneity to deal with this emotional exchange is how they can find a way for everyone to achieve success.

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Are We in This Together? Why Embracing Aspects of Child Care in School Is Vital to Reimagining Education

Andrea Van Vliet

Abstract

Child care and school are similar and interrelated, yet the comparison of school to child care seems contentious. The Covid-19 pandemic revealed pressure points in labeling these educational and care institutions essential—or not. This paper encourages collaboration between schools and child care as a vital component to reimagining education.

Background

In 2006, I moved to the interior of British Columbia and, though armed with my freshly minted teaching license and boundless enthusiasm, I was unsuccessful in securing a teaching position. In what I felt was a consolation, I applied to a child care center and was hired to work in the toddler room. I soon learned my degree in elementary education meant very little as I was woefully underqualified to work with those toddlers. The Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) at the center graciously educated me to observe the children, document my observations, and use that input to create engaging provocations for the children. I became fascinated by the field of early learning, which focuses on birth to age six, and by the applied research on brain development, on how to see children's behavior as communication, and on supporting parents by caring for their children. I was enthralled by how deeply embedded care is in early education. When the opportunity to become a teacher arrived, I declined, choosing to spend my years immersed in supporting ECEs as a centre director, then joining the public service as an early learning and child care consultant and, most recently, as a manager of child care operations. Though initially perceived as a step beneath school, I am grateful I was granted the opportunity to join that toddler room, as it altered the course of my career. I have been humbled multiple times over the intervening years as the same dismissiveness I had initially felt toward child care has been echoed by teachers around me. While correcting misconceptions to elevate child care as education was already a well-established habit, the Covid-19 pandemic provided a shift in perspective where I now see how this dismissiveness not only serves to supress child care, but also pedagogically limits teachers and their students.

I understand the comparison of school to child care to be contentious. I ground my work in a decolonizing pedagogy of solidarity as posited by Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez (2012), "…imagining human relations that are premised on the relationship between difference and interdependency, rather than similarity and a rational calculation of self-interests" (p. 29). By this, I mean I do not think child care and school are the same and I do not think one system is superior to the other—there is no need for competition or self-interest. I believe collaboration depends on recognizing the differences between child care and school, thus offering families interdependent support as children grow within these educational

streams. Gaztambide-Fernandez's structure for solidarity includes establishing relationship, obligation, then spurring action; I have designed this article within these three themes. To illustrate my perspective, I draw on personal experience and established research. At its core, this is a story about solidarity among educators, whether we work in schools or child care. Consider this an invitation to undertake a philosophical shift in what it means to be an educator.

March 2020 – Flashback

The effects of the Covid-19 global pandemic finally reached Saskatchewan in March 2020.

> *I was nearing the end of the winter term, working toward my MEd in Curriculum. My classmates and I had spent two terms thinking about the purpose of education.*

On Monday, March 16, the provincial government announced schools and school-based child care centers would close on Friday. The schools would close, then pivot to online learning and issue final grades two months early. The centers would reopen to provide child care for people in the essential services of frontline health care.

> *In our office, calls and emails poured in as we supported our child care facilities with this news. Why were schools unsafe while centres were safe? Do teachers matter more than ECEs?*

Amid the panic and uncertainty of those early days, the mantra "we're all in this together" appeared on my social media feed, in the windows of closed businesses and even in conversations with colleagues.

> *And for a while, I believed this hopeful affirmation. True solidarity, one of care and respect for each other regardless of situation or circumstance, is one of my deepest desires.*

Yet, as businesses stopped taking cash, affecting people without debit or credit, as toilet paper was hoarded by people with access to vehicles and storage space, and as office employees brought their equipment home while mass unemployment loomed for the service industry, the degree to which we were "in this together" seemed more dependent on socioeconomic factors than solidarity. Within weeks, "essential services" had expanded to include wage earners who were essential to the economy, who needed to leave their houses to sell everything from groceries to deck lumber—and they all needed child care.

