LEARNing Landscapes

Teacher Research:
Integrating Action,
Observation, and Reflection

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Statement of Purpose

LEARNing Landscapes™ is an open access, peer-reviewed, online education journal supported by LEARN (Leading English Education and Resource Network). Published in the spring and autumn 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, by welcoming 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.

Review Board (Vol. 8 No. 2)

Editorial

*T*he origins of action research have been attributed to American social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who developed a theory of action research in the 1930s, which served as a basis for legitimizing this type of work (Adelman, 1993). After a number of studies in neighbourhoods and factories, he posited that participatory research, or what he termed action research—rather than top-down research—produces greater productivity and satisfaction among participants because it encourages involvement and, as a result, creates an ethical and democratic means for making change. Lewin believed that action research, "develops the powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research" in specific contexts (Adelman, 1993, p. 8). Action research in education came about in the late 1940s and early 1950s when it was used largely for addressing complex problems such as inter-group relations and prejudices (McKernan, 1988). Subsequently, action research became the basis for the teacher research movement in the U.K. which was precipitated by Stenhouse in the 1970s. Proponents of this movement believed that all teaching should be research based and carried out by teachers themselves. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, the work of Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle did much to develop the teacher research movement in the U.S. In their widely acclaimed book entitled "Inside Outside: Teacher Research and Knowledge" (1993), they argued that

> Teacher research is a form of social change wherein individuals and groups labour to understand and alter classrooms, schools, and school communities and that this project has important implications for research on teaching, preservice, and inservice teacher education … Because teacher research interrupts traditional assumptions about knowers, knowing, and what can be known about teaching, it has the potential to redefine the notion of a knowledge base for teaching and to challenge the university's hegemony in the generation of expert knowledge for the field. (p. xiv)

Since these early beginnings, action research has continued to expand into many types of research contexts. More commonly known as "participatory action research" or PAR, it is carried out by researchers who strongly believe in the participatory nature of the work, and the need for social justice and change. The term "action research" is used less interchangeably with "teacher research," probably because teacher research has most often referred to school-based work, although both have common roots, and are based on similar ideologies. Recently, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) have used the

term "practitioner inquiry" as a substitute for teacher research in order to embrace and include researchers in universities, as well as educators in schools, who carry out alone, or in collaboration with others, participatory research predicated on the early tenets of Lewin's theory of action research. For the purposes of this issue of LEARNing Landscapes, and after careful consideration, we chose to use the term "teacher research" because we thought it would attract contributions from a wide variety of educational contexts. We are pleased that our call for submissions did just that. We have five very interesting commentaries and 17 articles that provide, through examples, excellent nuances of teacher research. As usual, these contributions are arranged alphabetically, but they are addressed thematically in the editorial.

Invited Commentaries

In a compelling commentary, **Susan Groundwater-Smith**, Honorary Professor at the University of Sydney, Australia, urges the academy to recognize and affirm teacher research with open and hospitable arms. She argues that this reflective research is what needs to become a form of knowledge that has currency in the university system, and that teacher researchers have a right to belong to the research-based community of practice. **Judith McBride**, a retired special education teacher from the Riverside School Board in Quebec, discusses in an interview how she first became interested in action research while attending a two-week professional development course with Jack Whitehead, the well-known action researcher from the U.K. He challenged the educators he was working with to examine their values and, as a result, Judith describes how in the process she underwent a total transformation of her perspectives on teaching. She became a staunch teacher researcher and advocate for action research, and shares examples of how, over many years, she has worked and published with educators from different schools conducting research in this field. These experiences have proven to be professionally transformative and engaging. **Karin Rönnerman**, Professor of Education at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, draws parallels between teacher research and the collaborative learning that was part of the early 20th century Nordic tradition of group knowledge produced in "study circles." In study circles, people met regularly to reflect together and expand their knowledge in a process that was based on voluntary participation, informal leadership, open access, and a belief in informal learning. In the 1970s, study circles evolved into "research circles" which were partnerships between universities and communities and/or schools. They focused on praxis and were predicated on the same tenets that were part of Lewin's action research theory. She illuminates her analysis by sharing some recent examples that emphasize the importance of developing teacher leaders in the context of teacher research. **Sarah Schlessinger**, Lecturer and **Celia Oyler**, Professor, both at Teachers

College, Columbia University, describe an action research project in which "action teams" for K-12 educators in New York City provided an engaging and safe space in which educators shared their work, explored their pedagogical beliefs, and analyzed power relations in classrooms and schools. These teacher researchers were validated by this work, and developed greater agency to act more definitively for social justice and inclusion in their school contexts. In the final commentary, **Ken Zeichner**, Boeing Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Washington, provides in a passionate interview, the need for teacher educators to develop an inquiry orientation among preservice teachers, in order to foster a teacher researcher stance from the outset. In an example, he describes how this may best be done in a third space independent from the bureaucracy of the university. He argues that failing to do this will ultimately remove the responsibility of teacher education from universities. These thought-provoking commentaries provide an excellent backdrop for the articles that follow.

Inquiry as Stance

In an important article included here as a reprint, **Cochran-Smith** (cited above), a main contributor to the teacher research movement in the U.S., juxtaposes the stories of two novice teachers, Gill, who learns to teach successfully and thrive over time, and Elsie, who leaves teaching after just one year. Among several factors that contributed to Gill's success were finding a supportive peer group, sustaining high expectations for students, participating in nested communities of practice, and having an inquiry stance mindset. Cochran-Smith calls for much needed and increased attention to the complex, multiple, and interrelated factors that affect teachers, and the ways to acknowledge and support the varied identities, roles, and ways of knowing of teachers. **Fichtman Dana** outlines the important differences between "inquiry as project" and "inquiry as stance." This is brought to life with the inclusion of a short video that follows the work of one teacher who embraces the idea of inquiry as stance. The video highlights the important dimensions of this stance, which include data collection as an integral part of teaching, the seamless blending of teaching and inquiry, and the commitment to creating a more equitable classroom.

Practitioners as Researchers

Haling and **Spears**, in a collaborative teacher researcher project, show how when the focus was shifted from reading accuracy to reading comprehension, the understanding of student abilities was modified. It became apparent that oral miscues were not related to loss of meaning, and specific instruction with students on miscues demonstrated how meaning making occurs and validated the students' strengths as readers.

The authors suggest how action research can overcome the limitations of evaluation criteria. **Campano**, **Ngo**, and **Player** describe a collaborative practitioner research project that focused on second-language immigrant youth conducting inquiry projects in the context of a community centre. These youth researched their families and neighbourhoods. They illustrate with two interesting examples how the youth gained from the experience, and also how the practitioner research process helped these researchers to challenge some of the previous suppositions they held about second-language immigrant youth at the beginning of the study, and to rethink curriculum as a result. **Casey** studied her own practice as she integrated social and participatory media into her high school classroom. She discovered that the unique qualities of media engendered participation and student-to-student learning. This dynamic process necessitated that she redefine her ideas and values about teaching, and that both she and her students shift their perceptions about what constituted "good" teaching. **Schecter**, **Arthurs**, **Sengupta**, and **Wong** describe how their practitioner research enabled them to attain new and important insights about a lack of awareness about parents' migration narratives among generation 1.5 language minority students, which produced language transmission discontinuities and complicated their social lives. They argue that what they gleaned in this process enabled them to consider promising pedagogical approaches to help foster academic success and identity reconciliation among these youth. **Roberts-Harris** and **Sandoval** share how what started off to be a collaborative, voluntary teacher research project with elementary school teachers in a charter school was so successful in providing valuable reflections and insights into teaching that it became a mandatory practice for all teachers in the school and a substantial part of teacher evaluation. Yearlong teacher research projects culminated in a festival of the work shared among teachers, administrators, and community members. The sharing validated these research efforts, and extended the learning among staff and beyond. The study showed how this type of rigorous, reflective practice enhances learning, and makes teachers credible insider experts. **Nelson** relates her experience in a collaborative practitioner research project, or what she refers to as a collaborative action research (CAR) project that she conducted with three middle school teachers interested in enhancing student voice in their classrooms. The teachers did this by partnering with their students and including their input into the classroom pedagogy. The teachers learned immensely from the students in the process. Nelson notes, however, that this teacher research works well and is accepted in low-stake areas of the curriculum, but runs into difficulty in the high-stake curricular areas where prescription, accountability, and student scores dominate and teachers have limited influence.

Teacher Research in Higher Education

Preston, **Jakubiec**, **Jones**, and **Earl** examine B. Ed. student experiences when incorporating Twitter into an undergraduate course, and how the learning gained by these students enhanced collaboration with the instructors. These authors suggest that acquiring digital literacy in undergraduate courses is a key component for developing digital practices in future classrooms. **Luke** and **Rogers** describe how they studied their collaborative planning, reflection, and teaching with 90 elementary education students. Although they experienced some moments of discomfort and distress in this process, they emphasize how collaborative reflection greatly deepened their professional growth, and led to more effective and practical solutions to problems as they arose. **Burbank**, **Goldsmith**, and **Bates** used a format of teacher research to study the accreditation experience at their university. Their findings emphasize the need to view the accreditation process as an important time for meaningful and useful self-reflection, rather than as just a "hoop-jumping" exercise.

Teacher Research Projects Among Higher Education Students

Professors in higher education, who are proponents of teacher research, frequently encourage their students, who are often teaching while studying, to embark on teacher research projects. **Heinrichs**, a recent M. Ed. graduate, examined how children, parents, and teachers can benefit from the coordination of home visits. She concluded that knowledge gained from home visits can help to enrich curriculum, create a more inclusive classroom environment, and remove deficit notions about children based on erroneous assumptions about children and their families. **Conway**, **Hansen**, **Edgar**, and **Palmer** describe how seven high school music teachers implemented action research projects in their classrooms over the course of one school year. They conclude that teacher research is an excellent way to bridge the gap between theory and practice, but cautioned that in some instances, the burden of conducting research while responding to the immediate classroom demands, can be onerous. For some, this resulted in abandoning the project. **Jamieson** developed a teacher research study of her grade eleven English classroom for her M.A. thesis. She focused on how to help students who were struggling with reading. She believed that through teacher research, empathy would help her to better understand and empower these students. She describes with examples how some of her students were able to make strong connections with the characters in the novel *Oliver Twist* by learning to take another's perspective, and as a result, enhanced their literacy skills. **Mitton-Kukner**, a higher education teacher, studied retrospectively the experience of three graduate students as they individually conducted teacher research projects for their M.A. degrees. She found that while there was a good deal of engagement and learning in

their work as teacher researchers, they faced considerable challenges in the amount of time involved in this type of work, in the complexities of the tasks, and in balancing the teacher and researcher roles. She cautions that with the increasing workloads in teaching, it is important to ask how teacher research might be shaped to make sure it can be a sustainable process for teachers.

Two Sides of the Same Coin

It is a fitting conclusion to this powerful issue to discuss the contribution of two authors. **Gade** describes her own teaching and schooling experiences in India and subsequent teacher researcher collaboration in Sweden. She proposes that teacher research should be seen as both an invaluable process of self-study and of increased opportunity for collaboration taken on by those who have inquisitive minds, who get as close as possible to concrete practitioner action, use relational and imaginative approaches for realistic problem-solving, and ask important and pertinent questions. She suggests these "two sides" can then draw on and inform the much needed educational action in a timely and viable manner. **Currin** uses the villanelle, an ancient Italian and pastoral form of poetry, as a metaphor for practitioner inquiry which, "living at the overlap of theory and practice, is an excellent resource to that end, a framework not unlike the villanelle …" (p. 158). The recursiveness and structure of the poetic form reflect the inquiry cycle as well as the simultaneous dynamic and static qualities of teacher research, and provide a rhythm to highlight and/or disrupt at pertinent junctures. This metaphor engagingly affirms the long-held beliefs about teacher research, and stretches our ways of thinking about it.

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Commentary

Being Hospitable to Teacher Research: A Challenge for the Academy

Susan Groundwater-Smith, University of Sydney

ABSTRACT

In my brief contribution to this edition of *LEARNing Landscapes*, focusing as it does upon teacher research, integrating action, reflection, and observation, I have chosen to discuss, in particular, the right of teacher research to be recognized and affirmed by the academy in the form of hospitality; a right that is being compromised more and more by the burgeoning neo-liberal culture that dominates so many of our institutions. I argue, in spite of the constraints that are put in its way, that teacher research makes a significant contribution to the development of professional knowledge and, like other aspects of professional practice, is also subject to those parameters that determine quality.

Hospitality: A Right to Visit or a Right to Belong

Hospitality is a tricky word and who no better to draw our attention to its difficult nature than Jacques Derrida. In his provocative article, "Hostipitality," Derrida (2000) juxtaposes hospitality with hostility and reminds us of the ways in which the two actions sit alongside each other, cheek by jowl. In writing this, in concert with much else of his work, he asserts that hospitality signals that the stranger should not be treated with hostility, but that there can be no such thing as an "unconditional welcome" (p. 4). Drawing on Kant, he sees the host remaining the master in his or her own domain, thus defining the conditions of hospitality. The "other," the guest, the stranger, is subject to the desires of the host who may say:

'Make yourself at home', this is a self-limiting invitation … it means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but remember, this is not true, this is not your home, but mine and you are expected to respect my property. (Derrida in conversation with Caputo, 2002, p. 111)

In this short piece I argue that universities, by their nature residing in a neo-liberal world, have offered a limited hospitality to the kind of research and publication that teachers and their academic mentors may undertake. They have accorded a right to visit, but not necessarily a right to belong (Still, 2010).

It could be asserted that teacher research is a counter to the oppressive force of the audit culture that is in such ascendancy in the university of today, dominated as it is by league tables determined by various research assessment exercises. Thornton (2012) has outlined the homogenizing practices of neo-liberalism in relation to knowledge production and commodification in universities with academics reduced to auditable performers. In the context of faculties of law, Thornton writes of the pressure to be productive where the aim is "merely to produce an auditable output with scant regard for the substance of intellectual worth" (p. 176). Metrics used to score research productivity in professional faculties take little or limited account of publications that have currency in the actual field of practice. Unfunded research, or research that attracts modest funding, is held to be of little worth.

In the body of this article I shall ask, can teacher research cross the threshold and be welcomed into a more hospitable university sector, can it result in knowledge that counts?

Professional Knowledge That Counts

In addressing the matter of professional knowledge that counts we need to ask ourselves the following four questions:

1. Is professional practice that is research *informed* an improvement upon that which is research *applied*?
2. What is the contribution that is made by professional research in and from the field to our quantum of professional knowledge?
3. What is the contribution that academic practitioners may make in working alongside their colleagues in the field as facilitators and co-researchers?
4. How do we judge the quality of such research?

Research Informed and Research Applied

Lingard and Renshaw (2010) take a stance resisting teachers as translators or interpreters of educational research done by others where they are at best only informants and at worst passive recipients; that is where essentially they apply the results of research done by others. Rather, they argue for the professionals in the field to engage fully by having a "researcherly disposition" that enables them to be active inquirers, while at the same time, academics should have a "pedagogical disposition" that takes teacher research seriously and examines how it might relate to both theory and practice.

In our contribution to *Methodological Choice and Design* (Groundwater-Smith & Irwin, 2011), we argued that critical to practice in professional fields is the need to seek an *understanding* that transcends a technical insight, whose tools are required to undertake that practice effectively. Authentic understanding is one that leads practitioners to pose the difficult questions regarding the evolution of that practice and its consequences. We drew upon the late Lawrence Stenhouse (1975, 1979) who advocated, within the field of education, that teachers evolve a self-critical, purposeful examination of practice for the benefit of both themselves and their students. He concluded his chapter upon Teacher as Researcher in this way:

> For in the end it is difficult to see how teaching can be improved or how curriculum proposals can be evaluated without self monitoring on the part of teachers. A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and which feeds teaching must be created if education is to be significantly improved. (1975, p. 165)

Building upon the work of Stenhouse and his colleagues at the Centre for Applied Research in Education (CARE) at the University of East Anglia, scholars from the UK, Canada, Australia, and the USA developed forms of teacher inquiry that took account of both the circumstances of a given classroom and school and those of systems themselves; for example, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) characterized "inquiry as stance" in this way:

> Working from and with an inquiry stance, involves a continual process of making current arrangements problematic; questioning the ways knowledge and practice are constructed, evaluated and used; and assuming that part of the work of practitioners individually and collectively is to participate in educational and social change. (p. 121)

By moving in this direction it became clear that not only were those supporting teacher research moving from the notion of applying research to practice, but also towards it, making a substantial contribution to knowledge about practice in a given field, a knowledge that could and should be acceptable to the academy.

The contribution that is made by professional research in and from the field to our quantum of professional knowledge. In their often quoted seminal work, *The New Production of Knowledge*, Gibbons et al. (1994) argue that knowledge production has been transformed. They distinguish between Mode 1 knowledge that is generated within the academy, or research establishments, and I would argue, is welcomed and applauded by the academy; and Mode 2 knowledge that is created in broader, transdisciplinary social and economic contexts, but nonetheless is identified as legitimate and thus admissible. Having made this distinction, Gibbons and colleagues subscribed to the principle that in whichever Mode, the knowledge was produced through research, whether basic or applied, it was in the hands of some kind of research community.

More recently, Nowotny, Scott, and Gibbons (2003) have argued that judging the worth of the Mode 2 Knowledge is in fact no longer the exclusive province of the academy. Indeed, they continue by asserting that the research game is being joined by more and more players. Furthermore, it has been argued that we are now in the realm of Mode 3 knowledge (Groundwater-Smith & Irwin, 2011). Indeed, this very digital journal, *LEARNing Landscapes*, built as it is upon an emergent participatory culture of partnerships, collaboration, inclusion, and multiple voices (Jenkins, Clinton, Purushotma, Robinson, & Weigel, 2006), is an example of networked knowledge, built upon a collective and mutually respectful enterprise.

Returning for a moment to Jacques Derrida, Cornell (2007) quotes him having written regarding the future:

> It is a matter of looking for something that is not yet well received, but that waits to be received. And one may possess a kind of flair for that which, going against the current, is already in touch with possible reception. (Derrida in Cornell, p. 102)

While Derrida speaks to a future that heeds the voices of minorities, it is possible to also conceive of a future in the academy where professional knowledge that is developed from practitioner research may be not only accepted, but also honoured. This is surely a role for the academics in professional faculties, that they alongside their colleagues in the field become advocates, acting not just as mentors, but also as co-researchers.

The contribution that academic practitioners may make in working as facilitators and co-researchers. All too often it is the case that where academic practitioners work alongside their field-based colleagues, the task is seen as a transactional one. Acting exclusively as a facilitator is thus in the ascendancy. In reflecting on this, Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, Mockler, Ponte, and Ronnerman (2013) sought for a bona fide partnership in the form of all parties being co-researchers requiring mutual trust, accountability, sustainability, and transparency that may be best achieved through dialogue and debate. We argued that for partnership to take account of not only the events under scrutiny, but also for the physical, social, political, and geographic contexts in which they occur, it was essential that the relationship be governed by deep respect, each for the other. Not only that, but a respect for the quality of the inquiry being undertaken.

Judging the quality of teacher research conducted in partnership with the academy. Furlong and Oancea (2005), under the auspices of the ESRC in England, looked in particular at strategies for developing a framework for assessing quality in applied and practice-based educational research. They recognized the complex interaction between academic researchers and field-based practitioners who will themselves be engaged in systematic inquiry. In other words, they saw that there was a blurring of the boundaries between the researcher and the researched. However, there was little recognition of the very different worlds in which the various parties might work and how, in particular, universities might be more welcoming of practitioner researchers.

The framework sought to establish four dimensions of quality: epistemic; technological; capacity development and value for people; and, economic. While it would be difficult to argue with these dimensions, it is possible to insert into the discussion a fifth important, missing dimension that relates to ethical practice as a determinant of quality (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2008). In this context a series of broad, overriding "ethical" guidelines for practitioner research, conducted in concert with academic colleagues, were established. Some of these are linked to a traditional conceptualization of research ethics, while others flow from the discourse of the ethical professional, these being:

- *That it should observe ethical protocols and processes*: Practitioner research undertaken by those in the field, in concert with those in the academy, is subject to the same ethical protocols as other social research. Informed consent should be sought from participants, whether students, service users and providers, parents or others, and an earnest attempt should be made to "do no harm."

- *That it should be transparent in its processes*: One of the broader aims of practitioner research lies in the building of community and the sharing of knowledge and ideas. To this end, practitioner research should be "transparent" in its enactment, and practitioner researchers accountable to their community for the processes and products of their research.

- *That it should be collaborative in its nature*: Practitioner research should aim to provide opportunities for colleagues to share, discuss, and debate aspects of their practice in the name of improvement and development. The responsibility of "making sense" of data collected from within the field of one's own practice (through triangulation of evidence and other means) relies heavily on these opportunities.

- *That it should be transformative in its intent and action*: Practitioner researchers engage in an enterprise which is, in essence, about contributing to both transformation of practice and transformation of society. Responsible and ethical practitioner research operates in such a way as to create actionable, actioned outcomes.

- *That it should be able to justify itself to its community of practice*: Engaging in practitioner research involves an opportunity cost to the community. To do well, requires time and energy that cannot be spent in other professional ways. The benefits must be commensurable with the effort and resources expended in the course of the work, which necessarily will require collaboration and communication.

Conclusion

Throughout this discussion I have argued that teacher researchers should not be seen as supplicants to universities, begging for recognition and admission, but as having a right to belong to the research-based community of practice, and that, in turn, universities should act as hospitable hosts. In the edition of *LEARNing Landscapes* that follows, there is ample evidence that this is critical professional work, leading to both the development of professional knowledge as well as informing how it may be best enacted. Surely, this is a legitimate task for university faculties in professional fields. The conclusion that I arrived at some eight years ago still stands:

We need to learn to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty and recognise that there are no 'silver bullets' that will provide ready-made solutions to complex problems. We need to be prepared to analyse and challenge cultural formations in embedded practices in the field. We need to acknowledge difference and to eschew seeking for consensus at all costs. Finally, we need to recognise that professional learning resulting from authentic partnerships is enriching, powerful and in the best of worlds emancipatory. If we can open our minds and hearts, heads and hands to each other we shall be the richer for it. (Groundwater-Smith, 2007)

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Commentary
Living Your Values in Your Practice

Judith McBride

ABSTRACT

In this interview, Judith McBride describes how she first became interested in teacher research as a graduate student and how a summer school course with influential educator Jack Whitehead propelled her through a "huge transformation" that changed the way she taught and the way she thought about teaching. She was involved in teacher research during her career as a high school teacher and was instrumental in guiding other teachers in action research and narrative inquiry. Now retired from teaching, she continues to contribute to this field in a variety of projects and shares her advice to teachers who wish to research their own practice.

Can you describe how you became involved in teacher research?

When I was doing graduate work I had a mentor here at McGill and she was a graduate student working as a T.A. in a class that I was taking and she had been a classroom teacher. She was then doing her doctoral studies and I kind of fell in love with her work because she had been working with gifted kids using inquiry, which was all new to me. She said, "Well, you could be doing research on your practice," and I said, "Oh!" It never occurred to me that I could be doing something like that. And so, I was taken under her wing for a long time. She then left to teach at Bishop's University.

She later called me to say that she had a guest professor coming from the U.K. that summer and I was introduced to the work of Jack Whitehead and *that was it*. I just knew that teacher research was what I had to do for the rest of my teacher life: that meant

to be looking for problems and trying to find solutions, not waiting for things to wash over me, not listening to the whining in the staffroom anymore, but being proactive. The most important part of it was learning to work through my values by being very clear about what I cared about in education, to be always focused on working through my values, looking at the contradictions and ways to overcome the problems that came in practice. It just became a habit—it became my way of teaching and thinking about teaching and it was because of those influences.

What inspired you during that visit of Jack Whitehead? I believe he inspired a number of people that were with him that summer.

The summer school course with Jack Whitehead was a two-week intensive and we met for four out of seven days for two weeks. We walked into the first class and nobody knew what they were getting into. It was a course on action research—that's all we were told. When we walked in there were a couple of first pages of articles on the table, and one of them was an article by Elliot Eisner, *The Promise and Perils of Alternate Forms of Data Representation*. And I thought, "Why, I just read that. This is going to be really good: we're going to be able to talk about something that I've just read."

Then Jack came in and all of a sudden we felt quite uncomfortable. He challenged us to write value claims—"What do you care about in education?" After I got to know him I realized what a kind and caring man he was, but when he came in he was all business—"Shall we begin?" So, we started by writing value claims. I'd never really thought about what I cared about in education, never thought about how I lived my values in my practice, or how I was accountable to my values. Everybody in the room was feeling the same, but nobody was sharing yet because many of us didn't know each other.