At the time, my partner and I had one child in Grade 2 and one in child care. Our school and center were closing; we were scrambling to shift to remote work and online learning, yet we needed to be physically present in the office during the week of March 16. Our children needed to be cared for, so we continued to take them to school and the center. Family, our other child care option, had been removed by the then-unknowns of Covid-19. Amid the anxiety, guilt set in. We wished we could do it differently, but we needed them to be in a safe place with caring adults. On Wednesday, I received an email from our daughter's principal, addressed to the few parents who continued to send their children. The impending school closure was noted followed by the advice that as there was "nothing of educational value happening in the schools," and it was best to keep the children home (Personal correspondence, March 18, 2020).

> *I had advised the school of our situation, so this email surprised me; I felt judged and criticized for not being able to be home with our daughter.*

Looking back, I am sure the principal was doing their best to support their teachers. Yet at our school-based center, each day our younger daughter was welcomed with a smile and continued to engage in play-based inquiry. I wondered why spending time with a teacher who was no longer following a set curriculum was necessarily void of educational value.

A year later, in a CTV interview, Don Giesbrecht, Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Child Care Federation, reflected,

> We know that child care has been essential since the beginning of Covid-19, we know that governments do not want to shut down child care the way they shut down school. They know that . . . child care centres have to remain open so that families are economically viable. (Somos, 2021)

In the March 2020 scramble of school closures, a conversation resurfaced regarding the basic aspect of child care within the school system. A quick internet search of the words "teachers not daycare" results in hundreds of articles and blog posts where teachers assert why they do not equate their work with daycare. Bachelor's or master's degrees are noted—just as I did in the opening of this paper as a means of establishing academic credibility.

> *If I were writing this before March 2020, I would exercise my nearly two decades of practice in dispelling myths and assumptions of child care. However, when I read those articles with the lens provided by my Covid-19 context, I see the underlying messages resting on a compulsion to reinforce public respect for the people who are educating young children.*

I wondered where this division of school versus child care began, so I further examined the history of school and child care in Canada, drawing heavily from Larry Prochner's (2000) chapter, *A History of Early Education and Child Care in Canada, 1820-1966*, found in the book *Early Childhood Care and Education in Canada*. Interestingly, the dismissive "not child care" stance can be seen as early as 1921 as, during a debate over closing Edmonton school-based Kindergartens due to a funding shortage, one parent noted, "Our Kindergarten teachers are well trained in particular work, and the average Canadian mother has more intelligence than to regard a Kindergarten as a 'Day Nursery'" (Madill, 1921, as cited in Prochner, 2000, p. 36).

Relationship: Origin Stories

The institutions of public schooling and child care emerged from the same source—the economy (Prochner, 2000). Both institutions are linked to urbanization and the economic shift from a family's reliance on independent trade or subsistence farming and crop sales to reliance on wage earning. From around 1860 to the early 1920s, the large-scale removal and processing of trees, coal, minerals, and other natural resources prompted colonial settlement patterns of Europeans immigrating to Canada. In many cases, urbanization and immigration removed families from their multigenerational supports. Industrialization resulted in most people working waged labor with profits retained by a small number

of land and factory owners (Tucker, 1988; Prochner, 2000; Industrialization in Canada, 2017). Though owners were prosperous, the low wages paid to employees did not adequately compensate them for their time spent in dangerous factories, mines, and farms. Wage earners, more commonly known as the working class (Frank, 2015), lived in poverty, necessitating the employment of all capable family members, including the children. Children were either earning wages, or, without older relatives to step in, were caring for younger siblings or left on their own (Prochner, 2000; Frank, 2015). In Britain and throughout the British Colonies, the upper and middle classes of the time viewed poverty as a moral failing. There was a perception that people who worked for wages and lived in poverty did so because they were unskilled and uneducated. Wage earning parents were then believed to be choosing to expose their children to unsafe conditions simply because of ignorance.

> *Through a deconstructionist lens that I am privileged to adopt a century and a half later, I consider how life today would be different if employers in 1882 had envisioned ways to make the work less dangerous rather than more hazardous for increased speed and profit. I imagine employers, policymakers, and citizens conferring over the correlations between low wages and poverty. I imagine parents at all socioeconomic levels being able to choose safe employment for themselves and high-quality care and education for their children.*

As factory employees and early unions pushed for workers' rights, the upper and middle class concurrently lobbied to limit employment for women and children in professions deemed to only be fit for men, like mining and factories. *The Britain Factories Act* was passed in 1883, setting basic health and safety standards for all factory workers and legislating only children aged nine and up could legally work in a factory. In Canadian provinces, similar legislation was passed beginning with *The Ontario Factories Act of 1884* which stated that twelve-year-old boys could begin working in factories and girls could join them at fourteen. Canadian children were permitted to work a maximum of 10 hours per day and 60 hours per week (Frank, 2015). Simultaneously, the perception that parents were willfully endangering their children in exchange for wages prompted the colonial upper class to develop and fund formal institutions—schools or day nurseries—to house under-working-age children while their parents worked. In schools, children of working-class parents received instruction on subjects to aid them in becoming skilled, employable members of society, ostensibly elevating them above the low status of their parents (Norozi & Moen, 2016; Oreopolous, 2005). In fact, many of the earliest schools were started by factory owners as a way of training children with the skills to become new employees and quelling parent/employee protests. In contrast, a 1905 report from the East End Day Nursery in Toronto illustrates the purpose of child care, "We come to the aid of people who, perhaps, might become paupers and possibly their children criminals" (East End Nursery, 1905 in Prochner, 2000). The benefits of removing children from the perceived negative influences of their parents—at least for a portion of the day—took hold; soon, along with the children of the working poor, the Canadian upper class designated other groups of children to be at risk and in need of Anglo-Christian social reform. These groups included the children of newcomers from non-English speaking countries and the Indigenous Peoples of North America.

The Beginning of the Divide Between School and Child Care: Curriculum and Funding

By the 1920s, compulsory school attendance for ages seven to fourteen was legislated across Canada and funded by provincial and municipal governments as per *The Constitution Act of 1867*, which established provincial responsibility for education (Orlikow & Peters, 2013). When legislation shifted to require children of all social classes to attend, more schools needed to be built and teachers needed to be hired. As education became a significant portion of a government's budget, the financial value of education began to prompt regular debate. Alongside this movement to institutionalize vast numbers of children, the emerging fields of child psychology and curriculum development arose to determine how best to guide these future adults toward desired skills and aptitudes. Challenged to establish financial efficiencies in publicly funded education, leaders within the field of formal curriculum development intensified discussions to determine the essentials. Mathematics, English Literacy, and Sciences—required for employment—seemed undisputed, while the Humanities (Art, Music, Dance) were subject to funding. These debates served to both shift the purpose of school away from accommodating working parents and to solidly entrench the financial and social value, or return on investment, of publicly funded education and the value of teachers.

Meanwhile, wage-earning parents realized the practical advantage of having their children in school and sent their younger children, too, resulting in classroom overcrowding and increased cost to governments (Prochner, 2000). When younger children were barred from attending schools, wage-earning mothers were forced to either forego their income or to leave their children unsupervised. As a response, preschool programs were created, operated, and funded mostly by women's charitable organizations and churches. Though their educational programming varied, their shared goal was to intervene and counteract perceived parental deficits which were thought to result in crime, poor health, and political rebellion. As Prochner (2000) explained, an 1895 report from the Toronto Board of Education ". . . equated the employment of mothers with child neglect and used this as a rationale for providing Kindergarten as a form of publicly supported childcare" (p. 39). Societally, these non-school-based day programs for children from birth to age six were viewed as accessory to school and laden with moral judgment of working mothers.

Preschool education was very much subject to funding availability, as school-based Kindergartens across Canada were the first to be cut during government shortfalls. Charity-run, non-school-based Kindergartens and preschools were also closed when community fund-raising was insufficient. This underfunding resulted in a lack of consistency for teachers of young children and an unwillingness to accept a preschool position if a more stable job with older children was available (Prochner, 2000). The argument against funding programs for young children, which hinges on the argument that return on investment is difficult to determine, contributes to the perception of preschool—as in programs for young children prior to them starting Grade 1—as holding less educational value.