In the morning, there were brass bands practicing outside and huge trucks reeling by on the highway. We had all this turmoil going on and nobody felt comfortable. Then, in the afternoon it was strange. One of those huge summer thunderstorms struck outside, with the water blowing against the windows. We laughed and thought, "Oh my goodness, how are we going to survive two weeks?" We began self-studies and the experience was extremely intense. We had to provide evidence that we were living our values in our practice—tangible evidence like notes from parents, documents from school, or student artefacts. There were a few of us who created negative dialectics, finding evidence that we were not living our values in our practice.

I came home on that first weekend. I had just packed up my classroom because I was coming back to university full time in the fall. I had boxes all over the house and I told my husband, "Go away, leave me alone, I'm working." I started going through stuff, sure I was never going to find anything to disprove my claim to value students above all else. Well, I found all kinds of evidence, and I was basically on my knees when I went back to Bishop's that Monday morning. I was just so shaken by things that I had in my possession that I'd never really read, that I'd never really looked at, and never really wanted to.

For example, there was a student, Mike, and in my class he was just great. I would ask him to try a strategy and he would try it until he perfected it. He was really on the path to being a good student going from a self-contained special ed. class into the mainstream. But outside of my classroom he wasn't doing so well. Socially, he was not really adjusting to high school. He was into all kinds of mischief. But I just thought, "Well, that's somebody else's problem, that's not my problem." He was in my class for two years. In grade nine, he left to go into the mainstream and he became a terrible bully, doing all kinds of horrible things to weaker students. This is what I confronted at summer school. I knew all of these things, but I stopped caring when kids left my classroom. They became somebody else's problem.

I made it through the second week of summer school and I really didn't know whether I'd ever return to teaching. I was at university studying full time and I thought, "Wow, what for?" I took a lot of time to sort out my thinking and what I concluded was that I had to switch my thesis topic and continue my self-study for my dissertation, to work out how I was going to live through my values outside my classroom. That became through teacher research and mentoring other teachers who wanted to engage in research. It was a *huge* transformation. It was a horribly painful transformation, but it certainly made a difference to me as a teacher and as a person altogether inside and outside of a classroom.

Can you tell me how you and your "Narrative Inquiry Group" got started?

The Narrative Inquiry Group[1] began as an offshoot of an action-research project that I was facilitating in the high school from which I retired. I was invited by a teacher to come into the school to help her with an action-research project. She was going to be teaching, "Mathematics Resource, Secondary," and was a new teacher. I said, "Sure, I'll come in and work with you on two conditions: one, you have to get the blessing of the principal, and two, you have to open up the project to everybody in the school."

The principal was happy to have me there. He called a meeting and 20 people showed up, interested in action research, including the principal, a vice-principal and her secretary, teachers, and support staff. That was the beginning of my volunteer work in the school. The narrative group grew out of this with a collection of English teachers who were really interested in storying. I introduced them to the work of Jean Clandinin and we started talking about "cover stories" and "inside stories." We got together to share stories, but we didn't start writing for quite a while. But then the need for it to be research surfaced in me, and so it became more than just sitting and talking and telling stories. We started looking at why we tell stories, what stories we tell, why they are important, what we learn from our own stories and from each other's stories. So it became more formalized over the years.

I started looking at narrative inquiry, not just telling stories and writing stories, but really getting into the meaning of the stories and getting to the learning that teachers do. I firmly believe that teachers have to learn all the way through. This notion that you go to school, get a B.Ed, know everything there is to know about teaching, and stop learning is quite ridiculous. So slowly, slowly I was introducing the idea that we could *read* research and that we could *write* research and we could *be* researchers. Now we all are firmly of the opinion that we are—we work it, we live it, we are teacher researchers. We used to meet every second Friday morning before class when everybody was in the same school. Over the years, different people have joined, a few have left, so we're not all English teachers now—we're English, drama, dance, art teachers.

Because we are in different schools, we meet once a month on a Saturday or Sunday for the better part of the day. We talk and we write, and then we share. We looked for different ways of making our learning explicit, and we came across literary métissage— the work of Anita Sinner, Carl Leggo, and Erika Hasebe-Ludt in particular. Their method is something that really works for us, because we all have our stories and we all have our writing, and we all write in different ways. Some write lists, some write poems, some write stories, and some write essays. Métissage gives us a way to bring our stories together as one, to not just make our learning explicit, but to really give us something that launches us into the next piece. Everybody writes on a theme and then we braid our pieces and come up with something new and startling—nobody knows what is going to come out of the braiding. Métissage gives us direction, more questions, more ideas, more writing, and so on we go.

I understood from my graduate years how important it is to publish. If we're going to be researchers, we've got to go through that last stage of putting it out there for the public to validate. So publishing has become the last big step, and as you know we

published[2] in your journal, which was a big thrill for all of us. That's not one that we're all comfortable with yet, but it will come.

Do you have any particular project that you could give us a little more detail about and the learning that came out of it with one of the colleagues that you worked with?

The first project that the Narrative Group did together is all about learning. We were exploring métissage. We had been invited for a number of years to Concordia University to a one-day life-writing workshop with Anita Sinner, Carl Leggo, and Erika Hasebe-Ludt. After the first workshop we went back to our meetings and decided that we were going to embark on this: we were going to do a *braid*. We had to come up with a topic and everybody was saying, "Where are we going to find the time for this? I have so much difficulty finding balance in my life already." Well, *balance* became our topic. There were seven of us involved in this project. Each of us wrote a balance piece. We got together to share bits and pieces, until finally we each had a polished piece. We met at one of the teacher's homes in a beautiful pastoral setting. Everybody was relaxed and happy. We tried to figure out how to actually go about braiding because there's no how-to book on métissage that we've been able to find. We decided that everyone would read their piece and we would listen for lines that kind of clicked with us, and then we would figure out how to put those lines together. We spent a day reading and pulling out lines. Each of the pieces on balance was really different: it was balance in personal life, balance between personal and professional, balance as a new mother, all kinds of different perspectives on balance. We came up with four poems,[3] completely unrelated to anything that anybody had written previously. It was miraculous as far as we were concerned. They are beautiful poems. Everybody's voice is there. A reader who doesn't know us would get something from these pieces. That was a huge turning point for the group when we actually produced our first métissage.

Over the years, what are some of the highlights you've had working on teacher research?

My personal success in my classroom practice after I was introduced to action research, self-study, and Jack's idea of living theory was transformational. The success of my students was remarkable when they left the self-contained class and went into the mainstream because I was just teaching a different way. I had some kids for three years. They noticed the change, could see the difference in the way I was approaching teaching and learning. I introduced inquiry into their learning—it really became an inquiry practice, inside out.

The action research projects that some of the teachers completed in the first school I worked in as a facilitator were really remarkable and some of them were published in *LEARNing Landscapes*.[4] They did not just create something new, but they changed the way they think about teaching and learning. That's something that teachers have to do voluntarily—you can't say, "Okay, you have to change, you have to think critically about what you're doing." Teachers becoming teacher researchers have to go through a process of change and I was able to track the progress of the change.

I'm working with another little group now, "The Living Theory Project" and the question we're addressing is: "How can I live my values more fully in my practice?" We meet once a month on a Saturday and we basically talk. We don't produce anything together—it's all about ideas. And that for me is wonderful because I'm just participating in a conversation at that point; I'm not chasing around looking for articles or ideas, or recommending books. It's just professional conversation—for me that's a highlight, because there's been a shift in my role, in my perspective within the groups.

I guess the most recent highlight is my work as a consultant in a First Nations school. I was asked to do workshops, and I said, "I don't do workshops. I never really appreciated them as a teacher and I really just can't take your money, but I will write a proposal for an alternative." So what I proposed was that I would be in the school for two days a week and I would work with a small group of teachers, teaching them something about the process of doing research on practice. They could pick their own problem and we'd find a solution together, rather than having me come in and do a cooperative learning workshop or a behaviour management workshop, or whatever. My time in the school just wrapped up and there are some beautiful projects that are in place now. We're going to have a Sharing Circle in June. Each teacher will share a project with colleagues, and next year mentor one of them as they begin the process. So that's definitely a highlight.

Can you say a little bit about how you transitioned from being the facilitator at the group to being a member of the group?

It's something that I have struggled with and when I stopped struggling, it started to happen. I had this feeling that everything was going to derail if I wasn't in control, and it didn't happen that way. I still do subversive things from time to time. I'll say, "Oh, I just read a really great book. You have to read this."

Sometimes I've had to kind of push people to take the lead. I was invited to lead professional conversations in a school, conversations about whatever problem anybody brought to the table at lunchtime on Fridays. There is a big transition going on in the school right now, and they're changing the whole program. The conversations became very specific to that, and there was a very significant and remarkable absence of trust amongst the teachers involved in these conversations.

I brought in some ideas from business on team building. I made sure that key teachers were comfortable with the idea, and that they could take on the role of implementing a team-building model. It was working, but the first step is to establish trust, and once you've established trust you can get into conflicts, conversations about things that you don't agree about, with the idea that you're going to achieve consensus. Then you can get into "buy-in" and "results." It became clear to me that I couldn't continue to participate because I couldn't be trusted. I'm an outsider. So, two of the teachers took on the facilitator's role.

Sometimes transitioning is forced and sometimes it's something that happens quite naturally, which is more of the case of what happened with *The Narrative Inquiry Group*. We don't need a leader; they don't need me to be there—I want to be there, but the group functions quite happily on its own. Everybody has their own expertise, their own gifts, their own strengths, and there's respect—I think that's maybe the key thing: respecting each other's intelligences, talents, spaces, and needs.

What do you suggest to other teachers who want to get involved in researching their own practice?

I actually believe it begins before teachers are credentialed. I think the responsibility for the shift to an inquiry perspective belongs here at the university—that's where it has to start. Actually, maybe it can go back further than that. I think if kids go through school and are introduced to an inquiry curriculum, then they're going to start thinking differently: they'll develop the mind-set for being curious and looking at problems before problems find them. But I really do believe that it starts here and that it should be embedded in not just one course, but throughout the program for pre-service teachers.

To introduce teacher research to a school is not easy. I know that when I started working at a school last fall, there were questions about what teacher research was going to do for them and where were they going to find the time. It was just kind of slow and steady. I was working basically as a research assistant. A teacher would say,

"There is a problem with engagement in this classroom" and I would say, "I'll bring in some ideas that we can look at"—kind of like Jack with his first pages of articles on the table.

The first thing the school needs is a commitment from a core of teachers, who would be committed to the idea and the administration would definitely have to be committed to the idea. But *how* do you get that commitment? There has to be a need, a recognized need for change.

I'm sad when, sometimes in schools, I see people who are content with complaining and inertia. They don't really, when it comes down to it, want change. There's a culture of unhappiness, and that has to change to a culture of *care*. Once you have commitment, there has to be trust, particularly in an endeavour that involves the threat of losing something that's safe—even if that something is not good. The threat of change can be really disturbing. There has to be that trust amongst the people who are committing to a teacher research perspective. It doesn't take long once you've made the commitment and learned to trust, and once you've started the process you can't stop. It just becomes a way of being in the classroom, in the school. You can't say, "Well, I'm not going to do that this year." That just doesn't work.

Notes

1. *The Narrative Inquiry Group* is a writers' collective with 11 members. The group is composed of teachers and non-teaching professionals, active and retired, from three public secondary schools in Quebec, Canada. It meets every few weeks to talk, reflect, write, analyze, illustrate, and braid lived experience. As well, the group seeks opportunities to perform the products of our professional conversations and to engage with others in the practice of narrative inquiry and literary métissage.

2. "To Where Teachers Learn: Following the Yellow Brick Road" appeared in the Autumn 2014 edition issue of the journal and was written by *The Narrative Inquiry Group*.

3. To read these poems, please visit: http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/learning landscapes/Documents/LL_no16_poeme.pdf

4. "Teacher Inquiry for Educational Change" appeared in the Spring 2011 edition issue of the journal and was written by Danielle Couture, Judith McBride, Sujata Saha, Denise Schellhase, and Kelly Von Eschen.

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Commentary
The Importance of Generating Middle Leading Through Action Research for Collaborative Learning

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ABSTRACT

In this commentary I connect today's emphasis on collaborative learning with the Nordic tradition of study/research circles and action research. More specifically, I do this by examining three key aspects: the need to understand one's history and educational roots; the importance of fostering and generating middle leaders through action research; and the significance of recognizing middle leaders in schools and pre-schools for the development of collaborative learning.

*T*eacher research with a focus on collaborative learning has become a major interest in the field of professional learning, and is often discussed in relation to the importance of inquiry and reflection. Sagar (2013) shows that different content in professional learning curricula and experiences can enable or constrain the kinds of learning which occur among teachers. Kennedy (2005) emphasizes that professional learning which starts from teachers' own questions has the potential to change practices, particularly if it is connected to some kind of facilitation. In a literature review, Opfer and Pedder (2011) show that the most effective approach to professional learning is one that relates to teachers' practices and involves activities related to their everyday work; this effectiveness increases even more if the learning is conducted in collaboration with colleagues and takes place over a long time. Campbell (2014) underscores the importance of developing the professional capacity of experienced teachers to evolve their practices further and to contribute to improvements in classrooms, in schools, and across education systems. Similarly, Timperley (2011) argues

that it is important for teachers to focus on the learning of all students, to seek relevant knowledge and skills to achieve this, and to assess regularly and collaboratively the impact of their practices on students in order to make appropriate adjustments.

However, it is easy to fall into the trap of believing that everything will run smoothly and without contradiction if one simply emphasizes collaborative learning (Salo & Rönnerman, 2014). And it is easy to believe that collaborative learning lacks any historical roots.

In this invited commentary I will take the opportunity to relate today's focus on collaborative learning and action research to historic educational traditions in the Nordic countries—and specifically in Sweden, where the era of folk enlightenment, at the beginning of the last century, saw the birth of collaborative adult education in study circles whose purpose was to enlighten people to become democratic citizens.

A study circle gathers a group of people who meet on a regular basis to discuss, reflect together, and thus expand their knowledge on a topic of mutual interest. The idea(l) of a study circle is based on voluntary participation, informal leadership, and open access to all, embodying an informal and non-instrumental view of learning.

Study circles were of great importance in building the Swedish welfare state, and were connected to the democratic project ("study circle democracy"). They aimed, on the one hand, to educate people politically (ideologically) for their functions in local organizations and, on the other, to educate workers in school subjects they had not previously studied. The role of study circles in this national process is discussed by Larsson (2001), who relates them to seven aspects of democracy: equal participation, horizontal relations, recognition of diverse identities, knowledge that informs standpoints, deliberative communication and action, internal democratic decision-making, and striving for action to form society.

Since the era of folk enlightenment, the study circle as an arena for knowledge construction has become an important approach to adult education outside the institutionalized school system. But while a study circle can be viewed as a way to achieve individual learning, it is also a way to create democratic processes for collective knowledge construction and for enhancing social changes—both of which are also features of critical action research (Rönnerman & Salo, 2012). Both study circles and action research use methods based on the ideas and principles of democracy to develop democratic processes for gaining knowledge. One essential democratic aspect is a focus on the group rather than the individual, so that the emphasis is not

on developing the individual capacities of each person through a personal study of the subject, but rather on developing the capacities of the group through collaborative discussion. In this perspective, the participants themselves are an important source of knowledge, and the methods developed for sharing and extending knowledge in the group are based on recognizing and sharing participants' experiences and working lives (Holmer, 1993).

A further development of the study circle happened in the 1970s in Sweden, when partnerships were established between universities and the labour market to increase understanding during specific industrial crises—for example in the shipping and car industries. These forms of circles were named research circles, and also became an arena for developing methods of inquiry for the university researchers involved.

A research circle is not a uniform concept, but can be described as a meeting in which participants conduct an organized search for, and development of, knowledge in co-operation with other participants. The ideology behind the research circle encompasses both the creation of a social practice and the development of concepts about that practice. Analytically, Holmer refers to the researchers' role in this process as "research praxis" and the participants' role as "participant praxis." From a participant perspective, the process of developing knowledge could be seen in three ways: gaining knowledge, developing knowledge, and participating in the social production of knowledge (Holmer, 1993). The research circle is described as involving issues about the workplace and professional skills, the organization, and strategic planning (Holmstrand & Haraldsson, 1999). A research circle always involves a problem which has been jointly decided upon and which should be scrutinized from all sides. The intention is not to solve the problem, but to examine it in detail and thereby widen participants' knowledge about it. Although the way of dealing with identified problems differs, Holmstrand and Härnsten (2003) nonetheless point out that in all research circles some specific resources are signified such as: the participants' knowledge and experiences, the researchers' knowledge about the identified problem, the researchers' competence as researchers (systematic knowledge), and other researchers' knowledge which might shed light on the problem.

Considering this brief outline of the Swedish tradition of study/research circles, it is interesting to see how similarly professional learning communities (PLC) or teacher learning communities (TLC) are described. Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) as well as Nehring and Fitzsimmons (2011) summarize the importance of collaborative structures, shared values and visions, collective responsibility, shared leadership, reflective dialogues, and questioning one's own practice with a

focus on new knowledge for teaching and learning. In both study/research circles and in TLCs/PLCs, participation, responsibility, reflection, and dialogues are emphasized in nurturing learning based on shared values. Notably, these are also important features in action research as part of the development of the practice, as explained below.

In the development of Nordic action research (Rönnerman, Furu, & Salo, 2008; Rönnerman & Salo, 2014), the Nordic traditions were taken into account and have been of great importance, alongside influences from the Anglo-Saxon traditions. In this way, reflections and dialogues among researchers, teachers, and school leaders have been put to the fore. Through establishing school-university partnerships within which the inquiry stance is emphasized, action research projects have been initiated in pre-schools and schools with the purpose of developing practice via a focus on creating dialogues among participants and a researcher. Following many projects over time reveals that a particularly interesting development occurs among teachers as they discover that this is the way to improve quality in practice. One such aspect is taking on a leadership role as facilitator for their colleagues.

In a recent study, Edwards-Groves and Rönnerman (2013) found that teachers involved in a program of action research, which included doing their own action research projects over time and facilitated by a researcher, experienced a transformation of leadership in their own practices—with the result described as a generated leadership. The study used data from two action research programs—one in Australia and one in Sweden—and similarities were found in how the two programs were organized. Both were conducted over 12 months, including participants doing their own action research and incorporating eight sessions of group meetings. Groups consisted of about 10-12 teachers and were facilitated by the same researcher for the whole program. During smaller facilitation groups with an emphasis on sharing experiences in dialogues, the facilitator also used specific ways of asking questions to challenge the taken-for-granted thinking of everyday practices. In the findings of the study, it became evident for the teachers to present their work to other teachers by leading their own colleagues. The role of the facilitator was taken on by the teachers, enabling agency and encouraging them to organize and set up similar groups in their own schools and preschools. However, the study also showed that building leadership capacities through professional learning requires certain conditions to be fulfilled in an individual's practice. The principal at each school or preschool needs to support and recognize the leading practices at each site so that they are nurtured and can be sustained as collaborative learning.

Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, and Rönnerman (2014) found in their study that one of the crucial tasks for middle leaders or teacher leaders in schools is to find the time and space for collaborative learning among teachers for sustained development in schools and preschools. Teacher leaders or middle leaders, identified as teachers who are leading their colleagues, but also working with them as colleagues (Grootenboer et al., 2014), are essential in action research, because they also know what it is to be a teacher. In the literature there is a wide range of concepts trying to define this leadership, such as: teacher leader, distributed leadership, shared leadership, and dispersed leadership; but none of these captures the closeness to the classroom and the impact on teacher professional learning. Middle leaders are in a unique position where they can bridge between the principal and the staff, and since they are close to the most important site in education—the site where learning takes place—they can also exercise their leadership from a place of great proximity and relevance.

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Commentary

Inquiry-Based Teacher Learning for Inclusivity: Professional Development for Action and Change

Sarah Schlessinger and Celia Oyler, Columbia University

ABSTRACT

University-school partnerships can offer teachers a space for inquiry into theory-based practice related to teaching for equity, inclusivity, and justice. The Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project (TCICP) invites city teachers to join an Inquiry to Action Team where they collectively interrogate students' access to full participation in schools. Teachers are enthusiastic about this work and eagerly share their wisdom and carefully document their yearlong journeys into creating greater access and participation for students. The inquiry teams function as an alternate space for educators to share their work, ponder their pedagogical beliefs, and analyze power relationships in their classrooms and schools. As participants are validated in their work in this alternate space, they are able to build agency as intellectuals and act inclusively and for social justice within their own school spaces.

Our Project

*I*nvited by the New York City Department of Education to create a "toolkit" for teachers to learn "best practices" to support the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms, we instead argued for a professional development approach anchored in teacher inquiry. We know that some classrooms are not designed to meet the needs of a very wide range of learners and since teaching inclusively is such complicated work, it is resistant to easy fixes or one-size-fits-all prescriptions. We also know teachers—having been in that role ourselves for a

combined 20 years—are committed to problem solving for their own classrooms and stimulated by opportunities to pursue such problem solving with peers.

Therefore, we (as the Teachers College Inclusive Classrooms Project) organized yearlong Inquiry to Action teams for K-12 educators from across the city. Our work with teachers—both what we invite them to do with their students and what we invite them to do with us—is rooted in a capacity orientation to humans. That is, unlike some traditions from special education and urban education that emphasize what children and youth *cannot* do, we organize our work around investigations into what students and teachers know, can do, and value. We understand that students are members of communities that have resources and knowledge and also values and dreams. Our goal is to support teachers to inventory and understand these resources and competencies. Simultaneously, we also view *teachers* from a capacity perspective, which requires that professional development be organized in ways that honor teachers' knowledge and expertise. We do not provide "teacher proof" recommendations and do not offer ready-made solutions to their local and context- and child-specific dilemmas. Rather, we design spaces to build intellectual communities in which we ponder the possibilities and practices for inclusivity and equity.

Toward a Praxis of Critical Inclusivity

Inclusive education is built on a belief in equity in education for all (Ainscow, 2005). As a stance, inclusivity not only assumes and anticipates human difference, but it also values difference and what differences can teach us (Ainscow, Howes, Farrell, & Frankham, 2003). Thus, enacting an inclusive stance requires disrupting ideas of normal and abnormal and removing barriers to education for all students that are constructed upon these notions of normalcy (Barton & Armstrong, 2008). (See Table 1 for various examples of traits considered normal and desirable in many schools.)

Table 1
Normal and Abnormal Traits

Center	Margin
NORMAL	**ABNORMAL**
general education student	special education student, English language learners, "at risk" students
heterosexual	homosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer
gender conforming	sissy, faggot, tranny
stable housing	homeless, in the foster system
fluent accentless English speaker	speakers of other languages
well behaved	emotionally disturbed, ADHD, problem student
able-bodied	disabled
mentally healthy	mentally ill
physically healthy	overweight, underweight
smart	slow, stupid, retarded
clean	dirty
two parent, heterosexual home	broken home, non-traditional home
average	low performing, struggling, gifted

North American educational systems have traditionally positioned particular groups as "other" in ways that diminish their humanity and deem them inferior. Among the groups often marginalized are students who are of color, disabled, working class, queer, multilingual, female, and religious minorities. Too often these groups have been blamed for their educational experiences without an analysis of the historical, institutional, and sociocultural factors that contribute to such inequity and exclusion.

A praxis of critical inclusivity invites active interrogation of how classroom and school curriculum and instructional practices may have an exclusionary impact on particular students. This interrogation of exclusion begins with a simple proposition: Human differences abound and because of socially constructed knowledge-power matrices, there are numerous ways that students, their families and communities, their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), and their ways of knowing

are positioned vis-à-vis authorized school knowledge. Drawing on this interrogation, teaching inclusively then requires the enactment of counter-hegemonic practices that work against the exclusion of students. These practices should be enacted with the knowledge that there is no formula for success, but rather a continuous and ongoing learning process that requires work on one's self, constantly assessing one's own assumptions about difference (Allan, 2008).

Throughout much of the movement for inclusion there have been well-meaning scholars and educators paving the way for the inclusion of students with disabilities by teaching techniques to support a wide range of learners in the general education classroom. These techniques are often helpful in smoothing the path for teachers and students to learn from and with each other. However, 30 years of techniques from inclusionists have not created a sufficient shift to make most schools welcoming places to the disabled. Quite similar to techniques for students with disabilities, comes a recent best-seller for controlling young people from low-income communities of color. We refer here to Doug Lemov's (2010) *Teach Like a Champion*. As the author explains in the promotional materials posted on Amazon.com,[1] these techniques are used in

> a group of schools that serve low-income populations in urban centers in New York and New Jersey. Across our 16 schools 98% of our students scored proficient in math and just below 90% in English. This means that our schools usually outperform more privileged suburban districts.