I believe, the questions of how schools and child care are funded and whether they have a formal curriculum are at the heart of the divide, as we see initiatives to publicly fund child care over the years directly linked to the parent's employment and socioeconomic status. Schools and child care began as a

way to give children a safer place to be while their parents worked. They also have origins of benevolent pathology (Boykin, 2013), founded in the notion that children are flawed and needing improvement that is beyond their parents' capacity to provide. Though schools and child care programs have not yet entirely escaped these origins, a lot has changed since the 1920s.

Obligation: Open Minds and Hearts – Understanding Early Learning and Child Care

While many adults attended school and can draw on personal experience, Saskatchewan's earliest child care centres opened in the 1980s and 90s, so there may be adults who do not understand what it means to grow up in a modern early learning and child care program. I was once one of those people. Child care refers to the daytime provision of non-parental, typically, non-familial, care. Anecdotally, if a family member provides care, people highlight the familial connection and do not refer to it as child care. "She stays with my mom." "They go to Auntie's." My mom was a farmer and homemaker during my childhood in the 1980s and my sisters and I would stay at our neighbor's house if Mom needed to be gone during the day. As previously discussed, child care became understood to be a social support program for *mothers* who *needed to work* but did not have extended family to provide care. This distinction has continued through public policy (Carlberg & Budney, 2019; Employment and Social Development Canada, 2022).

While schools are provincially funded through the Ministry of Education, child care receives funding from both the federal and provincial governments. Beginning in 1942, the federal government attempted to partner with provinces under the *Authorization of Agreements with Provinces for the Care of Children* (Canada, 1942) to provide child care funding for mothers involved in wartime employment. Though only Ontario and Quebec signed the agreements, the initiative was argued to be of national interest. It was the first time the use of child care was normalized, though the program was promoted as full day nursery school. This shift away from perceiving daytime care for young children as a dire last resort to a valued educational program was fundamental to the evolution of child care as early learning. Yet, once the war ended, the perception of child care as early education was hindered and complicated by both Western notions of class-based child-rearing—where the mother was at home and available to her children throughout the day—and by the mother-child dyad promoted by attachment-theory proponents John Bowlby (1951, 1953, 1958) and Mary Ainsworth (1962). Their early writings on insecure attachment highlighted potential psychological damage including emotional imbalance and future delinquency (Adamson & Brennan, 2013; Page, 2018) that could be inflicted on young children if removed from *their mothers* for extended periods of time. Though subsequent research demonstrated that children are capable of forming multiple secure attachments with caring adults (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Page, 2018), critics of child care focused on Bowlby and Ainsworth's early research. Critics highlighted the age (birth to 5 years) of the child and that they were spending time away from their mother; they did not differentiate between large-scale, live-in orphanages and small-scale, daytime programs (Prochner, 2000, p. 56).

By 1966, when the federal Canada Assistance Plan provided funding to provinces to restructure child care as a necessity for the employment of women (Department of Finance Canada, 2014), support was provided only as a social service for mothers who could demonstrate financial need (Friendly, 2000). In 1969, Saskatchewan's first policy for child care was implemented under *The Child Welfare Act*, by multiple departments within the Ministry of Social Services. In 1990, formal provincial regulation of child care began with the introduction of the terms "licensed" and "unlicensed." A program is licensed when it meets basic health, safety, and educational programming standards established by *The Child Care Act* and *The Child Care Regulations*. Parents accessing licensed care can apply for subsidy through the Ministry of Social Services; their monthly fees are reduced based on their ability to demonstrate financial need. In their examination of child care in Saskatchewan, Carlberg and Budney (2019) observed, " . . . rather than being a service to benefit all children and families, licensed child care was conceived as a piece of a puzzle to assist parents in getting off government assistance by allowing them to participate in the workforce" (p. 7). This conception is in keeping with the history of child care as intended only for children of low-income, wage-earning parents (Schultz, 1978).