For students marked as "at-risk," disabled, or low-income, many teaching techniques center on compliance and control, rather than learning, co-agency (Hart, Dixon, Drummond, & McIntyre, 2004), and active engagement. We have found that teachers are eager to work counter-hegemonically together to engage with us in re-designing classroom curriculum and instruction with questions of inclusion and equity at the center.

Inquiry as Stance

While there are multiple ways to support teachers as they think through the reflective, creative, and ongoing work of teaching inclusively, we consider practitioner inquiry to be conceptually aligned due to its positioning of teachers as problem-posers and problem-solvers. Consider that:

Most versions of practitioner inquiry share a sense of the practitioner as knower and agent for educational and social change. . . . Many of the variants of practitioner inquiry also foster new kinds of social relationships that assuage the isolation of teaching and other sites of practice. This is especially true in inquiry communities structured to foster deep intellectual discourse about critical issues and thus to become spaces where the uncertainties and questions intrinsic to practice can be seen (not hidden) and can function as grist for new insights and new ways to theorize practice. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 37)

The practice of inquiry that we invite teachers to participate in is iterative, reflective work, involving taking risks—and doing so publicly; we support teachers to embrace failure as a necessary part of learning new approaches. Thus, the *content* of the inquiry, when focused on capacity and inclusivity, has the potential to work against the dominant discourses that marginalize and exclude particular students and populations, while the *process* of inquiry can position teachers as thinking, creative, intellectual problem solvers, thus working against the dominant discourse of teachers as technicians.

Inquiry to Action Groups

Derived from the rich body of research on inclusive education and the teaching experiences of the founding co-directors, TCICP has designed various inquiry to action groups over the years, including: Designing Accessible Curriculum and Peer Supports; Implementing Culturally Relevant and Responsive Pedagogy; Integrating Assistive Technology; Integrating Multimodal Projects and Approaches; Working With Communities and Families; Designing Positive Approaches to Social and Academic Behavior Support. These practices overlap and support each other as general approaches that can foster inclusivity. For instance, designing accessible curriculum requires teachers to anticipate difference when creating lesson plans and incorporate multiple points of access, and it is often accomplished through the use of a multimodal approach that asks teachers to recognize a variety of ways of learning and expressing knowledge.

In their inquiry teams, teachers receive some direct instruction regarding a particular practice. For instance, in the Designing Positive Approaches to Social and Academic Behavior Support inquiry team, teachers read Ross Greene's (2008) *Lost at School* and learn about behavior as communication, assessing lagging skills, and teaching replacement behaviors. They read Mara Sapon-Shevin's (2010) *Because We Can Change*

the World, and consider how to build supportive classroom and school communities. They review the tenets of Positive Behavior Interventions Supports (PBIS), and learn how to do functional behavioral analyses. Simultaneously, teachers collect data around a local question or dilemma from their classroom. Analyzing the data and drawing on the framework and specific tools provided in their inquiry team, educators plan for action in their classrooms or schools. Each implementation of the inclusive practice varies depending on what resources and ideas the teacher has found most valuable as well as what school-based dilemma he or she has decided to interrogate. The intent of the TCICP professional development is to provide teachers with tools and a framework to analyze school-based dilemmas they are encountering as related to enhancing inclusivity, and to support them as they develop these practices in their classroom. How these practices are enacted is up to the individual teacher and is often subjected to much sharing of ideas and resources among inquiry team members.

All participants spend a year working on an inquiry into their own classroom or teaching practices and at the end of the year are invited to present their work at citywide conference and/or to publish their inquiry work digitally through http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org. These digital inquiries are demonstrative of the kind of work individual teachers take up in their classrooms and their commitment to social justice and inclusivity. Examples of this work include titles such as: Inquiry to Action: How I Learned to Craft Meaningful IEPs; Social and Emotional Supports in an Inclusive Classroom Community; Access Through Integrated Technology; You've Been Punk'd: Embedding Learning in High Engagement Activities; and Multimodality: Creating Access for all Kinds of Learners. Each inquiry clearly demonstrates an understanding that at the center of each teacher's dilemma is not a student or students who cannot learn, but an education that has not accommodated or supported the learning of these students. Similarly central to this work is the teachers' willingness to examine and interrogate their own teaching practices, in particular as related to those students who occupy the margins of their classrooms.

While this work is seemingly quite individualized, one of the paramount findings of our research into the inquiry teams is the importance of the community built in the inquiry space for the implementation of inclusive practices within the school space. To quote one inquiry participant:

Throughout the journey with my inquiry team members, we shared our struggles and concerns as teachers. We talked about what wasn't working in our classrooms. We contemplated WHY these things weren't working. We collaborated to create a solid explanation of what a meaningful education means to us, as educators and

to our students. And then, with an inclusive frame of mind and an inquiry stance, we independently crafted our own lesson plans to address what WAS NOT working and to fit our inquiry team's description of meaningful education. – Sofia

Professional development participants often reported moments or experiences of isolation in their school buildings resulting from their special education licensing, school perceptions of their students, or their enactment of inclusive education. The inquiry teams function as an alternate space wherein participants can explore their work as educators, the pedagogical beliefs, and the power relationships in their schools with a group of like-minded peers enduring similar experiences in their schools. And as participants are validated in their work in this alternate space, they are able to build identities as teachers and intellectuals to act inclusively and for social justice within their school spaces.

The work of teaching is thoughtful problem solving (Oyler, 2011) and in order to make deliberate and informed choices teachers require a certain amount of autonomy and self-confidence around their decision making (Farris-Berg & Dirkswager, 2013). Membership in the intellectual communities of our inquiry teams provided participants with validation and support that fostered confidence and autonomy in their classroom decision making. This membership also served as a check for participants, to ensure that they were working for inclusivity and social justice. Membership in these communities provided participants with generative conflict, collective creativity, and collaborative sharing. The intellectual community served to create a kind of collective autonomy "that seeks to liberate the individual through the power of creative collaboration and the embracing of interdependence" (Shand, 2009, p. 76). The knowledge, reflection, and creativity of the whole group informed the autonomous decision making of individual participants in their classrooms. Thus participants were able to perform as intellectuals in their school spaces, enact inclusive practices in their classrooms and act against the systems of governmentality (Foucault, 1982) that deskill them and allow them to deskill themselves.

In this era in which teachers are subjected to prescriptive curricula, constant comparisons of their effectiveness using international benchmarks and standardized exams, the pressure to conform to narrow visions of teaching and learning is acute—at least in our context in New York City. By hosting an alternative vision of teaching and learning in a space that depended on teachers' active engagement as intellectuals, we seek to play a small role in positioning teachers as intellectuals and teaching architects so they can engage in the complex work of designing inclusive classrooms.

Note

1. See answer #4 in the Amazon Exclusive: Q&A with Author Doug Lemov: http://www.amazon.com/Teach-Like-Champion-Techniques-Students/dp/0470550473

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LINK TO:

http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/inquiry-action-how-i-learned-craft-meaningful-ieps

http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/social-and-emotional-supports-inclusive-classroom-community

http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/access-through-integrated-technology

http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/you've-been-punk'd-embedding-learning-high-engagement-activities

http://www.inclusiveclassrooms.org/inquiries/multimodality-creating-access-all-kinds-learners

Commentary
A Candid Look at Teacher Research and Teacher Education Today

Ken Zeichner, University of Washington

ABSTRACT

In this interview, Ken Zeichner describes the current changes and trends in teacher education and examines the university's role in providing teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge. He advocates a model where the university, community, and school work together as partners to give teachers a more diversified set of knowledge and skills. This type of teacher education can be situated in the university, but it may be more effective if it takes place "outside of the bureaucracy and budget of both the university and the school system." Dr. Zeichner sees teacher research as a critical part of teacher development and firmly believes that each teacher should adopt an inquiry stance, where research is part of the practice rather than a separate activity. In conclusion, he states that, "…the old traditional forms of university-based teacher education…are not going to survive."

Can you tell us how you first became interested in teacher research and why?

*M*y involvement started when I was a teacher in terms of being in an environment that was under a lot of change and we had to figure out how to adjust collectively—those of us in the schools that I was in—to make it more relevant to the local community, which was primarily African-American. There had been a lot of turmoil in this school before I got there. It was an environment that had a lot of things going on. We tried to invent a new more culturally relevant form of education for our students.

I started as a teacher studying my own practice and most of my career as a teacher educator has involved studying work that I've been responsible for in one way or the other: my own teaching in the classroom or programs that I've been responsible for. I have also been involved with trying to support other teachers and teacher educators in studying their practice. It's been something that's gone through my time in education from the very beginning and continues today.

There are varying definitions of teacher research: action research, participatory action research, practitioner inquiry, and so on. Can you define for us what teacher research means for you and for our LEARNing Landscapes audience?

My approach to it is similar to what Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle have talked about as an inquiry stance, where the research is part of, rather than, something that's an addition to teaching. I see teacher research more as an inquiring stance towards one's practice, and the contexts in which that practice exists. It does not take any particular form. There are different versions of teacher research or action research that say there are *x* number of steps—four steps, five steps; you have to do it this way. I've always felt that those were too restrictive and in the work that I've done I've encouraged the teachers, student teachers, teacher educators—whose inquiries I've tried to support—to create their ways of representing their research that enable them to communicate their findings.

Graduate students whose doctoral work I've supervised have done studies that have examined their own work as teachers and/or teacher educators. A few of those have chosen to use artistic forms of inquiry, and arts-based research methods to represent their research; and I encouraged them to do that. Where others took more narrative forms and there have been some who have taken traditional action research kinds of approaches, identifying a problem and so on. I think it's a problem when people define teacher research in a particular way that does not allow flexibility. It's the quality of inquiry and exploration that matters as well as the relationship between the thinking and action that is involved, rather than letting a particular form of inquiry be mandated and drive the process.

Can you give an example of an arts-based project that you found particularly interesting?

One of my students, Mary Wright, is a professor in teacher education. She used a variety of forms of media to illuminate the themes in her work over many years as

a teacher and then as a teacher educator. There were both elements of a traditional dissertation where she situated her work in a larger body of work and identified how it was building on previous work. But there was also an arts-based element to it that…she was able to express things that she wouldn't have been able to express through traditional narrative forms of dissertation. It was really quite powerful work. Mary composed music and choreographed and performed a dance as a part of her representation for example.

Mary Klehr was another graduate student of mine. She still works in the Madison, Wisconsin public schools today directing a classroom-action research program where teachers, principals, and other educators in the system study their own practice. In her dissertation, Mary studied several teachers, including herself, who used forms of teacher research to study and improve their practice. In that dissertation I remember one of the teachers (who I think was in the Bay area) used poetry as a form to express her work as a researcher.

I've been interested in alternative forms of representing what is learned in research for two reasons. One is the powerful ways in which this teacher inquiry as part of the work of teaching can help people improve their practice. I've been teaching in higher education now for a long time and I'm always still working on aspects in my practice in every course that I teach. It's something that's part of the way of teaching, rather than an addition. But I also became interested in it because of the idea that what is produced in this research by teachers and teacher educators about their own practice can contribute to what's defined as the larger knowledge base of education. The research of academics in higher education about others, or even the research of teachers about others, is not able to get at the kinds of things somebody immersed in the practice and studying in it are able to get at. There is a knowledge-producing element of this teacher research that's very important in addition to its overall positive impact as a vehicle for professional development for both teachers and teacher educators.

Can you talk about the competing explanations about teacher socialization and how this can play a role in teacher education and teacher research?

People come into teaching, into teacher education programs, with particular knowledge, skills, and dispositions that they have acquired over many years. These programs that they enter then try to socialize them in particular ways. In teacher education programs or professional development programs, expertise is often seen to lie external to the teachers and teacher candidates. They come in and the professors or

their professional development providers are supposedly the experts and it's sort of a banking model of teacher development using Freire's notion of a "banking form of education" where the goal is to deposit knowledge from the experts to the teachers or teacher candidates.

Teacher research, and the forms of teacher education that I've tried to support, represent a different view where to me a more democratic process that disrupts hierarchies of knowledge that often exist in the field. It recognizes that teachers bring knowledge and expertise to professional development or to their teacher education programs, and that the process of teacher education is more of a dialogical process of the interaction of the knowledge that people bring with what they're offered in the program, rather than the ways in which professional development for teachers and teacher education programs are usually conducted.

Generally, I've been trying recently to envision new forms of university-based teacher education that rely more centrally on the knowledge and expertise of classroom teachers and people in local communities who send their kids to public schools. I'm arguing that the university expertise is important and a lot of people in the U.S. are arguing that it's not. But I'm also saying that going back to the traditional models that I've been critiquing for many years where the expertise is seen to lie with the university faculty, or the professional staff developers, is not a good thing and we need to have a view of knowledge and expertise that includes recognition of the knowledge and expertise that teachers bring.

Not only does this process go on, but the further argument that teachers can help produce knowledge, new knowledge that university faculty can benefit from in their programs, and that professional developers or school systems can benefit from the knowledge that's produced through teacher inquiry. I look at it as both a form of professional development and as a form of knowledge production similar to professors with PhDs producing knowledge. I feel that the current system is too limited.

Can you say a little bit about how you've persuaded colleagues to come on board and do these kinds of things?

That's a process that is still underway! I wrote a recent paper on engaging local communities and educating the teachers of their children. This is just one example of this more hybrid form of teacher development and teacher education in which university faculty come to the table with knowledge, but they recognize the knowledge that

others bring and that the actual teacher education or teacher development represents an integration of these different forms of knowledge and different ways that are less hierarchical than traditional forms of teacher education and teacher development.

To be frank about it, I think over the years I've been focusing a lot on teachers and so-called partnerships between universities and schools in teacher education. There is always a lot of pushback on the ideas of letting teachers in to the world of teacher education in ways that take real advantage of what they have to bring. It's the difference between having teachers come in as guests in university spaces and universities and schools coming together to create new spaces together where there is more mutual recognition of the knowledge and expertise that everybody brings.

I've extended my work in this area in the last five and a half years that I've been here in Seattle, bringing in members of local communities. It's an uphill battle or process of bringing people on board because of the traditions where people with PhDs are seen to be the experts. "Who are these people that you're bringing in to the university space?" Some of them are immigrant parents, for instance, who have limited ability to speak English in ways that are traditional in the academy. They have different pedagogical styles for communicating what they want to say about the kind of education they'd like their kids to receive in public schools. There is a lot tension that's being created by trying to build these new more hybrid forms of teacher education and teacher development. I don't pretend to have the answers, but I am convinced that the old traditional forms of university-based teacher education, at least in my country and a number of countries around the world, are not going to survive unless they become more contextualized and relevant to the needs of schools and communities. I think in Canada…at least my recent research in Alberta and knowledge of Ontario have shown that there is still more acceptance of the idea of everybody getting a university teacher education before they become responsible for classrooms. That's no longer the case in the United States.

Because of the unresponsiveness of the universities to people in schools and communities, there are a lot of new forms of teacher education and teacher professional development that have emerged in the U.S. that have made little room for universities to contribute. Unless university teacher education in the United States becomes more connected and situated in the ways that I've described, it's going to disappear. I think the tensions are there right now…there is still a holding on by some to these more university-centric models of teacher education and professional development, but policies are being created, new programs have been funded that have brought new non-university teacher educators into the mix. Philanthropy has essentially turned its back on university schools of education.

The US government, in the last two administrations, has funded policies to create alternatives to the universities' own teacher education and teacher professional development. The United States is not alone—the UK started even before the United States. There are a number of examples internationally…I know that what happens in Canada is provincially based to some extent…there's differences but I think there's still this commitment to university-based teacher education before going in to teaching.

Can you describe to us what this vision of the new university-based teacher education might look like?

I've been working for probably almost 20 years on trying to create these models. There was a professional development school partnership in Wisconsin that I helped create and directed for 12 years. I've been leading the community engagement work in teacher education in Seattle in recent years from the university end where we and a group of community organizers mutually decided to partner with one another to educate new teachers who are more knowledgeable and responsive to local communities, including the families of their students.

And I helped create a teacher education program with the Seattle public schools. I was one of the university's point people on this, "The Seattle Teacher Residency." Maybe that would be an example of a program that I could use to respond to your question. Here is a program that was created with the Seattle public schools to prepare teachers for high poverty or what we call "Title One" schools in Seattle, where teacher turnover is very high, where there are often more problems with student achievement under the No Child Left Behind rules. We worked together over a number of years to create a new program. The program itself is situated in a local non-profit. It was deliberately situated outside of the bureaucracy and budget of both the university and the school system.

I'm not that confident right now, based on my many years of experience in the field and knowledge of the literature, that it's possible to put one of these new forms of teacher education that I'd like to see become more common *inside* a university or school system with the particular kinds of knowledge histories that exist there. The residency model to me offers the potential for creating a new space for this work to be actually created and realized. That doesn't mean it's free of problems.

There are all sorts of issues when you bring people from the schools, the universities, the community, and the teachers' union together. I'm quite pleased and excited about

what has happened the last few years. We're in the second year of implementation of the residency. I was frankly very sceptical with the idea that university and school people could sit down and transcend their own self-interests and create a new curriculum for a teacher education program to prepare teachers for Seattle Public Schools. The community component in this program is growing and growing. It keeps moving forward.

I look at other residencies around the country though…and I'm not saying that the residency model by itself necessarily brings hybridity and flattening of hierarchy of power and knowledge hierarchies that exist. Because I see residencies that do not have these characteristics—residencies that are connected to corporate charter schools, for instance. In Chicago, there's a particular residency that's connected to what they call "turn-around schools," where schools are closed down, taken away from their local communities and reopened under a model that's provided by an external charter company. Or residencies, such as the one in Boston where the university is not a genuine player in that program. It's a program that is a response to many years of universities being unresponsive to the needs of the schools. Basically it's the Boston public schools preparing its own teachers and the University of Massachusetts Boston stamping the degrees.

I don't think that the residency model, per se, necessarily brings the kinds of things that I'd like to see, but it offers the potential in ways that putting a program like this in a university bureaucracy or into a school system I don't think can easily bring. Particularly right now in the United States where we've had the defunding of public universities over a period of years that have essentially turned them into private universities, in terms of the ways in which the fiscal situation is managed. I have a real problem seeing right now how we can have these programs in the United States within universities. The same forces of privatization and stripping of public resources have also been dominating most school systems in the United States. I think the "third spaces" sometimes referred to are places that are more hospitable for bringing together knowledge and expertise from different institutional spaces: school, community, university.

What benefits and challenges do we face in terms of augmenting and sustaining teacher research?

I've seen a lot looking around internationally at the deprofessionalization of teaching and giving up on the idea of fully preparing teachers before they go in schools. This is not just in the United States. Again in the UK, but it also exists in much of the world,

and being promoted by a number of international development agencies such as the World Bank. This idea that we cannot afford, for a variety of reasons, to have professional teachers who inquire into their practice, who have adaptive expertise, who exercise their judgment in the classroom and that what we need are teachers who follow scripts.

We see the growing popularity around the world of programs like those based on the work of Doug Lemov in the United States. An example of a program would be "Relay Graduate School of Education," which is a charter-type teacher education program that was funded by venture capital and it's expanding like a virus throughout the United States right now. It's based almost entirely on the work of Lemov who argues that there are 49 strategies to "teach like a champion." The curriculum and the program are basically trying to get the teacher candidates to teach with fidelity to these 49 strategies. There is really not any vision of the teacher as a reflective practitioner. The teacher research piece would be incorporated into this idea of teacher as a reflective practitioner including the ideas of inquiry stance, of exercising judgment, and of adaptive expertise. There is a growing tendency to give up on that idea for the teachers of "other people's" children while we still want to have reflective, inquiring, and adaptive teachers for our own children.

They argue that for teachers of *other people's* children we need the technical teacher who can do things, often with high degrees of control to raise test scores. We begin to see a narrowing of the purposes of public education that comes along with the deprofessionalization of teaching. Again, it's mainly for other people's children, because I really don't know too many of these what I call "reformers" who send their own children to these schools to be taught by these narrow technical teachers who have some kind of ejection of a set of technical skills. Lemov is only one example—a prominent one in the United States, but not the only one.

You have these two visions of teaching and teacher education and of the purposes of public education that exist and we've seen a tremendous growth of this narrow technical view around the world and in the United States. The city of New Orleans in the United States has zero public schools left; it's been taken over completely by this narrow model. Other cities, like Chicago and Philadelphia, are on their way to becoming like New Orleans. We see an exiting from public schools by the middle class and upper middle class. We're seeing a growing definition of public schools that have existed in other countries for many years: public schools serve the poor, to prepare them for the kinds of low paying jobs that will be waiting for them. And there are not going to be the kind of jobs where they're going to be going through schools that are dominated by

these narrow techniques and what's referred to as "no excuses discipline." Most of them are not going to be heading to Google.

We're at a very critical time right now in terms of public education, in terms of our willingness to support it, and our willingness to support professional teachers for everyone's children. I don't know where it's going to go. In my own small way I'm trying to contribute to both support for public education and to the idea of a teacher education program that prepares reflective professional teachers who do engage in teacher research as well as in a number of other things consistent with a professional stature for teachers.

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More Than Hoop Jumping: Making Accreditation Matter

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a discussion of faculty perspectives on the impact of national accreditation on a teacher education program. Research questions from a three-year investigation examined the influence of accreditation on how teacher educators approach their work and whether meeting accreditation requirements contributes to ongoing, systemic self-reflection. Self-study survey data identified faculty perspectives on the influence of accreditation on planning, instruction, curriculum development, assessment, collaboration, reflection, and awareness of accreditation discussions. Accreditation as a form of self-study reveals both strengths and the inherent challenges of meeting the sometimes competing goals of accreditation requirements and meaningful examinations through self-reflection. Study implications underscore the need for conscious efforts to maintain self-reflection as central to program improvements and considerations for teacher educators' work.

*I*n today's education climate, rarely a week passes when the status of education or its constituent parts are not critiqued, including curriculum choices, student performance, teacher preparation, and performance reporting. Subsequent conversations among stakeholders cast blame on any number of reasons for why the profession is seen as needing a fundamental overhaul due to its perceived inadequacy, subpar international standing, and presumed broken status (Duncan, 2009; Felch, Song, & Smith, 2010; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013).

As conduits to K-12 student learning, teacher education programs are also reminded of their role, often through indictments on the quality of K-12 teacher preparation (Finn, 2001; Laberee, 2004; Maier, 2012; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013). New takes on accreditation, "blueprints" for success in program development, and think tanks are among the remedies proposed (United States Department of Education, 2013). Regardless of the stakeholder, calls to define quality insist on data to fortify excellence while simultaneously engendering what some propose as healthy competition in teacher preparation (Hess, 2001; National Council on Teacher Quality, 2011, 2013; Zeichner, 2007). Defining the characteristics of "quality" and agreeing on what constitutes "data" are areas of program evaluation open to varied perspectives.

This study provides a discussion of a teacher education faculty's perspectives on the impact of national accreditation on their reflective practices about quality teacher education. Research questions examined the influence of accreditation on how teacher educators approach their work and whether meeting accreditation requirements contributes to ongoing, systemic self-reflection. Study findings identified the influence of accreditation on planning, instruction, curriculum development, assessment, collaboration, reflection, and awareness of accreditation discussions. Accreditation as a potential form of self-study reveals both strengths and the inherent challenges of meeting the sometimes competing goals of accreditation requirements and meaningful examinations through self-reflection. The implications underscore the need for conscious efforts to maintain self-reflection as central to program improvements and considerations for teacher educators' work.

Introduction

Defining Quality

Like the public education system, higher education faces the opportunity and the challenge of responding to newly defined evaluation structures that delineate broad-based goals for teacher preparation (Dillon & Silva, 2011; Raths & Lyman, 2003; Teaching Commission, 2006). Drawing from edicts that were sparked originally by NCLB (2001) and more recently through national evaluations of quality (e.g., National Council on Teacher Quality, 2013), prescriptions for producing "highly qualified" teachers are relying on teacher training programs to include increased rigor in course work, improved professional development for inservice teachers, and higher standards through competency testing (Hardy, 2002). Central to these efforts is the presumed merit of accreditation as the vehicle for evaluating the quality of teacher preparation and a direct connection to K-12 student performance.

Theoretically, accreditation provides tools for data gathering and report development that chronicle teacher and student performance (Darling-Hammond, Amrein-Beardsley, Haertel, & Rothstein, 2012). What is less clear is whether the accreditation process impacts systemic and sustained individual and collective reflections among teacher educators. Without an examination of the reflective potential of accreditation as a form of self-study, accreditation remains an exercise in hoop jumping that is reluctantly engaged by some and vigorously avoided by others.

Accreditation and Self-Reflection

History of Self-Study

The concept of self-study in teacher education is not new (e.g., Hamilton, 1992; Loughran, 1996; Russell & Munby, 1992). Educational researchers and practitioners have long engaged in the process of self-study as a vehicle for examinations and reflection on practice (Cochran-Smith, 2005; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Loughran, 1996, 2002). A central dimension of self-study is a process of reflection and inquiry that is shared collectively, is public, and allows for reframing (Samaras & Freese, 2009). Without a dedicated focus that allows for a critique and subsequent response, self-studies may be adopted in the same manner as any other "skill" for technique-based examinations of practice.

Beyond skill development, the reflective component of self-study is also a process in its own right that allows for in-depth examinations of practice over time (Dinkelman, 2003). Dinkelman (2003) contends that as a true form of self-reflection, self-studies must also contribute to how we consider questions about teachers' work (teacher educators included), serve as a model for students, and prompt programmatic change through analyses of the kinds of knowledge produced that reflect in-depth reviews over time. Critically reflective practices are essential in this process.

Reflection

Critically reflective thinking and critical reflection have been long been defined in a variety of ways in teacher education research (Brookfield, 1995, 2009; Larrivee, 2000; Rodgers, 2002). The process often includes dilemma identification or problem framing from multiple perspectives that include critical examinations of practice both individually and system-wide. Regardless of the focal areas (i.e., individual or institutional practice), the process occurs by questioning and analyzing taken-for-granted assumptions, routines, rationalizations, and unexamined explanations (Carrington & Selva, 2008; Loughran, 2002; Rodgers, 2002; Shandomo, 2010).

Historically, examinations of reflective thinking offer perspectives on the individual and how he or she thinks as well as the process of problem solving (Dewey, 1933; Schön, 1983). Dewey's (1933) and Schön's (1983) conceptions of reflective thinking focus on multiple-perspective problem framing where all available data are used to seek and evaluate solutions. Although Schön's view of reflection includes a change component, these conceptions are not necessarily *critical* in the political sense of the word. Others have emphasized that to be critical, results must transform curricula and practice, focus on criteria of equity and justice, or alter the status quo (cf. Van Manen, 1977; Brookfield, 1995; Fook, 2006). Brookfield (2009) contends that the addition of "critical" represents a shift from working within an existing system toward questioning the system, assessing it, and considering alternatives. Without a commitment to examinations that push beyond the norm, "reflections" remain narrow and insulated.

More Than Bean Counting

A challenge for teacher educators who are committed to systemic program reform involves a movement away from data collection and data mining for the sole purpose of responding to accreditation mandates. Alternatively, deliberate question posing and problem identification must be a part of the *process* of self-study. Critically reflective problem solving, for example, is conceptualized as framing and reframing problems from multiple perspectives, generating and evaluating a range of possible solutions, and considering the personal, academic, political, and ethical consequences of solutions for students and society (Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Leland, Harste, & Youssef, 1997; Rodgers, 2002; Zeichner & Liston, 1996).

Critically reflective problem solving is thought to benefit both teachers and students by widening teachers' "understanding of teaching beyond narrow technical concerns to the broader socio-political influences" that affect students' learning (Risko, Roskos, & Vukelich, 1999, p. 113). The challenge for those engaged in self-studies linked to accreditation is a dedicated commitment to exceeding the technical requirements of program improvement. Instead, a more critical lens is necessary both in problem and question identification as well as in how data are reviewed and used, thereby affording opportunities for critically reflective thinking.

The more traditional approach to program evaluation, at times, dictates and justifies why program studies take place; program evaluation efforts are often lacking the more lasting and introspective dimension of true self-studies. The dilemma for teacher educators is steeped in tensions where self-studies are driven by outcomes-based goals that include a checklist mentality for program evaluations requirements.

This outcomes-based approach stems from a focus on the means to accomplishing a particular goal efficiently and effectively, without examining the goal itself and its underlying values and assumptions (Valli, 1993). Even when efforts are made to look beyond standardized performance assessment, teacher educators must be cautious in their intentions for data collection and data use. On a larger scale, data generated as part of self-studies have the potential to contribute to professional literature in ways that enhance teacher education (Zeichner, 2006).

The present study identified how the *process* of self-reflection, prompted by and affiliated with accreditation, was perceived by educators within a nationally accredited teacher education program. This study captures faculty reflections on: program goals and mission claims, reliability and validity in program assessment, and determining how "quality" is formalized. Findings reveal both genuine value in the process of accreditation as a prompt for self-study, as well as challenges of participation in ongoing self-studies that are rooted in accreditation frameworks.

Methods

Research Objectives

Influenced by the role of self-study as a method for critical reflection on practice, this research examined self-study survey data from 22 faculty members in "Western University's" teacher education program. Research questions included: What are the perspectives of faculty in a teacher education program on the process of accreditation? How does the process of accreditation impact the daily work of program faculty? What do faculty members perceive to be the strengths and limitations of engaging in accreditation? The survey questions were crafted to measure key areas of an educational program self-study including planning, instruction, curriculum development, assessment, collaboration, reflection, and awareness of accreditation discussions. Faculty perceptions regarding accreditation varied in depth and intensity.

Data Sources and Collection

Participants

Following 2011 accreditation approval by the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), a survey was distributed to teacher licensure faculty at Western

University. Data were collected at three yearly intervals between 2012 and 2014. The respondent pool for all waves of data collection included tenure-track and clinical licensure program faculty who had participated in the accreditation process. The same faculty members were asked to complete the surveys at multiple time intervals to determine changes in the group's attitudes and behaviors over time (Neuman, 2003).

Across all data collection periods, the majority of respondents were faculty from the Elementary, Secondary, and Special Education program options. In 2012 and 2013, approximately half of the respondents were tenure-track faculty members. In 2014, approximately two-thirds of the respondents were clinical faculty members. Between 2012 and 2014 response rates were reported at 77%, 86%, and 75% respectively.[1]

Data Collection

Survey method for waves 1 and 2. The 2012 and 2013 surveys consisted of 17 questions where the majority asked faculty to complete online surveys where they rated questions using a five-point Likert scale of "strongly disagree," "somewhat disagree," "neither agree nor disagree," "somewhat agree," and "strongly agree." Faculty rated statements asking whether the national accreditation process affected the overall quality of students' preparation, faculty members' approaches to course work, teaching, curriculum, collaboration, reflection on their work, assessment, and confidence in measures of program assessment, and awareness of local and national conversations about accreditation. The surveys also asked respondents to indicate their department and rank (i.e., tenure-track or clinical faculty).

In addition to closed-ended questions, the surveys included five open-ended questions that prompted faculty to discuss whether the national accreditation process affected the quality of student preparation, their work, their students' classroom experiences, their approach to learning assessment, and their level of discussions with others about assessment.[2]

Survey method for wave 3. The 2014 survey, more narrow in scope than the previous two, addressed respondents' most recent experiences with specific accreditation-related efforts including: aligning rubrics across specialization areas, improving inter-observer reliability of student teaching episodes, and identifying student teaching portfolio artifacts and rubrics that were common across specialization areas (e.g., Elementary and Secondary education). Accreditation feedback prompted attention to these tasks. By years two and three, post-accreditation visit, faculty began to formalize the process

of collaborating within and between specialization areas on these various program improvement areas. The survey included 16 questions where faculty considered a statement and rated it using the same five-point Likert scale as in previous surveys. Statements addressed whether accreditation efforts affected the overall quality of students' preparation, teaching practices, and their approach to supervision. As with previous survey waves, respondents indicated their department and faculty rank.

Several open-ended questions prompted greater specificity on whether the accreditation process affected the quality of student preparation; to what extent, if at all, the self-study component of accreditation was useful; in what ways, if any, accreditation efforts impacted views regarding teacher preparation; what, if anything, a faculty member learned about how other faculty members approach student teaching observations; and, in what ways, if any, the process of aligning rubrics and identifying work samples had been informative.

Data Summary

Survey data were analyzed for each year using frequency distributions and descriptive statistics. Where questions were the same from year to year, these data were examined for statistically significant differences between years using paired sample t-tests and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. Data were also analyzed on the subgroup level (i.e., tenure-track versus career-line faculty) using cross-tabulations and Chi-square tests. Correlations were used to determine relationships among key variables (Bohrnstedt & Knoke, 1994).

Although there were no statistically significant year-to-year differences for the average response to any question, in some areas, the distribution of responses within a question changed from one year to the next. We also found that national accreditation affected faculty subgroups differently (e.g., clinical faculty more than tenure-track faculty). Substantive findings demonstrate how the accreditation process framed a systematic and balanced approach to assessment and program study. Findings also showed that faculty are generally quite open to improvement and individualized reflection on practice. Many cited the advantages of using a common language for evaluating student progress, the merits of consistency in emphases across courses, and the utility of a formalized process for data-based decision making. For some, the primary goal of accreditation was to meet general administrative requirements governing program quality, while simultaneously gaining approval from an accreditation oversight body.

For others, data collection prompted self-reflection on program improvement using a systematic template for building an organizational narrative.

Impacts on Program Quality

Within the survey, faculty members rated their level of agreement or disagreement on whether involvement in national accreditation impacted the overall quality of student preparation. During both 2012 and 2013, about half of faculty members reported the overall quality of students' preparation had improved as a result of the university's involvement in national accreditation. For individuals who responded positively to a potential relationship between national accreditation and student quality, benefits included greater awareness of state standards, inter-departmental collaboration, and increased support for students. One respondent who agreed that the overall quality of students' preparation has improved wrote, "The self- reflection and coordination required for the national accreditation is helpful in spurring additional thinking about processes, programs, and classes."

As more time had passed since the accreditation visit, faculty members who did not agree that the overall quality of students' preparation had improved as a result of the university's involvement in national accreditation became less ambivalent and more likely to have a distinct negative opinion about the connection between the university's involvement in national accreditation and its overall quality of students' preparation. When faculty were asked to rate the impact of accreditation on program quality, one 2012 respondent said, "I think the accreditation is […] hoops to jump through that make no sense/don't improve the program."

Impacts on Planning, Teaching, Assessment, Reflective Practices, and Discussion

The survey asked faculty to consider the impacts of accreditation for key areas associated with a self-study, including coursework planning and assessment. For each area, at least some contingent of the faculty indicated that national accreditation had impacted their work. When asked to evaluate the impact of accreditation on coursework planning, nearly half of faculty respondents agreed that their approaches had changed as a result of accreditation requirements in the first two years after accreditation. When asked to evaluate the impact of accreditation on their approach to assessment, more than a third of respondents agreed that their approaches had changed as a result of accreditation requirements in the first two years after accreditation. Nearly half of faculty agreed that they have confidence in the measures used to assess program quality.

The impact of national accreditation on faculty's teaching practices as well as curriculum development appeared to be a bit more complex. Approximately a third of faculty reported that their teaching practices were affected as a result of their involvement in national accreditation. An even larger percentage reported that their teaching practices were affected as a result of their work conducting specific accreditation-related tasks. However, most of the faculty who reported an impact of accreditation on teaching practices were clinical, rather than tenure-track faculty. One year after accreditation, clinical faculty were more likely than tenure-track faculty to report that their teaching practices had changed as a result of national accreditation. Three years after accreditation, this difference between clinical and tenure-track faculty was still present.

When faculty were asked to describe how their involvement in accreditation affected their students' classroom experiences, more were able to cite specific examples in 2013 than were able to in 2012. Cited examples included "be[ing] more transparent in my classes," "thoughtful application to the students' setting," and "some more time required on [the students'] part in relation to products for assessment." In year two, faculty members noted positive changes in the classroom as "students receive better quality," "more opportunities for hands-on experiences," and "more explicit and specific instruction on the standards of practice." However, faculty also noted some negative changes in the classroom, including an increasing burden on students to manage paperwork, stay current on evaluation forms, and submit portfolio assignments.

Nearly a third of faculty agreed that their involvement in national accreditation affected their approach to curriculum. Notably, the same distinction between clinical and tenure-track faculty that was present for teaching practices also existed when faculty reported on their approaches to curriculum. One year after the accreditation visit, clinical faculty were more likely than tenure-track faculty to say that their approaches to curriculum had changed as a result of their involvement in national accreditation.

In addition to considering the impact of accreditation on curriculum and instruction, faculty were also questioned about the impact of accreditation on their level of collaboration with colleagues, with about half of faculty members agreed that accreditation affected their level of collaboration with others. Collaboration was an area where the initial impacts of accreditation were apparent.[3] Specifically, in 2012, self-study data indicated that collaboration, and no other study variables, was linked to faculty's attitudes regarding overall program quality. In 2013, overall quality rating was significantly correlated with all other variables including whether national accreditation affected faculty teaching practices, approaches to curriculum, collaboration,

reflection on their work, approaches to assessment, confidence in measures, as well as participation in local and national conversations concerning accreditation. This year-to-year difference implies that as more time passed after the accreditation visit, faculty were more likely to recognize the accreditation process's widespread effects throughout the program.

Faculty reported that reflection on their work changed as a result of national accreditation. In both years, at least a third of faculty expressed that their reflective practices had changed as a result of accreditation. However, those faculty members who expressed ambivalence in 2012 expressed a stronger opinion (either negatively or positively) in how accreditation has impacted their reflective practices in 2013. Reflection was another area where opinions about the effect of national accreditation became more concrete for faculty as time passed.

About a third of faculty members agreed that their awareness of local and national conversations on accreditation has changed as a result of their participation in the accreditation process. In both instances, faculty members indicated that they were more initially plugged in to conversations about accreditation the first year after the accreditation visit than they were the second year after the visit.

Appendix A provides a summary of data themes from our findings.

Conclusion

Findings from this investigation demonstrate how standardization in teacher preparation does not have to be an end goal, as accreditation impacts faculty work differentially depending on the area of focus (e.g., teaching practices, assessment, etc.) and even when faculty hold different roles as tenure-track or clinical members of the program. Self-study data, originally driven by accreditation, revealed a series of findings highlighting both strengths and limitations of the process of meeting accreditation demands. The process of accreditation can affect faculty's work behaviors in a number of ways. Specifically, faculty members expressed that accreditation had an impact on student preparation, students' classroom experiences, and reflective practices as time passed from the accreditation visit. In these areas, faculty's initial expressions of ambivalence about whether accreditation impacted them in these areas in the first year turned into more well-defined opinions two years after the accreditation visit, indicating that faculty may not always know immediately how, if at all, their work will be affected

by the accreditation process. In contrast, faculty felt that their level of collaboration with others and their awareness of local and national conversations about accreditation increased at once as a result of the accreditation process. The accreditation process affected clinical faculty more significantly than tenure-track faculty in the areas of teaching practices and curriculum development.

For some, the primary goal of accreditation is to meet general administrative requirements governing program quality, while simultaneously gaining approval from an accreditation oversight body. For others, data gathering and reviews for accreditation have lent themselves to wider conversations that would not have happened without the accreditation mandates. While these prompts are not universally accepted, discussions that exceed accreditation criteria are beginning to take place. Finally, the impact of discussions and reflections are both collective and collaborative; they highlight the process of reviewing one's work, build a sense of community, and make explicit the benefits gained and the potential pitfalls of the specific areas of study (Samaras & Freese, 2009).

Implications

For others exploring whether the value of self-studies affiliated with accreditation helps faculty to view the process as more than hoop jumping, they are encouraged to define accreditation more broadly. Questions for consideration should encourage conscious efforts to reflect on the purposes of self-studies as well as the data gained from the process of self-studies. Obviously, many of the criteria affiliated with self-studies meet the mandates for program documentation and evaluation. But for many institutions, perhaps an overlooked benefit of accreditation stems from more broad-based goals for quality and in-depth reflection on practice. However, without a systematic plan for moving beyond the "hoops" of accreditation, the mechanics of accreditation never move beyond data gathering and form completion. The following recommendations will guide others in their efforts to engage in systematic reflection that moves accreditation towards a meaningful process:

1. *Framing problems*: As with other forms of reflection, teacher educators must determine how they will frame self-studies in ways that meet their needs; must consider how problems were conceptualized and framed (or located); and must determine if multiple perspectives that are considered areas of study are formulated.

2. *Seeking solutions*: What solutions were proposed, and how they will be related to the problems or suggested areas of evaluation?

3. *Evaluating solutions*: How are the data used to inform next steps for institutional and individual practices?

The answers to these questions are multi-layered and complex. Further, they also challenge the conventions of university, college, and departmental conversations that identify the purposes of teacher education and the value of various types of data collection on program quality. While self-studies lend themselves to data collection for problem solving and decision making, these outcomes are not the sole purposes of self-study. Nor, though, is self-study an end in and of itself. These lessons are particularly critical in the current climate with its emphasis on data collection for the purpose of defining and measuring performance.

At a time when teacher education is under intense scrutiny, teacher preparation programs must balance the realities of responding to accreditation requirements and reporting with the implementation of data-based decision making and broad-based self-reflection and program improvement. At times, these seemingly competing goals consume and drain the energy and resources spent showcasing data and its related impact on teacher preparation. Our findings revealed that the accreditation process heightened awareness by faculty of the need for systematic reviews of assessment tools, suggested more formalized plans for data collection and analysis, and challenged the need for an evidence-based program attuned to current practices in teacher education.

Without careful attention to moving beyond a process of filling in the blanks, an inherent feature of accreditation, efforts toward self-study as a continuous and reflective process remain unlikely. Feedback loops are encouraged and validated, however, without a deliberate commitment to efforts to move beyond the pendulum swings of a process-product view of engaging in self-study (Dinkelman, 2003), opportunities are lost for the benefits of self-reflection. The benefits of self-study as a continuous opportunity for review must be planned deliberately (Loughran & Northfield, 2009).

When accreditation compliance broadly informs self-study efforts, participants are provided the freedom to learn from data through question posing and examinations of findings foster future data collection, program improvements, and reflection on practice. For colleges and universities preparing for accreditation, adopting a reflective approach to program improvement requires acceptance and participation in the

process of critical examinations. At Western University, accreditation has positively affected the specific ways many faculty approach components of their work and their general satisfaction with program quality.

To be truly educative, self-studies affiliated with accreditation must require movement beyond a hyper-emphasis on the mechanics of evaluation in ways that detract from the fundamental mission of a teacher preparation program in unintended ways. As such, colleges of education must identify an approach that permits the faculty to balance program assessment with discussions of broader programmatic goals in ways that align with their missions, student needs, and research goals.

Without dedicated vigilance, accreditation remains an exercise in "hoop jumping." Conscious commitments to self-studies are catalysts for substantive conversations on teacher education. Data from this self-study indicate the *process* of accreditation offers both opportunities and potential barriers for program development and improvement and that, in some areas, opinion formation on the effects of accreditation takes time. As teacher educators, we are reminded that in the midst of the clamors for reform and an obsession with "drilling down" in data collection, self-reflection must underscore the complexity of teachers' work and the contexts in which they reside (e.g., Hargreaves, 2004; Sparks, 2004; Lasley, Siedentop, & Yinger, 2006; Zeichner, 2006). These goals must remain foundational to quality teacher preparation.

Notes

1. In 2012 and 2013, the survey was sent out to 22 faculty members. In 2014, the survey was sent out to 16 of these faculty members to capture the opinions of those who were involved in the specific accreditation tasks asked about in the survey. The response rates are calculated accordingly.

2. Due to a limited response in the first survey, "In what ways, if at all, have you participated in conversations about teacher education program assessment as a result of your involvement with national accreditation?" was not asked in the second survey.

3. For clarity, the question wording changed between years from "As a result of my involvement in national accreditation, collaboration with peers within my college changed," to "…collaboration with colleagues within my college has changed."

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Appendix A
Data Summary Themes

Self-Study Area	Degree of Change	Dynamics of Change
Overall Program Quality	About half of faculty believe that the quality of student preparation has improved.	Those ambivalent in 2012 expressed stronger opinions in 2013.
Coursework Planning	About half of faculty agreed that their approach to coursework planning had changed.	Opinions were stable across time and consistent across faculty subgroups.
Assessment	About a third of faculty agreed that their approach to assessment had changed and nearly half of faculty agreed that they have confidence in the measures used to assess program quality.	Opinions were stable across time and consistent across faculty subgroups.
Teaching Practices	About a third of faculty agreed that their approach to teaching practices had changed.	Clinical faculty were significantly more likely to have changed than tenure-track faculty in 2012 and 2014.
Approach to Curriculum	About a third of faculty agreed that their approach to curriculum had changed.	Clinical faculty were significantly more likely to have changed than tenure-track faculty in 2012.
Collaboration	About half of faculty agreed that collaboration had changed.	Faculty observed a change in collaboration more immediately than in other self-study areas.
Reflection	About a third of faculty members agreed that their reflective practices had changed in 2012, increasing to more than half in 2013.	Those ambivalent in 2012 expressed stronger opinions in 2013.
Awareness of local and national discussions about accreditation	About a third of faculty agreed that their awareness levels had changed.	Faculty members were more aware of conversations about accreditation in 2012 than in 2013.

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Researching From Buried Experiences: Collaborative Inquiry With Asian American Youth

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ABSTRACT

This article reports on an out-of-school practitioner researcher study, the Community Researchers Project, involving predominately Indonesian youth who were members of a Catholic parish in a diverse multilingual neighborhood of our city. The lives and learning of many of the youth in the Indonesian immigrant community were, to a large extent, invisible in the research literature or homogenized through broader generalizations regarding Asian Americans, such as the myth of the "model minority." Through analysis of several representative student inquiries, we argue that practitioner research can be an effective methodological vehicle for unearthing "buried" personal and collective histories that impact students.

Lan: What did you learn while you were doing your research?

Brian: I learned that there was two types of diabetes. One is Type 2 Diabetes and one was Type 1 Diabetes, and um I thought diabetes was like one disease, but there was like two disease in there, and um I was scared for my mom and dad because both of them have diabetes, but I didn't know what type they had diabetes, and um both of them didn't know, too. So um I think that tomorrow we're going to have an appointment to tell them like – to tell the doctors what diabetes they kind of have. [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014]

*I*n an interview, Brian (all names are pseudonyms) describes findings from the diabetes research he conducted while participating in an out-of-school teacher researcher study, what we call the Community Researchers Project (CRP), involving predominately Indonesian youth who were all members of a Catholic Parish in a diverse multilingual neighborhood of our city. The CRP was part of an ongoing research partnership with our university team that supports immigrant families and students in their efforts to acquire educational opportunities (Ghiso & Campano, 2013). The authors, along with two other members of the research team, designed and taught a collaborative inquiry with 13 youth, ages 10-14. The youth analyzed high-quality nonfiction books with social justice themes to study how data are represented in texts. Inspired by these books, they then learned qualitative research skills to investigate issues that were relevant to their own lives. They collected evidence on their topics from primary data sources and created their own multimodal representations of their findings, which they shared with their families and community leaders in a culminating poster presentation. The youth also presented their work during Practitioner Research Day at the annual Ethnography in Education Research Forum at the University of Pennsylvania. As teacher researchers, we strived to nurture a space for student inquiry while pursuing our own emerging questions on our practice.

The youth chose a range of topics to investigate, including the state of the public education system in the city, the nature of friendship, and the role of graffiti in urban spaces. Brian was one of several participants who, unpredicted by us, became interested in researching the medical field and diseases. We initially speculated that one reason this might have become a popular topic among the youth researchers is that medicine is considered a prestigious area of study for ambitious middle school students, an aspiration perhaps sanctioned by their parents. This explanation would certainly conform to "model minority" stereotypes and other prevalent assumptions regarding Asian American students that position them as excelling academically (Lee, 2009). Adopting an inquiry stance into our practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), however, led us to question our initial assumptions and situate teaching and learning within its larger social, cultural, and political contexts, thus enabling us to notice other motivations for the students' research interests percolating beneath these stereotypes. Brian, like several of his peers, witnessed first-hand how family members struggled to gain access to adequate health care. Through our research, we would come to learn how a variety of interrelated factors—such as language difference, citizenship status, poverty, and bullying (see Campano, Ghiso, Yee, & Pantoja, 2013)—might coalesce to inhibit immigrant families from procuring basic social goods and services. Brian was interested in medicine not simply for its prestige, but also because he desired better and more socially just opportunities for his loved ones and community, what might be

characterized as an ethos of care and interdependence (Ghiso, in press). This desire and sense of advocacy is evident in the immediate urgency he feels to go with his parents to an appointment "tomorrow" to identify the types of diabetes they might have.

In this article, we document how teacher research became a methodological vehicle through which to learn from youth about the issues of inequity and vulnerability they face in their daily lives. We also learned about their agency, the ways in which they could interpret these experiences and work toward change. It is important to note that these are not necessarily things we could have learned through reading secondary sources or studies. As we describe in the section that follows, the lives and learning of many of the youth in the Indonesian immigrant community were, to a large extent, invisible in the research literature or homogenized through broader generalizations regarding Asian Americans. In the absence of codified research literature that accurately reflected their lived experiences, the youth themselves became the experts on their communities. Practitioner research helped create a space for students to research and represent their own subaltern experiences, potentially making the issues that matter to them visible to larger audiences.