Public policy reflects and informs societal views, including child care legislation which is defined by two governance models, either a split-management or an integrated approach (Bennet, 2011). In a split-management approach, two or more ministries are responsible for specific aspects of care or education. Split management can result in a fragmentation of services with multiple organizational barriers for families to navigate. The integrated approach places responsibility for care and education under one ministry; as such, funding and services coordinate toward high-quality programs. While the regulation and educational support for child care moved to the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education in 2006, the responsibility for subsidy remained with Social Services, resulting in a split-governance model. However, a transformational change is underway that I hope will place this mindset firmly in the past.

In August 2021, Saskatchewan's Early Years Branch of the Ministry of Education worked with the federal government to negotiate and sign the *Canada-Saskatchewan Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*. Among the ambitious targets of developing a nationwide high-quality early learning and child care system, parent fees were reduced and will continue to be reduced to an average of $10 per day for children under six years of age. This is approximately the same amount a fully subsidized family would pay, so regardless of family income, parents in Saskatchewan have or will have access to an early learning and child care program. Though cost continues to be a barrier to some families and the split-governance model is not entirely dissolved, parents can now choose their child's early learning and care experiences in ways that are perhaps more similar to how they choose their child's publicly funded school.

It is important to note that just as not all schools suit the needs and desires of all families, neither does all licensed child care. Families are unique in their composition and there is significant educational and social value in children spending time with their caring adults. Elevating licensed child care does not diminish other societal structures of care and education.

Action: Identifying and Incorporating Elements of High-Quality Child Care Into School

> Curriculum is directed toward the self; it is about what the individual should know, be able to do, or about understanding individual experiences and fomenting an individual orientation *toward* difference. Instead, like solidarity, pedagogy is directed toward the relational and highlights the process by which we are made by others through and into difference. (Gaztambide-Fernandez, 2012, p. 51)

When I read Gaztambide-Fernandez's words, I think of formal curriculum's neat columns of indicators and outcomes. I think of assigning a percentage to a person's one-time demonstration of ability; at this particular time, they could demonstrate knowledge of a specific topic—isolated from other topics. I think of the debates over curriculum that were taking place in the 1920s and the 1950s, the push and pull of defining essential academic programs in relation to funding. I think of the attempts to define which publicly funded relationships held value (i.e., teachers of children aged seven and up) and which could be detrimental (i.e., non-parental care for young children of working mothers). In the middle of it all, is not what we teach, but how. Pedagogically, I hope we do not teach in isolation from each other. If, as Gaztambide-Fernandez wrote, "we are made by others," then we as educators have an opportunity for schools to be "made" by some of the most enriching aspects of high-quality child care.

> *For a long time, I wouldn't use the words child care or daycare, I said "early learning program," removing "care" as though it devalued education. Now I promote care as it brings value to any educational opportunity. We learn the best lessons from people we care about and who care about us. We study topics we care about more intently and remember them longer. I wish I could somehow incorporate the word "care" into "school. "*

Though multiple factors contribute to the quality of an early learning and child care program, there are three well-researched, seemingly consistent, factors in defining high-quality child care. They are integrated and of equal value: kinship, playful engagement, and interrelated content. I specifically chose these three because I have seen them in both school and child care and hope they are recognizable.

Kinship: Care and Reciprocal Learning Relationships

Child care requires educators to understand education as beginning at birth (versus at age six). High-quality infant care depends on educators building strong relationships with children and their parents in shared attachment (Schore, 2016; Hammond, 2020). Educators teach infants the security of belonging, essential for brain and nervous system development, via consistent care and focused attention (Shore, 2016; Hammond, 2020; Garboden-Murray, 2021). Consistent care and focused attention are elements of love. "Care" and "love" are loaded words in English, particularly when paired with "school," however, professional boundaries taken too far can create barriers to trusting relationships with children, parents, and colleagues. Education happens within the context of a relationship. In a reciprocal relationship, all parties learn from each other. The educator has acquired professional knowledge, but assuming the child is a blank or broken slate devalues the richness of their lives. Honest, respectful, caring relationships lead children and their adults to feel seen, heard, and loved for who they are and the unique perspectives they bring.