Asian Americans and Indonesian Americans

The misconception that Asian Americans are all the same "[masks] the complexity and diversity that exist within each racial population" (Museus & Kiang, 2009, p. 7). Within the field of education, Asian American youth are beholden to the myth of the model minority. This stereotype characterizes the experiences of Asian Americans as marked by economic prosperity, educational attainment, and upward social mobility. As a result, Asian Americans are often not included in the definition of underrepresented racial or ethnic minorities according to private and public funding agencies, with the implication that Asian Americans do not require attention and support (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Even our own institution does not consider Asian Americans an underrepresented minority. In their review of the literature on Southeast Asian American education, Bic Ngo and Stacey J. Lee (2007) draw on research by Hune (2000) and Lowe (1996) to conclude that there is a need for studies that "challenge assumptions of a universal experience within and across groups" (p. 442). This critique underscores how many of the diverse experiences of Asian Americans remain invisible in the educational literature.

The tradition of practitioner research from which we draw underscores how our own positionalities might productively inform our stance as researchers. We invariably bring our own experiences and cultural identities into our research, and our methodological orientation invites self-reflexivity about these hermeneutic horizons (Alcoff, 2006). Our own personal and familial histories made us aware of experiences buried beneath dominant narratives of immigration and Asian-American identity. Gerald, who is of mixed ethnicity, learned from his grandfather, a Filipino migrant laborer who arrived to the United States in the 1920s, about the virulent racism and legalized discrimination his generation endured, including anti-miscegenation laws and prohibitions to property ownership. This history was not in Gerald's school textbooks. Growing up, Lan did not identify with the portrayals of Chinese Americans in media and literature. Though her family is ethnically Chinese, her parents and brother migrated from Vietnam, their home country, at the end of the Vietnam (or "American") War, and her other brother was born in Hong Kong just before their arrival to the U.S. These transnational border crossings and perspectives are often lost within the label "Asian-American." Grace is the daughter of an Asian-Latina. Only through her mother's stories did she learn of her family's flight from Japan to Brazil before World War II and the subsequent racism she faced as a linguistic and ethnic minority in both her home country and in the United States. Grace's school experiences failed to acknowledge the existence of Asian Latina/os.

Our own backgrounds sensitized us to how contemporary Asian-American youth might have similar buried experiences and fueled our desire to do research that more accurately honored them. The group of Indonesian-American youth with whom we have been working for the past year and a half helped us better understand the minoritized and racialized nature of their immigrant identities, which may be too often overlooked by researchers and practitioners alike. According to the U.S. 2010 census, 63,383 people reported Indonesian and "one detailed Asian group" as their ethnic identification, and 6,713 reported Indonesian and "two or more detailed Asian groups" for a total U.S. population of 70,096 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The latter are likely nearly all Indonesian Chinese, but this cannot be confirmed (as informed by Cunningham, 2008). The obscurity resulting from official data collection is also evidenced in the American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011), which only includes groups with more than 4,000 persons in a city. As such, information about Indonesians in the city of this research study, for example, is largely missing.

After conducting research on Indonesian migrants to the U.S., Cunningham (2008) surmised that about 25,000 Indonesians were of undocumented immigration status and thus not taken into account in census data. In the late 1980s and 1990s, Indonesians of Chinese descent and those that were Christian "suffered from discrimination,

sporadic violence, and threat of danger in the homeland that encouraged some people to migrate to Australia, Singapore, the United States, and Canada" (p. 90). Despite this oppression, they did not arrive to their host country with government-sanctioned refugee status, and once in the United States, they encountered precarious social standing (Cunningham, 2008). For example, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania alone ordered approximately 2,400 people deported to Indonesia between 2002-2012 (Asian Americans Advancing Justice, 2013). Over the years at our research site, many Indonesian families have been torn apart and the educational possibilities for many youth have become constrained. At the same time, the community has organized to challenge anti-immigration sentiments and support more expansive educational opportunities. In fact, it was the desire of Indonesian families for educational opportunities that was the basis for our collaborative research with the youth.

Viewing Immigrant Youth as Cosmopolitan Intellectuals Through Practitioner Research

Despite their current struggles in the U.S., the Indonesian community has rich intellectual and activist legacies. Unlike the characterization of model minorities who are lauded for their perceived facility to assimilate into the dominant culture, the students and their families might better be thought of as cosmopolitan intellectuals (Campano & Ghiso, 2011) who draw from their transnational experiences to navigate multiple contexts and analyze social inequities through a comparative framework. As cosmopolitan intellectuals, students may mobilize their language and literacy practices to "articulate buried histories, enlarge our aesthetic sensibilities, redraw boundaries, rethink what it means to be an American, and cultivate human rights commitments that transcend national borders" (p. 175). The concept of buried pasts has been a foundational trope in Asian-American studies (Ichioka, 1974; Lee, 2014). It signifies those histories and experiences that are absent in the codified historical or institutional record. Our work with the youth sought to create a curricular space for students to mobilize their identities and rich cultural resources to research their own buried experiences into existence.

Teacher/Practitioner research as a theoretical and methodological orientation is uniquely suited for these inquiries. In our description of these frameworks, we follow Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1993, 2009) shift in terminology from "teacher research" to "practitioner research" in order to underscore that educators in a range of positions have a practice to investigate, including ourselves as university partners with the St. Frances Cabrini community and as facilitators of the inquiry we report on in this article. One key feature of practitioner research is that it challenges established hierarchies of

knowledge. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) argue, in practitioner research, rather than content being static, pre-determined, and transmitted to students,

> subject-matter knowledge is fluid and dynamic, constructed in the interactions of all participants within learning communities; part of what it means to learn subject matter, then, is to critique its meanings and sources, including whose knowledge perspectives are left out. (p. 2)

In interrogating the relationship between knowledge and power, a practitioner research orientation has a social justice dimension. One request from the parents of the youth in the Community Researcher's Project was to support their children with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a new curricular emphasis in their schools. The CCSS emphasize the importance of engaging students with high-level nonfiction texts. One of the dilemmas for us as practitioner researchers was that there were very few high-quality nonfiction texts that represent the histories of Asian Americans, much less a minoritized group like the Indonesian community. In past research, Gerald had grappled with this issue by conceptualizing students' testimonials as a form of subaltern history that may be incorporated in the literacy curriculum (Campano, 2007a, 2007b). In some iterations of the CCSS, however, there is an explicit devaluation of personal narrative in favor of staying within the confines of the published nonfiction text. We conceptualized our practitioner research study as working within and against these parameters: introducing the Indonesian youth to a number of informational texts as well as to qualitative research methods, and then inviting students to carry out and represent their own inquiries on topics that mattered to them. In this way, we were able to support families in their concern that the youth meet the standards while at the same time enacting a critical, culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2014) that honors the inquiries of the students themselves.

Another key feature of practitioner research is that it views dissonance as an opportunity for further learning and inquiry. Teacher researcher Ballenger (2009) uses the term "puzzling moments" to describe how educators might respond to, for example, moments when instruction did not go as planned, or when students appeared to not understand a lesson, text, or conceptual point. Rather than immediately dismiss the children as incorrect, the teachers in her inquiry group learned to pause and puzzle over these moments, from the perspective that the children were rational sense-makers. Through practitioner research, the dissonance between a teacher's expectations and the actual responses of students can be mined for further learning, in an ever-evolving process of theorizing one's practice (Campano, 2009). Vivian Vasquez's (2004) teacher research with diverse young children in Canada emphasizes the possibilities of following

students' leads in the curriculum, including their emerging sense of unfairness and injustice. In line with this tradition, our stance as practitioner researchers, then, involves taking seriously the sense-making and agency of the young people with whom we work. In our study, one of the dissonances concerned how the topics the youth chose to write about didn't conform to our expectations, prompting us to more deeply inquire into their scholarly interests and claims.

Context and Design of the Study

This article focuses on one inquiry within our broader research partnership with St. Frances Cabrini. The multicultural and multilingual parish provides a communal gathering place for immigrants from Vietnam, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Latin America, as well as its long-standing Italian-American and African-American congregations. St. Frances Cabrini strives to value the perspectives, language, and traditions of the different cultural groups and provide opportunities to work together in the service of social justice. Our research explores how individuals use language and literacy across social, cultural, linguistic, and institutional boundaries to negotiate a shared vision of educational justice and immigrant rights.

Our overall partnership with the St. Frances Cabrini parish, school, and community center combines traditional ethnographic methods (Erickson, 1986) with practitioner research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). We seek to involve community members throughout the research process, striving toward collaboration and transparency in our methodology (Campano, Ghiso, & Welch, 2015). The St. Frances Cabrini children and families, including the Indonesian youth who were part of the Community Researchers Project, have epistemic privilege—or knowledge derived from minoritized social locations (Campano, 2007a; Moya, 2002)—which situates them as uniquely positioned to analyze social inequities and power asymmetries. As practitioner researchers, we sought to redistribute intellectual authority by valuing the perspectives of youth and community members themselves.

The Community Researchers Project,[1] a year-and-a-half-long inquiry nested within this larger partnership, investigated the following research questions:
- What happens when we invite immigrant youth to connect their own experiences and interests to the study of nonfiction?
- What do we learn from the students' research and their multimodal representations?

The 13 participating youth, ages 10-14, met every other weekend between Fall 2013 and Spring 2015. Eleven of the students were from the Indonesian community and two were from the Latina/o community at St. Frances Cabrini. Some students were immigrants themselves, and others were second generation. Among the Indonesian population, most had Chinese heritage, making them and/or their families ethnic minorities not just in the United States, but also in Indonesia. Youth were recruited by community leaders, who had helped co-design the program and took responsibility for publicizing it. Any student between grades five and nine in the St. Frances Cabrini community who was interested in the program was eligible to participate.

The curriculum for the Community Researchers Project was designed by our university research team in concert with community leaders, particularly the mother of one of the youth participants. It invited youth to view their experiences as sources of knowledge—experiences that are buried by most nonfiction accounts of American history and by the reified categories and stereotypes of Asian Americans. We began by drafting an outline of the curriculum, which we shared with a community representative to ensure that our goals were aligned. While a general trajectory was laid out before implementation, we adhered to an inquiry model whereby we continually modified and reimagined the curriculum based on what we were learning from the youth in order to build on their talents, knowledge, and inquiries. We also embraced feedback from community leaders and the director of the St. Frances Cabrini Center. The initial sessions supported the youth in examining nonfiction books. They spent time reading, discussing, and sharing the high-quality texts we had purchased for the project, including selections from the Notable Books for a Global Society selected annually by the Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association. We promoted critical readings of the texts through discussions concerning notions of truth, perspective, authorship, and audience. The students also explored textual and graphic presentation of information, adjudicating the affordances and limitations of each mode.

The inquiry into nonfiction texts provided a foundation for the CRP youth to think about their own research projects and how to eventually represent their findings. They discussed concepts such as "research," "community," and "social justice" and thought about their membership in various communities to brainstorm potential lines of inquiry. As the youth settled on research questions they wanted to pursue, we introduced and critically engaged various research methods, such as interviews, fieldnotes, and surveys. CRP youth gathered data on their topics and spent time interpreting their findings with peers. They then decided on the best modes to convey

their findings and created their own nonfiction texts, which would be shared with wider audiences at St. Frances Cabrini and beyond.

Data sources for our study consisted of detailed fieldnotes of inquiry group sessions, artifacts (e.g., student work produced during the sessions), nine audio-recorded interviews with inquiry group participants, and researcher reflective memos. Interviews were an average length of 16 minutes, and ranged from 8 to 25 minutes; due to the age of the participants, we found shorter interviews more suitable. Data was analyzed thematically in a recursive and iterative process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to understand the issues youth deemed significant and the intersecting factors that shaped their lives and learning.

Findings

By cultivating a learning community that emphasized that the youth researchers had valuable knowledge to share, we found that they chose to investigate topics that were of genuine interest to them and that were connected to their lives and histories. Students took up a range of issues, including Indonesian and Latino cultural practices, popular culture and new literacies, friendship, access to schooling, healthcare, and socioeconomic class as related to neighborhood concerns such as vandalism and food justice. In discussing community gardens, for instance, Regina commented that "what we grow [in community gardens] is expensive at the market" [Fieldnotes, Jan. 10, 2013]. While brainstorming research questions, one student wrote, "My other question is on the [neighborhood] community and it's about how people get treated because of how we look and our house and why they treat people with a certain kind of house that way" [Fieldnotes, Nov. 23, 2013]. Another prevalent theme of the youth's research was health care, in many cases motivated by family illnesses and difficulties in accessing adequate medical treatments. Students discussed with one another ailments suffered by loved ones: one participant shared that her mother had rheumatoid arthritis and her grandfather lung cancer; another had a younger sister who had been recently hospitalized. Importantly, the inquiries the students pursued did not necessarily address the topics we expected them to. For example, none of the students took up the issue of immigration, which affected their lives in very real ways. However, their inquiries into healthcare, friendship, neighborhoods, and other topics underscored the systemic issues they faced as well as their agency in interpreting and representing them.

In the sections that follow, we highlight the inquiries of two of the Indonesian youth, Brian and Regina. At the time of our study, both Brian and Regina were in the seventh grade at charter schools that had the reputation of being "good school[s]" in the city [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014]. Their parents had learned about the school from friends and the news, and submitted an Intent to Enroll form to enter the admissions lottery. Brian, Regina, and their families viewed attending this school as a pathway to high school and college. At least one other participant in our study who attended the same charter school moved on to a Special Admission high school, commonly known as a "magnet school," with demanding admissions requirements based on standardized test scores and grades. Regina's two older siblings are now in college, one at a state college and one at a community college. Looking into the future, Regina was setting her sights on a variety of high schools she had heard of from family and friends. She noted, "I have a lot of options…I want to look deep in[to] them" [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014].

On the surface, these aspects of Brian's and Regina's stories seem to conform to the model minority stereotype: Asian-American parents push their children to excel in school, the student obtains a high GPA and high test scores, and then he or she is upwardly mobile and assimilates into mainstream society. We learned that this oversimplified narrative glosses over many issues and challenges, which the youth's research began to unearth.

"Has a Doctor Ever Been Mistaken?":
Brian's Inquiry Into Medicine and Bodily Fragility

For Brian, who we met in the opening of this article, the Community Researchers Project provided a venue to investigate his interest in the sciences—in particular, medicine. It was also where he shared his first-hand experiences with health issues and the medical establishment. Brian was one of at least three participants whose interest in medicine grew out of personal struggles, including the language barriers and social precarity (Butler, 2011) faced by many new immigrants to the U.S. His research, which he compiled into a book titled "Surgery and Medicine" (Figure 1), investigated three research questions: 1) What are people's experiences with surgery?; 2) How does medicine affect the body and life of community members?; and 3) Has a doctor ever been mistaken about your body or diseases you had? This direction suggests that Brian's inquiry was not a disinterested investigation of the subject, but was tied to the medical experiences of community members and, we would later learn, of his own family. Brian's questions point to his concern for others' physical well-being, and to how individuals recognized as authorities on the subject could be fallible, an insight that one would be unlikely to find in informational books about medicine targeted to Brian's

age group. It became evident in our review of the data that Brian was highly attuned to other's bodily fragility. While working on his questions, for example, he spoke about his teacher who had survived breast cancer; during this discussion, he also mentioned the relationship between stress and Parkinson's Disease [Fieldnotes, Feb. 2, 2014]. Later in the research process, he paused to ask several questions about cancer: "how it spreads, if one can survive it, and what the treatment process is like" [Fieldnotes, Jun. 1, 2014].
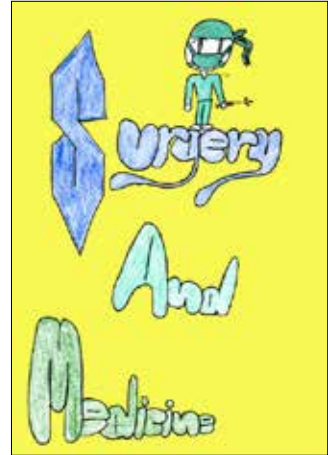
Fig. 1: "Surgery and medicine." This image is the cover of the book Brian created during the CRP.

Throughout the course of the inquiry and in an interview with Brian, we would learn about the personal experiences that fueled his interest in medicine. As a baby and young child, Brian underwent approximately 10 surgical operations for his hearing. In describing why he had decided to inquire into his chosen topic in the CRP, Brian wrote that, "surgery and medicine are important to me because I had experience [with] surgery and medicine for my ear/hearing" [Artifact, Feb. 2, 2014]. One important aspect of his medical ordeal was the lack of information Brian's family received about his condition and their difficulty in navigating healthcare due to language differences:

Brian: …[The] doctor didn't like give like details to my mom about my hearing loss. He just said that um your baby can't hear from the left ear, but he could hear from the right ear, which confuses my mom because he – she couldn't speak English back then, but now she could, and um once I got older and I got the surgeries I could hear more better which is really um good for me because I could do piano lesson, um violin and all those stuff that I couldn't do before. [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014]

Although his family was eventually able to receive help and overcome the linguistic challenges, the process was nonetheless difficult:

Brian: When the doctor was talking to her [my mom] um she didn't know English, and um once the doctor was like speaking English like that uh she didn't uh understand. So she called my mom's friend which is an interpreter, and um

the doctor was speaking to the interpreter, and then the interpreter was talking to my mom on the phone, and then my mom, she said that she was like really sad, and um she was praying for me every day, every time I have surgery and stuff like that. [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014]

We often hear statistics such as how in our city about 10% of the 1.4 million population are reportedly "Limited English Proficient" (Migration Policy Institute, 2013). Moreover, the myth of the model minority may lead to assumptions that a family like Brian's does not need linguistic or other supports. What these statistics and generalizations can obscure is the specifics of how language difference and cross-cultural misunderstanding, in a general climate of English Only monolingualism, impact a family's basic day-to-day affairs.

Brian's work also reflected his agency in drawing on social and cultural resources. For example, he recounts how his family enlisted the assistance of an interpreter from their community to navigate the healthcare system. Similarly, Brian invokes traditional medicinal remedies from his community in his research on diabetes, as seen in Figure 2.

Fig. 2: Brian's research on diabetes

Through working with the Indonesian youth, we learned how herbal medicines co-existed with "Western" medicine in their lives. For example, one student had initially considered studying Eastern and Western medicine, and another student mentioned taking Chinese herbal medicines when she was ill. Likewise, Brian's cures for diabetes include culturally based remedies "that won't include needles." A number of students and their families gravitated towards these alternative remedies in part because they were less economically prohibitive. The issue of social class is one that would also become a theme in Regina's research.

"You Have Like Four People to Feed and 10 Dollars in Your Pocket": Regina's Inquiry Into Health Disparities

Regina used her time at CRP to focus her inquiry on health issues, specifically asking, "Do people in my community exercise?" Regina surveyed members of her community to learn about their physical fitness (Figure 3), asking questions regarding the nature and frequency of their activities.

Fig. 3: Regina's survey questions

Regina's document also includes recommendations intended to change individual behaviors, such as dancing or taking the stairs. The implication is that with these fun and practical changes, people might overcome frequently cited obstacles to exercise and become healthier.

As the research progressed, rather than locate blame on the individual, Regina began to gain critical consciousness about the conditions that lead to health disparities. In an interview about her project, Regina stated,

If I live in [neighborhood name] and [neighborhood name] has all these Burger Kings, McDonald's, Wendy's, all these other good places for cheap and stuff. Well, you could go to [market in a nearby neighborhood] and get vegetables and you know – but some days you don't want to spend a lot because you don't have a lot. You have like four people to feed, and you have like ten dollars in your pocket. So it's might as well you get something from McDonald's from the Dollar Menu, and you could get a lot of things, soft drinks and burgers and stuff, and that could affect of what you're eating and how you're living and that. [Interview, Jul. 20, 2014]

Regina noted how families in the area had limited access to healthy choices due to price and availability of fresh foods, and exposed the struggles her community faced when it comes to acquiring basic social goods. Her research led her to eventually identify her own neighborhood as a food desert.

It is important to note that Regina's story directly challenges some of the meritocratic ideologies that the model minority stereotype is designed to uphold. The model minority stereotype is often used to perpetuate ideas that "anyone can make it" in America, as the dominant view of Asians is one of immigrant success and prosperity (Lee, 2009). When immigrant and other minoritized communities don't "make it," a comparison is made to apparent Asian success, and failure to thrive is attributed to an individual's poor choices rather than to social conditions. Regina shows that it isn't for lack of trying that issues of health arise for poor communities. Rather, it is structural inequities that limit the possibilities for healthy choice. As she defies meritocratic ideologies in researching her experience, she also reveals the very inequities the stereotype is meant to hide.

Tensions and Possibilities of Practitioner Research for Social Justice

By providing a platform for Brian, Regina, and their peers to research their family and community, we were able to begin to better understand their experiences beyond a model minority stereotype. Brian, like many of the youth, developed a heightened sense of human vulnerability and fragility. Regina cultivated a critical awareness of

the precarious social conditions that produce public health crises. These insights were born out of their experiences as racialized immigrants in the U.S. growing up in an under-resourced context. At the same time, they are developing the skills to analyze these systemic issues and cultivate activist identities that might eventually contribute to change.

We did find a number of tensions engaging in practitioner research with the Indonesian youth. Initially, we were wondering if the young people would employ the research opportunity to investigate immigrant rights, especially since it is an issue that had such immediate relevance to many of their families. Although the topic emerged in several peripheral conversations, it never became the focus of our work together. One possibility is that the immigration issues riveting the broader community were too traumatic to be taken up by the middle-school aged students. There are risks involved at research aimed toward social justice, and it is a priority for educators to protect the students from making themselves additionally vulnerable. No research methodology, including participatory varieties, can transcend the power asymmetries of a given context.

There were also several moments when we, as members of the research team, had to challenge some of the presuppositions we were bringing to the curriculum. For example, in order to be attentive to the youth's interest in medicine, we invited a dynamic and thoughtful medical doctor in the middle of his residency to share his ideas about the profession. At one point a number of the adults in the room discussed the importance of choosing to pursue work you love, since "you only live once." Reviewing our fieldnotes we realized that we may have been universalizing a particular cultural model (Gee, 2007) of work informed by our current privileged class status. For many in the community—who labor in low-wage service jobs—work was about survival and sacrifice for future generations, not necessarily self-actualization. And as we have discussed, even Brian, Regina, and their peers were motivated to examine health issues by an emerging sense of social responsibility. Just as we brought in outside experts, we might have also tapped the knowledge of community members, such as local leaders and everyday people, who navigated health and labor inequities and agitated for change.

One of the potential affordances of a practitioner research methodology, however, is the way it has built into it an internal feedback mechanism, whereby interpretation of the data emerging from practice and the multiple perspectives of participants in turn enables us to refine our conceptual lens and, with it, our future pedagogical decisions, a methodological process of "systematic improvisation" (Campano, 2007b). In response

to what we were finding, for example, we helped organize a workshop on immigration for the St. Frances Cabrini community, where undocumented DREAMers from our university could share their experiences with the Indonesian and Latino youth. We also invited students from the Community Researchers Project to present their work as part of a Practitioner Inquiry conference hosted at our university, reversing the roles of who is considered an expert and whose knowledge is privileged. This systematic and rigorous process of mobilizing multiple perspectives and constantly interrogating one's own presuppositions helps us challenge reified categories that too often drive educational policy and practice. In this case, practitioner research helped unsettle model minority stereotypes and make visible the subaltern experiences of one community in our city. It also applies at the level of the individual, as each person's experiences are singular and can never be exhausted by the categories used to explain them. In this manner, practitioner research can both contest dominant ideologies of categorization and help create more humane and socially just learning communities that honor the complexity, nuance, and agency of all youth.

Note

1. There was an inadvertent lapse in IRB approval between 12/14/12 and 6/22/15, which was discovered and addressed in June 2015.

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Unlearning to Be the Teacher:
Findings From an Action Research Study

Gail Casey, Deakin University

ABSTRACT

As the practitioner-researcher, the author integrated social and participatory media into her classes. Action research was used to explore how such media might enhance learning. The study found that the unique qualities of new media could be used to develop an active environment; students learned a lot from each other. Many complexities and tensions emerged and a shift in the teacher-to-student relationship occurred resulting in the need for the author to unlearn many past teaching practices.

*E*ach morning I still check my Facebook account for interaction or communication from my two adult children and I often upload pictures and stories of interest for my family and friends. I remember when my daughter posted a request for guidance in constructing a garden bed; a number of her online friends soon recommended construction approaches along with supportive websites. The speed at which she received this help, and the depth of thinking and critical analysis that occurred online, continued to play over in my mind and left me with questions of how social interaction and the value of online friends could be used to support learning and curriculum in more structured educational programs.