Care as education has a long history with the work of Nel Noddings (2003, 2005), Carol Garboden-Murray (2000, 2021), and Magda Gerber (2003). More recently, Dr. Jools Page (2018) expanded on care within early education as "professional love." Dr. Page's research demonstrates high student engagement, increased job satisfaction for educators, and improved allyship with parents via a triangular relationship placing equal value on teacher-student, parent-child, and parent-teacher dynamics. Building caring relationships is not always easy and takes time; when faced with the time constraints of a school day, teachers may wonder at the educational value of building relationships. As Ruth Ann Hammond (2020) wrote, "If a child does not feel safe and settled, [they] will be preoccupied with the need to emotionally self-regulate and will not be able to benefit from even the most richly prepared, developmentally appropriate environment" (p. 25). This statement is also true for adults. In this light, Dr. Debbie Pushor's (2015) extensive research on parent engagement and the encouragement to educators to "walk alongside" is viewed as an invitation to kinship. As educators actively take steps toward becoming part of extended family—even for a short period in a child's life—kinship works toward diminishing self-interest and increasing a sense of community.

Playful Engagement: Versus Action and Consequence

Playful engagement with materials, peers, and educators has been shown to decrease stress for children, increase their wonder/curiosity, and solidify new concepts (Ressler, 2019). Though "play" is associated with ideas of "fun," being playful is not necessarily fun (Mardell, 2019) as there are often frustrating obstacles that can only be overcome with perseverance and alternative approaches. Boykin and Noguera (2011) explained engagement as requiring three components: behavioral (effort and persistence), motivational (positive interest, relationship-based), and cognitive (deep processing of information and higher-order thinking). Engaging in play, children draw on previous experiences and new knowledge; they test theories and explore relationships. Contrary to ideas of play-based programming being easy or less work for teachers, successful playful engagement requires a balance of educator input with scaffolding based on academic knowledge and relationship-based observation of the child. Teachers can adopt an attitude of playful engagement, attempting different pedagogical approaches in different situations, based on their knowledge of a particular topic and a group of students—learning and adjusting for success along the way.

Interrelated Content: Cross-Curricular, Culturally Relevant Commitment

Practitioners of high-quality child care recognize children are continuously learning across structured and unstructured opportunities. Physical care routines—like helping a child settle for a nap—are rich educational opportunities for both the child and the educator. In child care, education continues in outdoor play, as humans are part of nature. In school, recess is often perceived as a break from learning and some teachers withhold it (and the unstructured play it affords) as punishment. Skilled Early Childhood Educators engage with children to present spirals and webs—cross-curricular outcomes across academic, social, emotional, spiritual, and physical domains. Spiraling, where academic concepts are introduced and spaced out (versus crammed), has been demonstrated to embed complex understandings

of interconnected systems. Webs create a visual link between stages of children's knowledge, highlighting the path of their diverse curiosities and their profound understanding of the world.

To offer developmentally and culturally appropriate scaffolding via webs and spirals, educators blend professional and personal knowledge in collaboration with the families and the community culture unique to the center. As the types of conversations and depths of opportunities for cross-curricular outcomes increase with age groups, high-quality child care practitioners collaborate with co-educators, community and family members, establishing the child's sense of belonging within their program as an extension of their community. When our eldest was about three years old, her educators had a pet rabbit who spent weekdays with the children in their classroom. On weekends, children were provided the opportunity to care for the rabbit at home. Along with the rabbit's essential information for care and feeding, families were given a book to document the experience and pose questions for the children to consider the following week. The book had been passed to many families over the years, annotated with comments from the educators, and was a rich source of information and entertainment. As a family, we read the experiences of many other families who were at the center as well as families who had come before us. Educators used the book to add to the webs, noting facts the children had learned from observation and attaching more paper to accommodate the ever-expanding questions. Not only were the children connected to the ongoing topics surrounding the rabbit, but the book prompted me to have different conversations with the educators and with other parents, and to connect and laugh in shared experience. Linking back to kinship, educators are changed via their interactions with the children, their families and their colleagues; the outcomes are richer for all parties.