Back in 2007, I was teaching English as a Second Language in South Korea when, as part of my studies for a Master of Education, I began the journey of a practitioner-researcher using action research. In a practical sense I began to trial the use of blog as a form of social media between Australian and Korean high school students. As an educator, I found action research to be very empowering and continued to use it as a mechanism to explore the integration of social and participatory media within my face-to-face

classes. My 15 years of experience in teaching and leading with technology includes both large multi-campus schools as well as regional and remote schools. This article discusses part of the action research study and details some of the significant teacher complexities, tensions, and challenges that were encountered. As the teacher and the action researcher, I collected data over an 18-month period during 2010 and 2011 in an Australian public secondary school where I had taught for five years. I was teaching Mathematics and Information Technology (IT) and the students were 13–16 years of age. The school was classified as mid socio-economic status and was set in a regional city with a population of approximately 140,000. It was a co-educational school with about 900 students. In discussing the pedagogical and curricular changes that occurred throughout the study, this article highlights the ways in which the unique qualities of social and participatory media were used in my teaching and learning programs.

Background

This action research was influenced by Nuthall's (2007) argument that students learn a lot from their peers, and teachers cannot be effective unless they take these peer relationships into account. It also considered the use of mobile devices and digital media to provide new avenues for peer-to-peer communication. Modes of learning continue to evolve and, as Davidson and Goldberg (2009) suggest, our sources of information, the ways we exchange and interact with it, and how information informs and shapes our lives, have also changed. As part of Davidson and Goldberg's (2009) research on digital media and learning for the MacArthur Foundation, they argue that the most important characteristic of the Internet is its capacity to allow for a worldwide community (and its myriad subsets) to exchange ideas and to learn from one another in ways not previously available. Their research examines potential new models of digital learning and it views participatory learning as a key term in thinking about emergent shifts. They explain that participatory learning includes the many ways that learners (of any age) use new technologies to participate in virtual communities where they share ideas, comment on one another's projects, and plan, design, implement, advance, or simply discuss their practices, goals, and ideas together. As practitioner-researcher, I used Davidson and Goldberg's (2009) concepts of participatory learning with the aim of building a shared online student-centred environment where students could interact across all of my classes, have opportunities to learn from their peers, and access resources anytime and anywhere.

A number of theorists and researchers have guided this study, including Zhang (2012), who explains that teaching and learning encourages recursion and the view of recursion instruction holds that the teacher's authority, and the relationship between the teacher and students, is dynamic. For educators, these concepts of authority, at times, can merge and they may be left examining concepts of "who is teaching whom?" These ideas blend well with Hamilton's (1990) learning by "seeking out" knowledge, Dunbar's (1996) complexity of the social whirl, and Doll's (1993) self-organization of curriculum. It is important to also consider the question of what counts as knowledge. Ludvigsen (2012) argues that one must consider how and what kind of knowledge is perceived as valuable, or, alternatively, what knowledge becomes invisible in schools. Ludvigsen (2012) explains that, "this challenge makes us sensitive to changes in how knowledge is negotiated and treated in institutional practice" (p. 41).

This study connects very well with McWilliam's (2008) concept of "unlearning." She argues that contemporary life demands, not only that we learn new forms of social engagement, but also that we unlearn habits that have been useful in the past but are no longer valuable. Her unlearning concepts come from a re-positioning of the teacher and they incorporate students as co-directors and co-editors of their social world. She proposes that the long-term notion of a good teacher should be challenged and that there should be:

(1) less time giving instructions and more time spent being a usefully ignorant co-worker in the thick of the action;
(2) less time spent being a custodial risk minimiser and more time spent being an experimenter and risk-taker;
(3) less time spent being a forensic classroom auditor and more time spent being a designer, editor and assembler, and
(4) less time spent being a counsellor and 'best buddy' and more time spent being a collaborative critic and authentic evaluator. (p. 265)

Research Design, Data Collection, and Context

Throughout this qualitative study I used Armstrong and Moore's (2004) action research framework involving cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting while being supported by critical friends. Generally, one action research cycle was one class topic, but a number of class topics were taught simultaneously with different subjects and ages: hence, what was learned from one class cycle helped to inform other

action research cycles in other classes. The study was broken down into three research questions and these were used to develop a social framework for learning.

Students: What scaffolding is needed to help students learn within the complexity of an online social environment?

Learning: How can this framework help meet the learning and curriculum needs for schooling?

Teachers: What new demands could this type of framework bring to teachers and what professional development is needed to support such change?

The study occurred during the first two stages of my school's "one laptop per student" implementation program. The research participants were students from the 13 classes that I taught over an 18-month period, and the research spanned three semester-length phases. Each class spanned one semester (approximately 20 weeks) and each class had an average of 25 students.

Phase A: Semester 2, 2010, seven classes

Phase B: Semester 1, 2011 five classes

Phase C: Semester 2, 2011 one class

Each semester, I created one social networking site, called a Ning (http://ning.com), to share among all of my classes; hence, students could interact with students from all of my mathematics and information technology classes. More details of each of the components within the Ning social network are provided in Casey (2013). For privacy reasons, students used pseudonyms and were asked, even in the face-to-face classroom, not to disclose their identities. Online groups were constructed for project work, but usually the subject name and/or year level was not identified online; this was done to encourage students across my classes to interact. Students also created their own informal groups based on their interests and expertise, providing opportunities to learn from each other, share their knowledge, and socialize.

Microsoft OneNote software was used to store all of the data collected, and templates were created for class planning and reflection notes within this software. OneNote was also used to take screen captures of students' online work during most classes and to embed a range of other digital data within the templates. Data collected included the teacher's planning documents; classroom reflections and field notes; screen captures of students' online activities and tasks; the teacher's weekly, mid-semester, and end-of-term reflections, as well as critical friend and peer feedback. Each of the three research questions were broken down and allocated tags to help with analysis. Once the data

was tagged in relation to the three research questions, a range of summary tables were created, allowing further analysis to be carried out on each curriculum topic within each class.

The three social networking sites, created over the 18-month data collection period, were not constructed for the purposes of showcasing students' near-perfect work to a wider audience. Rather, they presented much of the daily interaction that became part of the teaching and learning process; hence, they included many of the half-attempts and failures that coincided with students' learning. More details of how this approach supported concepts of knowledge building are discussed further in Casey (2011) and (Casey & Evans, 2011).

Figure 1 shows the main social networking site used during one of the three data collection phases. This screen capture helps to identify the range of activities available to students. The left-hand side of the webpage provides the students with quick links to the teacher's projects. The central area of the screen capture reminds students of the need to respect others and the need to use pseudonyms and not to post identifiable content. Students enjoyed creating their online identities and using the sites listed to create their individual avatar. The main menu is shown at the top section of the figure and provided students with quick access to many of the social tools. Each member of the site had access to his or her own "My Page," which highlighted that member's profile and provided links to the member's many activities, groups, and uploaded or user-generated content. It also contained an area where students could receive comments from their peers and the teacher.

Fig. 1: The main page of the social media site used during Phase A

Teacher Reflection and the Changing of Classroom Practices

Many challenges were identified within the teacher reflection data and often these concerned my perception, at any point in time, of how *best* to use classroom and organizational time. I continued to consider how *important* is this and what is a *good* teacher or *effective* teaching? However, the teacher reflection data show that these perceptions changed over time, indicating that my teacher mind-set evolved over the 18 months. The following pages provide more insight into the teacher reflection data while detailing examples of classroom projects and student activity to highlight the changes in teacher practices including using students as resources.

Change in Teacher Practices

During the first phase of data collection, as expected, the data showed that it took time to establish projects online and to moderate the social classroom. Time was needed, in addition to my usual teacher work, not only to create class projects, but also

to redesign them in order to take advantage of the interactive qualities of the social media. Initially, time was a significant problem, as was noted in the end of Phase A data where 77 interactive groups were created with more than 40 of these being student-initiated (groups unrelated to class projects). I needed extra time (which could only come from my personal/private hours) to maintain the online site in conjunction with the usual, more traditional, teaching behaviours. The following teacher reflection was common during the first phase of data and captures the feelings of frustration with time factors.

> There is never enough time to do everything. I continually want to create new things, online, for my students. I don't do some of the things I should do as a teacher and I should be doing some things better. With such time constraints I focus on those things that I enjoy most, which for me is creating new things and helping students learn from each other. I don't have time to fully prepare everything in detail so I add a few ideas and Internet links to the site and have my students experience things with me.

This reflection highlights teacher conflict between integrating social media into the classroom while trying to meet self and school expectations of the, somewhat, traditional instructor.

The teacher reflection data also showed that, due to time pressures, I was not able to monitor student progress in the same manner as previously, where I kept ongoing records of student progress and students' completed work. However, the classroom observations and field notes did provide adequate information regarding the standard of work and the students' approach to work. In other words, these allowed me to get a feel for how students were progressing. As the study continued, the action research cycles of improvement were used to approach assessment differently. By the end of the second phase, the data showed that implementing student self-assessment and peer-assessments, combined with classroom observations, were able to provide very detailed information. This had the advantage of including, more specifically, what students had done and why they had done so. It also included information such as the problems particular students encountered and the ways in which their peers had contributed. As the study continued, I modified my teaching and assessment practices and reduced the time spent correcting and monitoring student stages of work progress. By the middle of the second phase, the reflection data show that I became comfortable with this new approach to assessment, which resulted in less time needed to tediously record specific work as done or not done. It was notable that the parents, as well as the school administration, were very pleased with this type of data being used for

assessment purposes. However, it is important to note that the teacher reflection data, throughout the process of achieving this successful assessment process, identifies a significant pedagogical struggle with my beliefs regarding my role as a *good* teacher.

Teacher reflection data also indicated that more time was spent with individual students and small groups. I was able to spend more time to better understand students' individual learning needs. Aspects of this could be seen through a student's Ning "My Page." This was a page that the social media site provided for every member and it became a type of ePortfolio for each student. It also provided, for any particular student, links/access to posts and user-created content as well as the student's online friends and the groups in which the student was involved. A student's My Page became an excellent resource to document specific work practices of a student at any point in time. It was notable that as students became more responsible for peer feedback and peer assessment, the teacher reflection data indicated that the teacher-to-student relationship was changing.

Students as Resources

As each research phase progressed, the curriculum was designed and scaffolded in ways that ensured that peer support and peer feedback would progressively increase. In daily classroom experiences, I continued to search for signs of a shift in students' attitudes to learning. In the reflection data, some of these were described as shifts from the "mundane to magical." Four examples are provided in the following pages to demonstrate this shift. The first is from a Year 9/10 class where students were searching the Internet in preparation for an exam. Students used Hendron's (2010) concept of "buckets" of information with the aim of developing "info-seeking" fluency skills. They did this through a process of sharing their search results by posting their content on blogs and recording the web address of their source materials. They used these "buckets" of information and those of their peers to "harvest" (Hendron, 2010) what each student felt was credible. This involved students publishing their own summary of their topic and exchanging peer feedback using the comment section of a blog. One of the teacher reflections in this project included:

> While I was helping individual students, I could hear others, in a critical voice, accusing their peers of copying and pasting material from the Internet as their own work. Students were learning from each other, sharing knowledge and becoming critics while also being a supportive resource.

Blogs were often used by students for posting their project ideas and content. Using a blog often enabled a visual representation of their thinking and work practices while providing a mechanism for direct and specific feedback from peers and/or myself, as the teacher. After posting a blog, students could find their blog listed on the main blog page. It became common class practice for a student to obtain a team of peer reviewers/critical friends by selecting the peers listed immediately above them and below them, on the main blog page, as well as one other of the student's choice. These peers would provide progressive feedback and, ultimately, assessment. The action research cycle was used to strengthen the scaffolding needed to support this peer-to-peer feedback and assessment. In turn, this built a strong student-centred framework that provided insight into the Student and Learning research questions and acknowledged a change in the student expectation of the teacher.

The second example considers a common theme within most classes where students were involved in creating some form of helpful resource for peers, either in their classroom or across the classes that I taught. In this particular example, mathematics students used web cameras to record their pencil-and-paper solutions while also recording a verbal explanation. This was a challenging task for students because it required them to demonstrate their depth of understanding within a particular topic. It also required students to consider how they learned to solve the mathematical problem and what was needed when considering how their peers might learn. Once students made and published these online, the consequent task then required critical thinking as students provided online peer-feedback. The reflection data show that the teacher-to-student conversations changed during this task and moved from questions of *how* to a deeper level involving questioning concepts of *why* within mathematics while paying particular attention to correct mathematical language.

The third project example provides a snapshot of one of the ways I tried to include student individual skills and knowledge, as well as flexibility, into the design of curriculum. The project involved students setting up their own groups and forums to share their knowledge and expertise in using a computer. (This occurred not long after students received their new individual laptop.) The purpose was to build a collective knowledge base where students could interact less formally with the aim to generate personal interest and share their "funds of knowledge" (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005, p. 47). The screen capture, shown in Figure 2, identifies four students with different avatars that have the pseudonyms, *metalhead 1977*, *me-is-good*, *crazysis*, and *Sword of justice*. Also shown are the four discussion forums they created to share their understanding of the different software types: Skype, Game maker, PowerPoint, and Picnic. The peer comments, as well as the teacher reflection data, showed that

peers appreciated this sharing of expertise and, consequently, students were able to learn a lot from each other. This activity also enabled students to identify potential avenues of peer support for other project work.
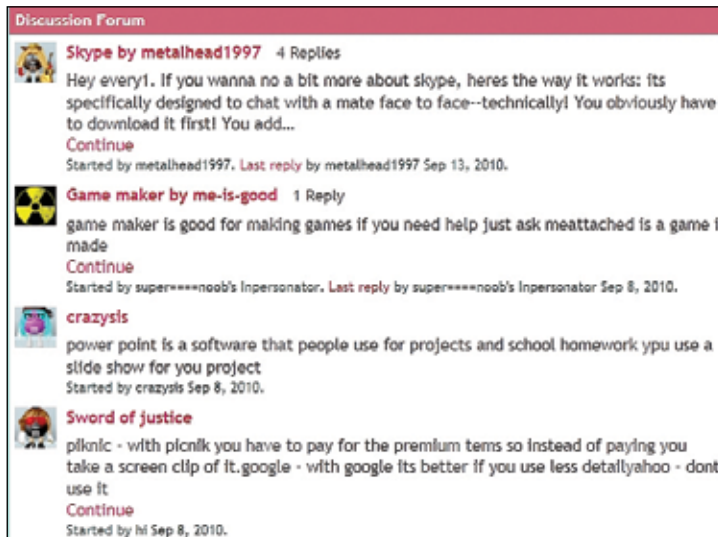
Fig. 2: Students were asked to create groups and forums to share knowledge and skills

In addition to the social media tools being used to design, create, and publish project work, students created informal groups and these allowed them to discuss such things as their interests in sport, hobbies, and music as well as how they were feeling. It could be considered that students were able to combine work and play. In these informal groups there was no expectation for students to learn, but they offered many teaching moments and the teacher reflection data show a range of examples where such discussions were integrated into the curriculum. When monitoring student informal groups, I often posted comments and questions and tried to role model appropriate interaction. Figure 3 shows some of the 45 groups created during Phase C of the study. These included both formal groups such as "Math" and "Romania What do we know?" as well as informal groups such as "RIP Dan Wheldon" and "FUNNY PICTURES."
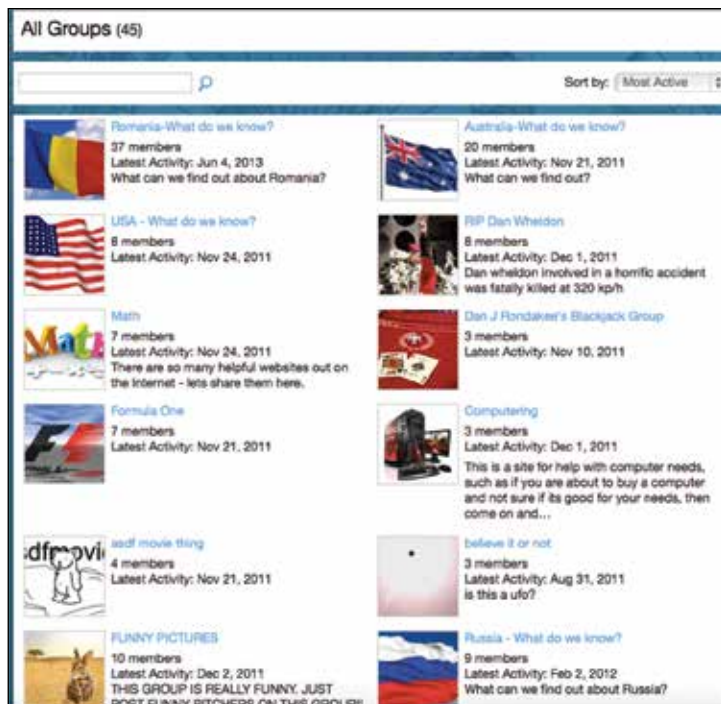
Fig. 3: Formal and informal groups were formed, 45 in total during Phase C

The fourth example involves one of the many student informal discussion groups where a particular discussion group posted humorous animations and pictures. The data show how I used this group to draw students' attention to the countries from where the animations originated as well as how the animations were created: concepts that held important curriculum value for Information Technology classes. It was found that encouraging students to create and engage in informal discussion groups held potential for teaching moments and provided students with social interaction that often supported curriculum content and learning practices. Figure 4 is a screen clip of a student's "My Page." The student used the pseudonym, *Explosive Bean*, and the My Page shows that Explosive Bean had received two gifts, posted eight blogs, and joined three groups. Figure 4 also shows a list of the "Latest Activity" for Explosive Bean where students with the pseudonyms, *A Lemon* and *Jo* have left comments for Explosive Bean and relate to a class project where students were creating games for their peers. Such comments provided students with authentic and timely feedback, which were generally appreciated and used for improvement before final assessment.

Fig. 4: The "My Page" of student who used the pseudonym *Explosive Bean*

Discussion: Learning and Unlearning

Embedding social and participatory media into my face-to-face classroom provided many opportunities for students to learn from each other and with these came a shift in the teacher-to-student relationship. Such a shift is discussed by Davis and Sumara (2012) and relates well to what Zhang (2012), in his discussion of new curriculum reform, calls the "blurring of the boundaries" (p. 90) between teaching and learning. This blurring of the boundaries can be seen in the learning that occurred in formal as well as informal online groups. Rhine and Bailey (2011) explain the natural tendency of students' attention to wander, over time, and the positive use of what they call "focused distractions." This occurs when it appears that students are being distracted, but the distraction is supporting the learning in ways that may not be obvious. In this study, informal groups could be considered to provide such distractions and these also have the potential to support different modes of learning. Zhang (2012), like Davidson and Goldberg, (2009), argues that modes of learning have changed and acknowledges the need for a continuous transformation of the roles of teacher and student where the teacher's authority becomes related to the concepts being studied and highlighted at the time. This could be seen in the examples discussed and is similar to Hamilton's (1990) concept of learning by seeking out knowledge.

The changes in teacher mind-set, experienced throughout this action research, harmonized with McWilliam's (2008) four challenges (listed earlier). Her first challenge: "less time giving instructions and more time spent being a usefully ignorant co-worker in the thick of the action" (p. 265) can be seen in the struggle with teacher time. In embedding social and participatory media into my curriculum, my teacher colleagues

and critical friends called me an "innovator." However, considering McWilliam's second challenge, she may well call me a "risk-taker" and "an experimenter" as I spent less time being, what she called, a "custodial risk minimiser" (p. 265). Her third challenge: "less time being a forensic classroom auditor and more time spent being a designer, editor and assembler" (p. 265), can be seen through the changes in assessment approaches. The reflection data also indicates that I was spending less time being, what McWilliam might call, a counsellor and "best buddy" and spending more time being a collaborative critic and authentic evaluator (her fourth challenge). This could be seen as a shift from students seeking teacher feedback to a more collaborative combination of peer and teacher feedback. Students were not only being assessed on their project work, but also on the feedback they were giving to support their peers. This changed the dynamics of the classroom and, as the teacher, I had more time to provide constructive one-to-one support on how to improve their feedback.

During the initial four weeks (about 12 hours of contact time) of each of the three research phases, the teacher reflection data highlights a common statement from students: "but that's the teacher's job," indicating that a shift in their thinking was required before they could fully appreciate the move away from the traditional teacher approach. Davidson and Goldberg (2009) confirm that "a blurring between teaching and learning" (p. 16) is to be expected within dynamic learning environments. They assert that, with participatory learning, the play between technology, composer, and audience is no longer passive. Like Zhang (2012), Davidson and Goldberg (2009) explain that, with participatory learning, conventional modes of authority break down, and the examples for this study, as described earlier, support this concept and raise challenges for educators who are trained under a different set of premises.

In this study, challenges also included that of being seen to be doing and being different from the other 70 or so teachers at the school; I frequently struggled with the concept of being a *good* teacher as I worked with critical friends, presented at learning area meetings, curriculum meetings, and whole-school meetings of teaching staff. As the action research cycle progressed, the answers to questions concerning what a good class should look and sound like did not always meet with my colleagues' beliefs and this became a pedagogical struggle for me. I sought a wider critical friend base by presenting at conferences, locally and internationally. Developing this wider network of educators and academics provided me with further insight and encouragement. Reconceptualizing teaching and learning in Gough's (2012) complexivist terms, Doll's (1993) self-organization of curriculum, and Selwyn's (2008) state-of-the-actual, gave me further strength. In particular, I gained a great deal of confidence when the social network used in my third research phase received first place in an international

award for innovative online learning in 2012.[1] Such support provided me with the confidence I needed to unlearn: to dispense with many of my traditional teaching behaviours. Davis and Sumara's (2012) discussion on "Learning About Learning" adds another perspective to McWilliam's (2008) notion of good teaching. They provide an interesting discussion around the concepts of the teacher being a learner. Davis and Sumara (2012) explain that this is one of a number of complexity-prompted shifts in structures in education, and they ask, "What is a teacher an expert in?" (p. 36). They provide the answer that "teachers should be learning experts." (p. 36). Davis and Sumara describe this as creating a sort of theoretical connoisseurship by developing an awareness of vital distinctions, varied implications, and hidden assumptions.

Conclusion

Through this action research study, social and participatory media was integrated into my face-to-face classes, and a shared dynamic, student-centred environment was built where students could interact across all of my classes. Students posted content, including project work, on blogs, group and discussion forums where online interactivity and user-generated content became an integral component of the classroom. Learning was supported by peers and by the teacher: hence, a shared, formal and informal student-centred environment was developed and was accessible anytime and anywhere. Such an approach can be integrated into other areas of education including university subjects and courses (Casey & Wells, 2015).

This study found that there are new demands on teaching and learning within such a dynamic environment and these resulted in the need for me, as the teacher, to modify my pedagogical strategies and values which, in turn, required the unlearning of many aspects of my previous teacher professional life to take place. The study found that there was a need to construct a type of social pedagogy in order to take advantage of the unique qualities of social media. This supports Blatchford, Kutnick, Baines, and Galton's (2003) prediction that in the future, the distinction between teacher and student, or expert and novice, may well become blurred, especially as information becomes more widely, and instantly, available. Like Freire (cited in Zhang, 2012), this study found that the role of the teacher and students could be transformed. He states that:

> The teacher is no longer just an instructor, and when communicating with students, teachers themselves can also benefit a lot. Students are taught by teachers and in turn, they also educate teachers. They grow up together through teamwork.

In this process, the argument based on authority is no longer effective; in order to function, authority has to support freedom, not be against freedom. (p. 96)

When considering the title of this article, "Unlearning to Be the Teacher," Davis and Sumara's (2012) discussion on *Learning About Learning*, helped me to analyze my thoughts on teachers as learners. This study demonstrates that there are new complexities and tensions within teaching and learning. While the study supports Davis and Sumara's concept that teachers should be learning experts, I can't help but wonder that, as the practitioner-researcher, if I had been a learning expert then perhaps I would not have needed to "unlearn."

Note

1. See: http://www.iste.org/docs/pdfs/iste_awards_archives.pdf?sfvrsn=4

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A Tale of Two Teachers: Learning to Teach Over Time

Marilyn Cochran-Smith

When I was preparing to be a teacher in the early 1970s, it was believed that people learned to teach through "training." Prospective teachers entered training programs—usually 4-year teacher education programs at colleges or universities—where, in addition to general education courses, they were introduced to important ideas about human development and schooling, equipped with teaching methods in the subject areas, and then, in the spring of their senior year, sent out to "practice" teaching.

Later, when they had become slightly more experienced teachers, they participated with everybody else in periodic "staff development" days, which usually meant that teachers from all the schools in one district were congregated in the high school auditorium to receive the latest information from educational experts about new ways of teaching or best teaching techniques. From this perspective, it was assumed that learning to teach was a single event that occurred prior to teaching, which was later supplemented with smaller updating events over the years.

By the 1980s (and continuing through the 1990s and beyond), things had changed. Newer images of teacher learning were informed by ideas about teachers as reflective practitioners who thought deeply about their work and made decisions in the classroom. The emphasis shifted from what teachers did to what they knew, what their sources of knowledge were, how those sources influenced their work in classrooms, and what conditions and contexts supported their learning. Teacher education programs were organized so that prospective teachers got into classrooms much sooner—during their sophomore or even freshman years—to get an early sense (from the other side

of the desk) of the day-to-day work of teaching and the complex set of responsibilities teachers have to juggle. In many places, there were also opportunities to gain initial teacher education in graduate-level programs.

Eventually, educators came to think of learning to teach as something that happens over time, not at just a single period of time. We began to work from the premise that learning to teach is a process, not an event. Increasingly, school districts encouraged (and sometimes required) teachers to work together in ongoing learning communities to look closely at their own practice in order to improve their work.

In today's policy and political climate, where teacher quality is widely assumed to be the single most important influence on students' learning, viewpoints about where, when, and how people learn to teach are mixed. However, most teachers and teacher educators continue to believe that teachers learn how to teach over time. In fact, it is widely agreed in the teacher education community that we are never finished learning to teach because each new group of school students brings new challenges and possibilities, and because, as society changes, the issues and problems teachers confront also change. People who see things this way maintain that we need to build into the daily work of schools opportunities for teachers to closely observe their students and investigate how to meet their needs as learners; to do this, teachers need time to meet, raise questions, and develop local knowledge.

A Tale of Two Teachers

This article looks closely at two teachers who had very different experiences during their first year of teaching. Juxtaposing their experiences helps explain what it means to learn to teach over time. Conveying their experiences in the form of story illuminates the contradictions and tensions that are inherently part of this process.

Literary theorist Barbara Hardy (1978, 12) once asserted that narrative should not be regarded as an "aesthetic invention used by artists to control, manipulate, and order experience, but as a primary act of mind transferred to art from life." Elaborating on the primary role of story in our lives, Hardy (1978, 13) suggested:

[Stories play] a major role in our sleeping and waking lives. We dream in narrative, daydream in narrative, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate and love by narrative.

From this perspective, narrative can be regarded as a central way we organize and understand experience. It is also a primary way we construct our multiple identities as human beings for whom race, gender, class, culture, ethnicity, language, and position make a profound difference in the nature and interpretation of experience. Story has the capacity to contain and entertain within it the contradictions, nuances, tensions, and complexities of learning to teach in the early years that traditional academic discourse, with its more distanced impersonal voice, often lacks.

The two stories that follow have many similarities—and many differences—that get at some of the nuances of teacher learning in the early years and of continuing to learn to teach across the professional life span.

The Tale of Gill Maimon

We begin with the tale of Gill Maimon. Like the vast majority of teachers in the United States, Gill is a white, middle class woman. She entered teaching in her mid-twenties. After college, she worked for a few years at several jobs related to the media and politics. Unlike some U.S. teachers—especially those who are widely critiqued by the media and policy makers who claim that teachers tend to come from the lowest levels of college students and thus have a weak academic background—Gill had a very strong academic background. In fact, Gill had attended a prestigious liberal arts college in the northeastern United States where she took an interdisciplinary major related to semiotics, literature, and society, which mixed literature study with political science.

Gill was a highly successful student, scoring well on standardized tests and placed in honors and other advanced classes in high school. Gill began teaching with a strong commitment to the profession, even though she did not plan to teach forever. She said she had always known she wanted to teach, but she planned to teach for three years or so and then move into education policy, which would match well with her college study of political science and her experience in politics.

Gill attended a major university for teacher preparation, a university whose school of education was ranked within the top 15 education schools in the country. She enrolled in a one-year master's program that led to initial teacher certification at the elementary school level, kindergarten through grade six. Gill told me in an interview that she chose her institution because of its urban location and because she wanted "rigor." Gill's preparation program had teacher research as its centerpiece and focused on preparing teachers to "teach against the grain" (Cochran-Smith 1991) of the common assumptions and school arrangements that perpetuate school and societal inequities.

Gill was hired to teach first grade in the same urban school district where she had student taught—not the same school, but at the same grade level that she had student taught. This meant that Gill was already familiar with many aspects of the curriculum, procedures, and processes of the school district when she began her first year. In keeping with the policy in her school district, Gill was assigned an official mentor, who was charged with meeting with her over the course of the year, and she also was required to attend a number of meetings to orient new teachers to the district.

Like many new teachers, Gill struggled her first year. This is not surprising. In fact, my own research on learning to teach (Cochran-Smith et al. 2009, 2012; McQuillan et al. 2009a, 2009b)—along with studies by many researchers in many different contexts and countries—indicates that most new teachers struggle, and many experienced teachers who look back on their first year openly acknowledge that their work at that time was far from ideal.

The Tale of Elsie Reynolds

Like Gill, Elsie Reynolds is a white, female, middle class woman. She was a little younger than Gill, entering the teacher-preparation program right out of college in her early 20s. Like Gill, Elsie also had a strong academic background. She attended a prestigious liberal arts college in the northeastern United States (not the same one as Gill) where she majored in English literature. She had been a strong high school student who had participated in nearly all honors and other advanced courses. She scored quite high on the standardized GRE® exam, which is used for entrance into graduate school. In fact, she had the highest GRE score among the 22 teachers in the case studies research project from which her story originates, and she later also scored very well on the teachers' test required by the state of Massachusetts.

Elsie began her teaching career with a strong commitment to the profession. But unlike Gill, Elsie told our research group in an early interview that she planned to make teaching her lifetime's work. Like Gill, Elsie attended a major research university for teacher preparation (again, not the same one as Gill), enrolling in a one-year master's degree program. Elsie earned initial teaching certification at the secondary level in the subject area of English. The education school at Elsie's university was ranked within the top 20 schools of education in the country. She chose this university over two others because of its location and its reputation for providing a strong secondary teacher-preparation program. Elsie's preparation program was organized around several themes, including preparing teachers to work for social justice, in part by meeting the diverse needs of all students. The program also emphasized inquiry and classroom research.

Elsie was hired to teach English at the same high school where she did her student teaching. According to policy studies, this is important. The studies point out that one cause of early attrition from teaching is the difficulty caused when new teachers are assigned to teaching jobs that are outside their field of study or outside the school level for which they were prepared (Liu 2002). Elsie was officially assigned a school mentor, the English department head at her school.

Like Gill, Elsie struggled her first year. Again, we know that many new teachers struggle—with the practicalities of teaching and managing a classroom; with the competing demands of administrators, parents, and colleagues; with the necessary juggling of multiple tasks and meeting the needs of many different learners; and—often—with the realization that their own expectations (and sometimes their dreams) about teaching do not match up with the reality of the work and with the weight of the responsibility for a group of students.

By now it should be clear that these two tales have many similarities. One could argue, perhaps, that some of these are just surface similarities. But many of them speak to factors that policy makers and others often claim are critical to improving teacher quality: strong academic background; solid subject-matter knowledge; preparation at a high-caliber institution; commitment to teaching; first-year teaching placement aligned with the teacher's subject field, certification area, and experience during the student teaching period; and designation of a formal mentor with some experience.

Despite these similarities, however, the conclusions of these two tales are strikingly different. Gill Maimon has now completed 17 years of full-time classroom teaching in the same large, urban public school district in which she began. Meanwhile, toward the end of her first year of teaching, Elsie Reynolds was informed she would not be rehired the following year, and she subsequently decided to leave teaching altogether.

What Made the Difference?

What explains this tale of two teachers and their strikingly dissimilar outcomes, especially given the just as strikingly similar aspects of their stories? What really made the difference?

To answer this question, I examined four features of these two teachers' experience—features that seemed to make the difference in what happened to them as new teachers and how they did or did not learn to teach over time: deprivatization of practice; high expectations for all students and for oneself as a teacher; inquiry as stance on

the work of teaching; and multiple, overlapping learning communities (see Figure 1). It is important to emphasize that these four are highly interrelated and overlapping aspects of the process of learning to teach over time, not discrete or independent factors. It is also important to note that how these features play out in the experiences of these two teachers—or any individual teacher—depends on the individual as well as on multiple social and cultural contexts.

Figure 1. Learning to Teach Over Time: Four Features of Practice
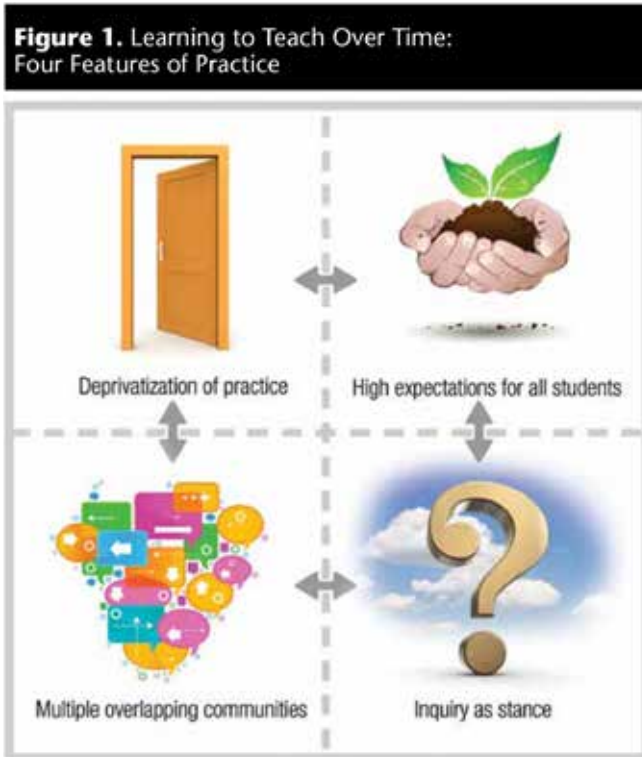
One way to think about the differences in the two teachers' experiences is that these four features were shaped by the ongoing interactions of various contexts. These contexts include:

- individual beginning teachers' values, beliefs, expectations and dispositions;
- their entry characteristics, including academic background and demographics, as well as family and personal situations;

- the nature of their opportunities to learn during the teacher-preparation period (which includes opportunities in coursework, fieldwork, community experiences, and other contexts) as well as opportunities to learn in ongoing professional development activities beyond the preparation period; and

- school, community, and larger cultures and contexts, including conditions, constraints, accountability systems, and available resources and supports.

All of these contexts are dynamically interrelated, not separate, and they change over the course of time (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Learning to Teach Over Time: Individual, Social, and Cultural Contexts
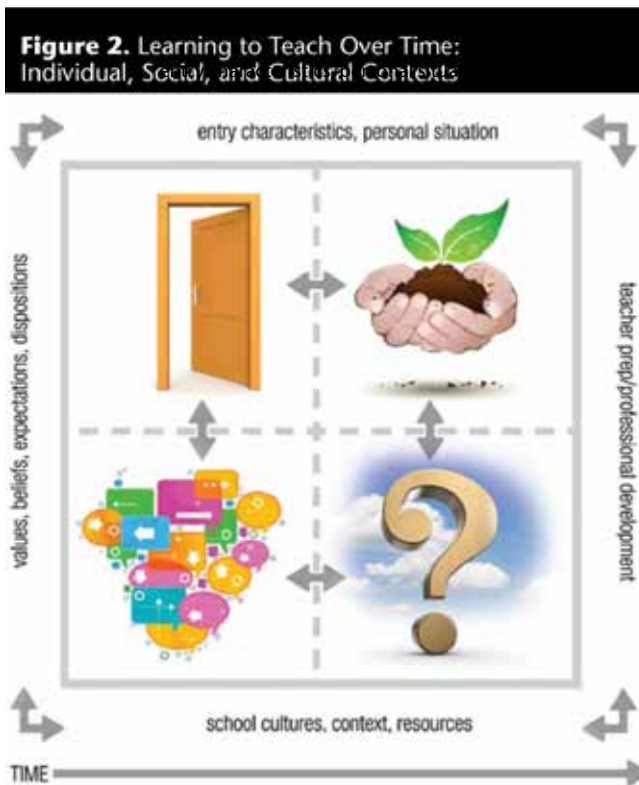
Deprivatization of Practice

The term "deprivatization" has been used in educational theory and research by a number of people working from different theoretical frameworks and traditions to refer to various aspects of pedagogy, teaching practice, school change, classroom documentation, and other related concepts (e.g., Spillane and Seashore Louis 2002; Fullan 2007; Stoll and Seashore Louis 2007). I use this term here to call attention to the

fact that for many years, teaching has been regarded as privatized work. Although this view has changed somewhat in some schools, teaching has been taught to new teachers, studied by researchers, and evaluated by administrators as a largely individual and private activity, something that takes place mostly behind the closed doors of individual classrooms and in isolation from other teachers and colleagues. Privatization has traditionally made teaching lonely and isolated work, but—and there is a double-edged sword here—it has also afforded a certain amount of autonomy and privacy from the scrutiny of others (Little 1990; Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993).

Deprivatization of practice, put simply, is the interruption of teaching as a private act. The change is brought about through a variety of perspectives and processes that open up teaching to others and prompt collaboration with others who are also engaged in the effort to make their work public and open to critique. The upside of deprivatization is the end of isolation—with, instead, collegial support, the joint construction of knowledge, and the mutual work of collaborators in communities. But, in certain contexts and circumstances, as is clear in this tale of two teachers, deprivatization also can be threatening and can increase anxiety and vulnerability.

In the tales of the two teachers introduced earlier, privatization and deprivatization played major, but complicated roles. As noted, both Gill and Elsie struggled during their first years. A fair amount of the struggle for each of them had to do with classroom management, the practicalities of teaching, and their attempts to deal with the tensions between the ideal teaching they envisioned and the realities and constraints of their classrooms.

Deprivatization and the Tale of Gill Maimon. Gill said in an interview that she finished the preparation program most in need of the practical pieces of teaching—that she was much better able to talk about and analyze teaching than actually do the work. As I noted, she got a job in a large school in the same school district where she had student taught. She became increasingly aware during the first year that her practice was, in her word, "sub-par," and that she did not have the systems, organizational strategies, and approaches that she needed to improve. Frantic for solutions, Gill reported, she was constantly trying everything she saw anyone else doing, which was not only exhausting, but also not true to herself. She struggled mightily to get what she termed "her system of justice" figured out and established in the classroom.

Gill commented that her principal did not welcome her reflective stance. Her officially designated mentor barely offered any support; in fact, she never showed up in person to help her. Near the end of the school year, the mentor arrived at Gill's

door and asked her to sign off on a school district form indicating that they had met periodically throughout the year; the signed form was required so the mentor could receive payment for her task. She was surprised—and not pleased—when Gill declined.

Fortunately for Gill, there was an experienced teacher who took her under her wing, advocated for her in several issues with the principal, and defended her as a professional colleague. And there were grade-level partners who were generous in sharing materials and ideas.

Nonetheless, she reported that, increasingly during her first year, she felt she was just "bad at teaching." In what she called an act of "desperation," Gill began to attend the Teachers Learning Cooperative (TLC), which turned out to be a crossroads for her in terms of deprivatizing her practice (though she did not use that word or concept). TLC is a teacher-initiated, teacher-led, and teacher-run cross-school group of teachers committed to urban education. The group works from the assumption that intellectual capacity is widely distributed across human beings and also assumes that teachers' work improves when they have opportunities to document it and critique it with other teachers in structured ways.

Gill had learned about the group during her teacher-preparation program. In several of her courses, the writings of TLC members and other teacher groups and individuals were included as part of the reading on course syllabi. In addition, teachers from TLC and other teacher groups made presentations about their work in the program courses and in monthly meetings of teacher candidates and their cooperating teachers, which were part of the program. And many teachers from TLC and other established teacher groups served as cooperating teachers and supervisors in Gill's preparation program. The work of this group was consistent with the perspective of the preparation program that learning to teach is a lifelong process wherein everybody is a learner—everybody opened up their work to others by deprivatizing it so all could learn from it. Gill reported that the teachers' group and the colleague who advocated for her were her saving grace during that first year.

Deprivatization and the Tale of Elsie Reynolds. Compared to Gill's experiences, Elsie's experiences were somewhat similar—but at the same time, very different. A week before beginning her first year, Elsie told us she felt fairly confident; although when asked about her goals for the year, she said she really just wanted to survive the first year and "do no harm at the very least." As the year progressed, however, Elsie's enduring challenge had to do with classroom management and discipline. She struggled with students who did not do homework and with rowdy behavior in some of her classes—attributing

these problems alternately to her own too relaxed manner, the difficulty of the group, the many undiagnosed learning and behavior problems in the school, and her own struggle to become an authority figure.

Elsie's classroom was located in the "annex," a separate wing of the school building, physically removed from the rest of the English teachers and other academic teachers, and directly across from the art teacher's room. On one side, the room had windows that looked onto the hallway. As the year progressed, Elsie expressed frustration. She felt detached from the rest of her department and, because of the windows, quite exposed—her troubles with classroom management on display. Elsie's official mentor was the English department head, who observed her once during the school year as did the assistant principal. Neither reported problems nor gave feedback. In an interview at the end of the year (after she had been informed she would not be rehired), Elsie's mentor told us he had left it to Elsie to ask for help. "She could have reached out if she needed support," he said.

Soon after Elsie had received the news that she would not be rehired, Karen Shakman, the researcher from our project, arrived at her classroom to observe and found that the windows of the classroom had been papered over so no one could see out or look in. Elsie explained that she had felt like she was in a "fishbowl," particularly because of her tense relationship with the art teacher across the hall. This act, and the fact that she had asked for and been granted permission from the administration to put up the paper, speaks to the school's culture of isolation and to Elsie's own increased anxiety. The papering of the windows was the culmination of months of neglect and isolation— a metaphor for Elsie's lack of ongoing support and her halted professional growth. Elsie never did receive a clear statement about why she was not rehired, although her assumption was that it had to do with student discipline issues. Neither of the two brief visits to her classroom by school administrators included follow-up.

One of the central differences in these two teachers' experiences during the first year had to do with what they did and where they turned when things were not going well. Gill went in the direction of deprivatization, while Elsie turned inward, making teaching more and more private until the final point, after she had been let go, when she papered over the windows of her classroom.

Of course, these different directions have to do with the interaction of multiple factors, as noted earlier. Individual teachers—who they are, what they bring with them to teaching, what their characteristics are—matter a lot. But this is not simply about teachers' personalities or people who are either "born" or "not born" to be teachers.

This also has to do with how teachers' characteristics interact with the resources that are available, what they learn in their teacher-preparation programs, what kinds of opportunities they have to critically reflect and work with others, and what the cultures of their schools are like.

Based partly on her character and the learning opportunities she had, Gill knew where to look for help, but she also knew what to look for—a way to deprivatize teaching and a teacher group where asking questions and admitting uncertainties were not seen as signs of failing, but as signs of learning. Elsie, on the other hand, who struggled with developing a teacher voice and an identity as a teacher, also entered into a school with a culture of isolation that only grew stronger as she experienced difficulty and uncertainty.

The second factor that played a major part in differentiating this tale of two teachers is high expectations for all students and for oneself as a teacher. Specifically, it is important for teachers to assume and then act on the assumption that all students are makers of meaning and all are capable of dealing with complex ideas. Having high expectations for all students means providing opportunities for all of them to learn academically challenging knowledge and skills. Akin to high expectations for students, this second factor also includes teachers having high expectations for themselves, working from a sense of their own efficacy as decision-makers, knowledge generators, and change agents. As with deprivatization, expectations played an important, but complicated role in this tale of two teachers.

High Expectations and the Tale of Gill Maimon. Gill entered the teacher-preparation program because she believed strongly in public education, and she wanted to be part of the larger effort to rectify an unjust educational system. However, during her preservice year, Gill was a student teacher in a class of 16 first-graders in a primarily working class elementary school in urban Philadelphia. Her class was uncharacteristically small because, as she wrote at the time, the children "were skimmed from the perceived 'bottom' of the first-grade population"—that is, they were children who had been designated "at risk" of academic failure by their kindergarten teachers, ear-marked for remedial instruction, and expected to spend at least two years in first grade. Over time, it became clear that Gill's cooperating teacher had low expectations for these students. She was not a good role model, and her practices were not consistent with what Gill was learning in her program.

But Gill resisted the negative influence of her cooperating teacher. In a project she completed as part of her preparation program, for example, she worked with a small

group of children in a literature study group to explore multiple versions of the Three Little Pigs story. In one session, Gill had the children draw pictures of their favorite story characters. She wrote:

I found Timmy's sympathy for the wolf so interesting that I wanted to include the entire class in our exchange. After Tim described his picture to everyone, I asked him, "Do you think the wolf deserved to be eaten at the end of the book?" He answered with a definite no. He explained. "You know why? Because the pig was mean. He came at different times and he wasn't waiting for the wolf. It wasn't fair. That's why he shouldn't get eaten." In response, Colleen stated strongly that the pig's deception was a necessary evil. "He had to do that or he would have been eaten." I quickly polled the room to see who stood where on this wolf issue. Based on the responses I received, I paired up individuals with classmates who held opposing opinions and asked each group member to try to convince the other.

In the days that followed, Gill and her students explored many versions of the classic story as well as parodies of the tale that played with point of view, narrator reliability, and novel characters.

In writing about the project as a whole, Gill said she had learned that a small group of "at risk" first-graders could indeed engage in quite sophisticated work, debating points of view, seeking textual evidence, and comparing/contrasting multiple versions. In her conclusion, she reflected on her children's abilities as learners and the damaging effects of a learning culture based on low expectations:

I have been told so many times, "You can't do this because they can't do this," and "You don't understand the way you have to teach these children." . . . In response, I hold up the powerful, angry, excited, exciting, deep, enlightening, funny, brave, complex, strong responses that these "at risk" students produced over the course of our literature study. Our exploration has been their and my vindication.

It is well-known that teachers frequently "dumb-down" the curriculum for "the low group" and for "at risk" students (Haberman 1991). However, supported by the many communities in her preparation program, Gill resisted the pressure to work from lowered expectations, instead providing rich learning opportunities and documenting her students' intellectual abilities to reason, debate, and compare. She maintained her high expectations for all students and for herself as a teacher and activist, committed to enhancing students' life chances.

High Expectations and the Tale of Elsie Reynolds. Elsie Reynolds also entered teacher preparation with high expectations. She wanted to expose students to great literature and inspire them in the way she had been inspired. She also wanted to relate to students and show that she cared about them. The teachers she remembered as role models from her own school experiences not only had strict expectations about students' work, but also related to them as whole persons.

In her preparation program, Elsie had learned about engaging students in critical thinking and about using collaborative group work and other nontraditional teaching methods. She saw some of these demonstrated in her first fieldwork experience, but not in her student teaching classroom, which was the same school from which she was eventually released. She tried to implement various approaches, but Elsie's cooperating teacher thought her expectations were too high. Over time, Elsie herself came to believe this. Midway through the student teaching period, when she was asked in an interview about expectations for students, she said:

> I really do think [my expectations] were too high. . . . I had always been in honors classes when I was in school. So I think my expectations were a little beyond what they had been taught and what they were capable of. And so in that sense, when you say did you maintain high expectations, that implies that . . . it's always bad to put the bar down a little bit. But if you're dealing with someone who's two feet tall, and you put the bar 20 feet up, [that's just] not gonna happen. So what I did, what I had to do, was assess where they were and set high expectations for where they would get to at the next point.

Based on our observations in Elsie's classroom and our analysis of her assignments and assessments of students, it appears that what Elsie actually did, as she endeavored to adjust her expectations, was to move mostly toward more direct instruction and spoon-feeding of the factual information that would be on a test. She began to rely on handouts that boiled down important information and then gave quizzes that required students to regurgitate that same information.

Elsie clearly grappled with the issue of expectations and with the gap between her ideals as an English teacher and what she eventually came to perceive as the level of the students she was teaching. In a certain sense, the students themselves were Elsie's most significant instructors in her first year. They had been socialized to expect particular relationships with their teachers and were accustomed to particular levels of effort. From them, Elsie learned to expect lower level work and ask for less. This phenomenon reflects what some researchers have argued is an unspoken agreement (Kennedy 2005)—a kind of Faustian bargain—between teachers and students in which teachers

do not ask a lot from students in exchange for a certain amount of calm and order in the classroom. Over time, Elsie's expectations eroded.