The Hard Part

I highlighted kinship, playful engagement and interrelated content as key aspects of child care because I hope they are familiar concepts to every teacher reading this article. The teachers in my life, who work in all grade levels, seek and employ these three aspects within the scope of their classrooms as they see the personal and professional value and strive to establish them as the basis of their pedagogical and philosophical approach to the provincial curriculum. However, these aspects are not universal. Often their strongest advocates will also undermine the value of their practice by noting, "It isn't really my job to...", "but it takes a lot of time to...", or they state difficulty in convincing their administration, their colleagues, or even the parents of the educational value. Stemming from historical concepts of child care versus school, I believe the perception of care-giving diminishes perceived educational value. Though these elements of high-quality care for children are known to lead to strong outcomes for children and families, because they look like child care, they lose perceived educational value in favor of more tangible, testable, academic standards. Within this mindset, as children progress to Grade 12, they are afforded less care, less playfulness and less personally relevant curriculum from their educators.

During my graduate courses, I was surrounded by smart, caring teachers who were passionate about their craft. Repeatedly, they shared experiences where care for a child was central to the story and each time, they concluded by brushing off their choice to deviate from a lesson plan to focus on care. Embedded in my heart and mind is a story shared by a classmate I will call "Carrie," who teaches grade

three in a Catholic school. Carrie had a student whose mother worked multiple jobs, including a night shift, and often was too tired to get him and his little brother up and ready for school. At age eight, he shouldered that responsibility. He was a quiet child who listened carefully and was always offering to help. It was Shrove Tuesday and Carrie's morning plan involved making pancakes with the students, incorporating measurement and fractions while discussing Lent. The classroom was loud with excited voices and filled with the delicious smell of pancakes, but Carrie noticed her student sitting quietly, not participating and repeatedly pushing flat a small tear in his hoodie's sleeve. Carrie read his posture as sad and preoccupied and was concerned. Carrie asked her teaching assistant to take over the griddle and went to sit beside her student. He bobbed his head at her when she sat down but continued to focus on his sleeve. Carrie thought for a moment then commented, "I see you have a small tear in your favorite hoodie, did I ever tell you that I can sew?" He shook his head once, so she asked if he would like her to sew it up. "It will only take a minute." He nodded, so Carrie went to her desk and pulled out the little kit she kept for her own quick fixes. He pulled off the hoodie and they sat quietly together, amid the bustle of the room as Carrie's careful stitches quickly masked the tear. Carrie gave him the hoodie, he put it on, ran his hand over the sleeve, looked into her eyes and smiled. Then he got up and joined the group. Carrie finished this beautiful story by saying, "I know the family doesn't have extra money to buy new clothes and I knew he needed the sleeve to be fixed to be able to settle into the activity, but it's not really my job to do that."

> *I hear that as, "Even though there is immense educational value in demonstrating care, it isn't in my job description to demonstrate care."*

Care is foundational to education, yet when teachers feel pressure with student achievement, framed solely as success within the intellectual/academic domain, it is easy to see why care becomes a luxury. I envision a time when teachers will embrace and promote the aspects of child care within their practice. We are all caring for children at distinct stages of life; educating by building skills in their social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual domains. Now is the time for teachers and Early Childhood Educators to collaborate, acknowledging the unique role played at each stage of education.

Conclusion

As a means of moving toward establishing educator solidarity across sectors, I have worked to describe the relationship between school and child care as being the same, yet different. By defending the value of school with the statement "not child care," there is a risk in undermining everything that looks like child care in schools and justifying the removal of care from schools. High-quality child care and the Early Childhood Educators who specialized in child development have much to teach the school system. Three years into the Covid-19 pandemic and nearly two-years into the national Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement, now is the time for schools and child care to unite in solidarity. When it comes to the truly fleeting time we spend as educators in the lives of the children we teach, we ARE all in this together.

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