What accounts for the very different level of expectations these two teachers held for their students and for themselves? Just like the issue of deprivatization, high expectations depend in part on the personal characteristics and identity of the teacher and in part on how these interact with the culture of the school. And, of course, Gill was dealing with young children just beginning school, while Elsie struggled with the distinctive difficulties posed by adolescents who had long ago learned how to "do" school. But the differences go beyond these individual circumstances. Gill's preparation focused explicitly on principled resistance, advocating the idea of "teaching against the grain" (Cochran-Smith 1991) of the cultures and arrangements of schooling that foster inequities. Although Elsie's preparation program emphasized social justice, her placement situation, some personal health issues, lack of support, and the pervasive culture of the school eventually wore her down and socialized her into lower expectations.

The third feature that differentiates the two teachers in this tale is "inquiry as stance," the title phrase of my book about practitioner research, coauthored with Susan Lytle (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 2009). Inquiry as stance is a concept we developed a number of years ago to emphasize that teacher inquiry is a world view, a critical habit of mind, and a way of knowing about teaching that carries across the professional continuum and across educational settings. The idea of inquiry as a stance contrasts sharply with inquiry conceptualized as a time- and place-bound classroom research project and with inquiry as a method or set of steps for solving problems.

Fundamental to inquiry as stance is the idea that educational practice is not simply instrumental in the sense of figuring out how to get things done, but also and as importantly, it is social and political in the sense of deliberating about what to get done, why to get it done, who decides, and whose interests are served. In this tale of two teachers, approaches to inquiry were dramatically different.

Inquiry as Stance and the Tale of Gill Maimon. In an interview, Gill told me that when she started her teacher-preparation program, the concept of inquiry and of being a teacher researcher was revolutionary to her, but she was very comfortable with it. She considered herself fortunate to be among the "lucky people [who] find work that matches how they want to see the world." She said, "I aim to be truthful, to want to know what's really going on in my classroom from different perspectives, always knowing that I only see a slice." For Gill, inquiry as a stance on teaching fit perfectly with,

in her words, "how she was wired." Because her preparation program was so cohesive in its approach, she said inquiry soon became an internal frame for her, which was extended by the professional groups in which she participated.

Gill's own words speak far better than mine could about her inquiry stance as a teacher over time. In a chapter titled, "Practitioner Inquiry as Mediated Emotion" (Maimon 2009, 213), Gill wrote:

I have never been certain whether I am a teacher who writes or a writer who teaches.… Over thirteen years in first, second, and third grade classrooms in the School District of Philadelphia, writing and teaching have become richly and inextricably intertwined. I am always endeavoring to create meaning from the perpetual ambiguity that accompanies the work that I do in the world. It is for this reason that I have kept a teaching journal throughout my career. …One of the reasons I write about my classroom is to challenge the limits of the work, to keep trying to know more. …I intentionally observe and describe day-to-day life in my classroom in order to extend the boundaries of what I am able to perceive.

Gill's theorizing about the role of inquiry and writing in her work as a teacher clearly reflects how she thought about her everyday classroom experience, which she regularly wrote about in a teaching journal.

Following her observations of her first- and second-grade students during a high-stakes testing period, she wrote:

It is not hard to come to a conclusion that, on a test like this, the fact that the children know so much sometimes makes them appear not to know enough. A great example of a [test] question that disadvantages good writers is this one, which asks students to complete a sentence by writing a word or words in a blank space: "My turtle_____to be alone." It seems clear that the test makers anticipate answers like, "wants" or "likes" or "hates" or even "does not want" or "does not like." From the miniscule size of the space, I can tell that they do not expect an answer like Frank's: "My turtle <u>must go into the street</u> to be alone." In attempting to fit this entire answer into a too small space, Frank spells everyword flawlessly, but so cramps them together that they are barely intelligible to me, one who is very familiar with his work. To a person not fluent in Frank, I suspect that the correctness of his answer will not be recognized. Maybe Frank should have been more savvy and kept his answer clear and simple. If so, then maybe I have done him a disservice, because I am teaching him to write, not to fill in blanks efficiently.

Gill later wrote, "The writing I do is an assertion of the inherent intellectual nature of teaching. It is a way that I keep learning."

Inquiry as Stance and the Tale of Elsie Reynolds. Elsie's experience with inquiry is dramatically different from, and much briefer than, Gill's. Although Elsie's preparation program was intended to focus on inquiry as stance, in actuality it fostered a view of inquiry as project. As noted previously, the notion of inquiry as stance contrasts sharply with inquiry as a time- and place-bound classroom research project. When inquiry is a project, the underlying message is that it is something turned off and on at given points in time, with very clear lines separating teaching and inquiry.

Elsie did not get a great deal out of the inquiry project she was required to do during student teaching. The question she decided to research was whether or not teaching students grammar based on their own writing is an effective teaching strategy. But her conclusions, contrary even to some of her own data, simply reinforced her initial belief that this was a good form of instruction. She formed no new insights or fresh perspectives, and she posed no additional questions that stretched her thinking. In fact, Elsie found doing the research project overwhelming on top of the expectations of student teaching, and she thought it was too difficult to do both simultaneously. Elsie explained:

> I just don't think it works very well, throwing [inquiry] on top of [student teaching because with] student teaching, there was just so much that I was learning and there was so much I was trying to figure out how to do that . . . it was hard for me. . . . It's hard enough to plan lessons in general when you're student teaching. But it's harder to plan out an entire research project through lessons.

Her cooperating teacher agreed.

The responses of both Elsie and her cooperating teacher speak to the fact that the preparation program conveyed—albeit unintentionally—the message that inquiry was separate from the work of teaching, rather than an integral and ongoing part of it that actually helped participants to be better teachers. Although Elsie would probably have benefitted from learning about the idea of inquiry as a way to interrogate her own assumptions as a teacher and as a way to understand more deeply what was happening in her classroom, this was not what she learned about inquiry from her preparation program. Rather, inquiry was one more requirement to be checked off an unreasonably long list.

The experiences Gill and Elsie had in terms of inquiry were as different as night and day. The notion of inquiry as stance resonated immediately with Gill, while Elsie found the inquiry project an annoyance. Of course, it is not clear how Elsie would have responded to an approach where inquiry truly was conveyed as a stance. What is clear is that Elsie never had that opportunity, primarily because of the approach of the teacher preparation program itself.

The fourth feature that differentiated Gill's and Elsie's experiences as teachers is the opportunity to be part of multiple overlapping communities. A great deal has been written over the last ten years or so about teacher learning in communities, often referenced as inquiry communities, teacher learning communities, professional learning communities, collaborative learning communities, and other terms (e.g., Lieberman 2000; McLaughlin and Talbert 2006; Stoll and Seashore Louis 2007). When Susan Lytle and I discuss communities (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1993; 1999; 2009), we are careful to point out what we do not mean by that term—that simply having teachers meet as a group is a good thing, or that something magical happens just by virtue of people coming together. Of course, it is the work that gets done in those groups that matters. The essential purpose of communities, as we have tried to conceptualize and live in and with them for the last 25 years, is to foster teacher learning over the lifespan and link practitioners with larger social and school change efforts.

From our perspective, learning from inquiry means that members of communities work together to question their own assumptions and pose problems of practice that require studying their own students and schools. Inquiry communities also foster new relationships that alter older expert-novice models of proficiency and replace the singular pursuit of best practice with considerations of practice finely tuned to local histories, cultures, and communities. The idea of teachers learning in communities is closely related to, and intertwined with, the other features I have written about so far: deprivatizing teaching, maintaining high expectations, and working from an inquiry stance. Gill's and Elsie's experiences with communities were vastly different.

Communities and the Tale of Gill Maimon. Gill's preparation program was organized around nested communities: teacher candidates moved through the one-year program in a tight cohort group, and 3–5 student teachers were grouped together for placement at the same school. Although each student teacher had an individual cooperating teacher, all the students at a given school, their cooperating teachers, and their university supervisor met weekly as a teacher researcher group on the school site, and all the teacher researcher groups from the different schools met monthly with other teacher educators at the university. In addition, the student teachers and

their supervisor from one school site cross-visited for a two-week period with the cooperating teachers at another school site, engaging in activities planned by the hosting school group. Meanwhile the university supervisors and teacher educators met biweekly as an inquiry group to scrutinize their own work as mentors.

As alluded to earlier, Gill's cooperating teacher seemed to have low expectations for the "at risk" students in her class and did not turn out to be a good role model or helpful mentor for Gill. But because of the multiple overlapping communities intentionally built into the program, many other mentors were accessible, which assuaged the difficulty caused by the one-to-one mismatch that may occur when mentors are assigned to student teachers or to new teachers. Mary Kate Cipriani, Gill's closest fellow teacher candidate during the program and a member of her school site group, described the importance of communities in learning to teach in a paper she wrote at the end of the program:

My salvation became the teacher communities I [was part of]. . . . The term "communities" is used broadly because it encompasses many kinds of support groups and moments. It includes the mornings when the other student teachers who taught with me at the school would come by my classroom to ask me questions that ranged from "Have you ever used pattern blocks?" to "How are things going in your life?" . . . It includes the [conference] paper group and the Sunday nights we spent beside our professor's fireplace going over our journals and papers, looking for themes. It includes my cooperating teacher and me chatting about our students' academic behavior and who likes whom this week. It includes dinners at my supervisor's house, classes at [the university], and special events like the conference where we presented our teacher research. . . . I am a teacher because we are a teacher community; and because we are a teacher community, I am a teacher.

When I interviewed Gill and asked her to look back on her experiences learning to teach, she spoke at length about the multiple overlapping teacher communities she had been part of, both during the teacher-preparation period and moving forward.

She said she had had multiple mentors who helped her with the day-to-day as well as the big picture aspects of teaching. She talked about learning from cross-visiting other teachers during the preparation program. The Philadelphia Teachers Learning Cooperative played a critical role in Gill's learning over time, partly because there were others there who had had the experience of being in opposition to the administration in honorable ways; their convictions reinforced her beliefs and values about teaching. Gill said that when she switched schools after her first three years of teaching, the principal at the new school, more than anybody, helped her learn more about the practical pieces of teaching.

Over the years, Gill was also part of the Philadelphia Writing Project, and she served as the math leader for her school and as a participant in the school's "small learning communities" approach. After five years of teaching, while she continued to teach full-time, Gill began a doctoral program, which opened up many new avenues for critical reflection and created another central community for understanding teaching, learning, and schooling. After a few years, Gill hosted student teachers in her own classroom nearly every year. She also mentored new teachers and opened up her classroom to frequent visitors, including parents, fellow teachers, university researchers, observers, and guests.

When asked in an interview to identify the key to mentoring beginning teachers, Gill replied without hesitation that the key was also the major problem with so many official mentoring programs: the fit between the mentor and the new teacher. This was true, she remarked, because a mentor—to a certain degree—has to be a person who shares your philosophy, even though there are many ways to do the work of teaching well.

As Gill pointed out, if one mentor does not fit (and as illustrated earlier, neither Gill's cooperating teacher during student teaching nor her official mentor during her first year fit well at all), then there better be another mentor—or group—to approach to talk, try out, and relate. Reflecting on her early years of teaching, Gill said it was not the presence or absence of a mentor, which is a support service for new teachers often built into state-level policies, but the overlapping and multiple opportunities she had had to be part of pairs, triads, small groups, larger groups, cohorts, communities, cooperatives, and inquiries that had helped her learn to teach and continue learning to teach over time.

Communities and the Tale of Elsie Reynolds. It is difficult to write about Elsie's experience with communities, because it is so diametrically different from Gill's. It was not simply that Elsie lacked multiple and overlapping communities; she had practically no community at all. In part because of the unusual nature of her placement at a school that did not have an ongoing partnership with the preparation program and in part because of her personal health limitations, Elsie had much less support from the program than she normally might have. Although she participated in the program's required activities, including several "content mentoring sessions" with other English teachers and English professors at the university, which she found helpful, those activities were limited in number and scope.

It is important to note here that Elsie's does not represent the usual experience of teacher candidates in her program. In fact, she is a stark—and extreme—example of learning to teach in isolation. Although devastating in terms of its outcomes for her individually, her experience is almost a case study in what not to do in terms of establishing community and supporting new teachers' learning. Her mentoring arrangement during her first year, which was intended to be a one-on-one relationship, existed in name only. In addition, during her first year of teaching, she was physically separated from the other faculty, and her mentor expected her to ask for help if she needed it. It turned out that Karen Shakman, the core researcher on our team who collected data about Elsie over two years, was the only person who observed her with any regularity and, according to Elsie, the only person who communicated regularly with her about teaching and asked her how she was experiencing the work. In the end, then, it is not surprising that Elsie's overall experience was one of isolation rather than community.

Again, what made the tales of these two teachers so different, at least during their preparation programs and their first year of teaching, had partly to do with who they were—their expectations, entering characteristics, and personal situations. But it also had to do with the social, organizational, and intellectual contexts that supported (or did not support) their learning in the school cultures and contexts in which they worked.

It also had to do with opportunities (or lack thereof) for ongoing professional development in a whole range of learning communities. For Gill, there were multiple opportunities available in her program and, to a certain extent, in her schools. But throughout her 17 years of teaching, she also sought out communities that made the possibilities richer and more revealing. Elsie, on the other hand, participated in few community activities within her program, and there were virtually no communities for her to be part of in her first-year school. Her isolation was exacerbated by her turn inward and her gradual withdrawal inside her classroom.

A Tale of Two Teachers: Conclusion

The stories of Gill and Elsie are connected to three larger issues related to learning to teach across the continuum of the professional lifespan. First, as these two stories make clear, what determines how new teachers fare is not the presence or absence of single factors—age or previous work experience, strong subject-matter knowledge, attendance at a selective institution, in-field or out-of-field placement in the first job, or having a mentor versus not having one—even though these are often the focus

of policy and critique. Policies and practices that attempt to improve teacher quality and teacher retention by manipulating singular aspects of teacher selection and recruitment, of teacher preparation, or of resources for new teachers, such as the provision of mentoring or induction programs, are unlikely to succeed.

The second point, related to the first, has to do with teacher quality, teacher learning, and teacher education. To support teacher learning across the continuum and to build teachers' capacity for improvement, we must take into account teachers' multiple identities, positions, roles, and ways of knowing. Addressing these considerations will require multi-layered policies and practices regarding initial teacher education, induction, and professional development that reflect the idea that teachers are not all the same and do not experience policies and practices in the same ways. How values and beliefs interact with background characteristics, teacher preparation and professional-learning programs, and the cultures and contexts of schools will have to be taken into account.

The third point is that communities for teacher learning must be contexts where questions and uncertainty are understood as signs of learning, not signs of failing. In a sense, this point ties together the four key features that differentiated the stories of the two teachers described here: deprivatization, high expectations for teaching and learning, inquiry as stance, and multiple overlapping communities. In Wayne Huebner's "The Vocation of Teaching" (1987, 26), he refers to teaching as a "pilgrimage" to emphasize the idea of learning to teach over time. He captures very eloquently the importance of teachers' ongoing learning as a critical part of all larger efforts to change schools and improve students' life chances:

Teachers must act in an imperfect world. To postpone action until the knowledge and technique makers establish the educational millennium is sheer irresponsibility, based on the illusion of progress. We have no choice but to risk ourselves. The choice is to consider the risk private or to build a community that accepts vulnerability and shares risks.

Learning to teach is something that happens over time, and it happens when new teachers work in the company of more experienced teachers who are also continuing to learn to teach.

This position contrasts dramatically with the ideas of some current policy makers and others involved in alternate approaches to teacher education, who believe that teachers should know how to teach effectively the minute they enter the classroom. From this perspective, effective teaching is defined as being able to raise students' test

scores; and there is a clear notion that there are "best" ways to teach, regardless of who the students are and what experiential and cultural resources they bring. People who see things this way believe that school administrators should figure out as quickly as possible which teachers are effective at improving students' achievement and which ones are not, and then get rid of those who do not make the grade. This kind of thinking fails to acknowledge that learning to teach takes time, and it is never finished.

Author's Notes

These stories come from two different studies I have been involved in at two different universities at different points in time. The work of the first study appears in Cochran-Smith 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1999, and 2000. The work of the second study appears in Cochran-Smith et al. 2009; Cochran-Smith, Gleeson, and Mitchell 2010; Cochran-Smith et al. 2012; McQuillan 2009a, 2009b; and Shakman 2009. These stories also draw on ideas from Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1994, 2009; Maimon 2009; and Shakman 2009. In particular, I am grateful to Gill Maimon and Elsie Reynolds, whose stories are told here, and Karen Shakman, who was the core researcher for data collection and analysis for the story of Elsie Reynolds.

Gill Maimon is the real name of the teacher who is described here. She prefers that her real name be used. Her story refers to experiences that go well beyond the first year, because her career in teaching is now quite a lengthy one. Elsie Reynolds is a pseudonym, as per the informed consent she signed for the study she was part of, wherein anonymity was assured. Her story is of much shorter duration.

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Teacher Research and Adult Learning in Music Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of seven music educators who designed and implemented teacher research in their classrooms in relation to the Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) theory of adult learning. Findings are presented within participant profiles and suggest that motivations to participate included a desire to be a better teacher and an interest in collaborating with the University. The collaboration helped the participants to continue with their studies as did their curiosity about the learning of their students. The issue of time hindered some of the participants' ability to complete their studies.

$\mathcal{M}$usic education researchers often write about the potential of action research or teacher research[1] in addressing important issues within the profession (Leglar & Collay, 2002; Regelski, 1994; Robbins, Burbank, & Dunkle, 2007; West, 2011). Teacher research is also suggested as a means to connect research and music teaching practice in preservice and inservice music teacher education (Conway & Borst, 1999; Conway, Eros, & Stanley, 2009). Miller (1996) posited that teacher research is the most realistic research approach for music teachers because research questions emanate from teachers' work. Conway and Jeffers (2004) discussed the value of collaboration within the teacher research process:

This research project has been one of, if not the most, beneficial activities I have pursued in my 35 years as an instrumental music teacher. One of the most important reasons for the successful completion of the present project was having a collaborator. Having a partner to critique my work made it much easier to see the progress. Sharing each step along the way made me feel secure about the work I was doing and the direction the project was taking….Being able to share ideas, listen to suggestions, and talk about problems and frustrations made this project exciting and manageable. (p. 39)

However, the music education profession has very little empirical evidence to help professional development providers and teacher educators understand the phenomena of teachers doing their own research. In criticizing preservice and inservice teacher education for lacking theory and overemphasizing "best practice research," Grossman and Schoenfeld (2005) stated:

The [early work in teacher education pedagogy] was grounded not in a well-defined theory of adult learning, but rather in a kind of gritty empiricism, building on what seemed to work and discarding what did not….In addition to better tools, we need better theory, which is itself a different kind of tool. Such a theory would go beyond the particulars of a specific pedagogical approach to help us understand more broadly the relationship between the pedagogies of professional education and features of professional practice. (p. 450)

In an attempt to provide empirical insight as to the experiences of teacher researchers in music and to respond to Grossman and Schoenfeld's concern about use of adult learning theory in teacher education research, we have conceptualized this study through the theory of adult learning provided by Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007).

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to describe the experiences of seven music educators who designed and implemented teacher research in their classrooms in relation to the Merrian et al. (2007) theory of adult learning. The key focus was on describing how and why they began, implemented, and completed or discontinued a teacher research project. We considered ourselves (Colleen, Erin, Scott, Michael) to be the adult educators, and the teacher participants were the adult learners. As we examined

the data and artifacts (lesson plans, P-12 student work, musical scores, etc.) from the participant teacher research projects, we searched for ways in which planning, carrying out, and analyzing their own practice were examples or not of adult learning theory.

Adult Learning Theory

As defined by Merriam and colleagues (2007), key concepts of adult learning theory include: (a) As people mature, their self concept moves from dependent to self-directed: (b) adults accumulate a "rich reservoir of experience" (p. 84) throughout their lives; (c) adults focus more on immediacy of application than future application; (d) internal motivation is strong for adults; and (e) adults need to see relevance in order to learn something.

Merriam et al. (2007) differentiate formal learning (in a degree or certificate program) from non-formal learning (organized learning opportunities outside the formal educational system) and informal learning (experiences of everyday living). The work that our participants were doing in their teacher research studies as well as in their collaborative communications for this study is considered "non-formal learning."

Finally, adult learning theory suggests that in order to be successful in their learning, adults need to formulate their own learning experiences with a teacher serving in the role of coach, mentor, or guide (Merriam et al., 2007). The responsibility of adult educators "is to help learners, whether they are learning on their own or in formal learning programs, to be able to plan, carry out, and evaluate their own learning" (p. 107).

Music Education Past Research

The existing teacher research literature in music education focuses primarily on teachers developing alternative music curricula and assessment activities for their classrooms (Byrne & Sheridan, 2001; Conway & Borst, 1999; Conway & Jeffers, 2004; Miller, 1996). No past studies have examined music teachers' experiences in doing their own research in relation to adult learning.

Although Standerfer (2008) did not examine teacher research, her investigation of the experiences of three choral music teachers who completed the process of National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) certification in relation to adult learning theory has strong connections to our work. Standerfer framed her study in the adult learning theories of Candy (1991) and Mezirow (1991) and suggested that the process of completing NBPTS certification led participants to experience self-directed learning (Candy, 1991) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991). The NBPTS process invites participants to plan, implement, and reflect on their teacher practice in ways similar to the work of our participants in their teacher research studies. Although we did not frame our work within the two specific theories that Standerfer explored, there were elements of self-direction and transformation in the learning of some of our participants that will be apparent in the profiles.

Method

We approached this investigation using "basic qualitative research" (Merriam, 2009). Merriam suggests:

In my experience, in applied fields of practice such as education, administration, health, social work, counseling, business, and so on, the most common "type" of qualitative research is a basic, interpretive study. One does a qualitative research study, not a phenomenological, grounded theory, narrative analysis, or critical or ethnographic study. Over the years I have struggled with how to label such a study, using words such as generic, basic, and interpretive. Since all qualitative research is interpretive, I have come around to preferring labeling this type of study as a **basic qualitative study** (bold added). (p. 22)

Participants (see Figure 1 in Profiles) included seven music teachers (all pseudonyms) who designed a research project in their classrooms during the 2010-2011 school years. Detailed profiles of these participants appear in the findings section of this report. Details of the projects appear in the profiles, and procedures for meetings and data collection are provided below.

Our choice of participants represents what Patton (2002) would call criterion sampling. The criteria included:(a) experienced music teachers (5-16 years of teaching); (b) completion of a graduate research course; and (d) a willingness to devote time and energy to teacher research. The sense was that although these participants

exhibited these unique background characteristics, the profession could learn from these participants.

Data Collection and Procedures

Project start-up meeting. Each of the seven participants was asked to attend one of two project start-up meetings held in August 2010 (three attended one meeting, and four the other). The meeting introduced the participants to the goals of our study and invited them to begin to share ideas for research projects in their classrooms. Logistics for the email survey, observations, and interviews were also addressed at this first meeting. The meetings were not recorded as we were trying to set up an environment of inquiry and sharing. All co-authors wrote reactions to the meetings in our researcher logs.

Email survey. All seven participants responded to an open-response email survey sent just after the start-up meeting that included the following questions: (a) Describe your current teaching position; (b) How long have you worked in this position?; (c) List previous teaching positions and years occupied; (d) What is your current teaching schedule?; (e) Provide instances in your teaching when you modified instruction based on evidence gathered from your students or classroom; (f) Given the answers above, what were your motivations for examining your classroom or teaching?; (g) What are some of the issues, curiosities, or concerns you have regarding your teaching this year?

Classroom observation. Each participant was visited once by one of the co-authors in Fall 2010. Observations provided a context by which to interpret other data from the participants. Field notes from the observations were collected.

Individual interviews. Each participant was interviewed once by one of the co-authors in Fall 2010. The fall interview was held on the same day as the fall observation in October or November 2010. Much of this interview focused on follow-up to the email survey and discussion of the purpose and design of the research projects to be done by the participants. A second interview was held in May or June of 2011 that focused on implementation and completion of the projects. The same interviewer did the second interview. Both interviews were approximately 30 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded.[2]

Focus group interview. One focus group meeting was held in June with four participants. The remaining three participants participated in individual interviews that same month. The focus group gave the four participants who were able to attend

an opportunity to elaborate on issues they discussed in individual interviews and to respond to one another in a group format. All four researchers were at the focus group meeting. The focus group meeting was audio-recorded. The individual interviews with the other three participants also allowed them to expand on responses from earlier interviews and were also audio-recorded.

Artifacts from the participant projects. In some cases the researchers collected lesson plans, musical scores, P-12 student assignments, audio recordings, surveys, and PowerPoint presentations associated with the projects. These served as a secondary data set and helped us to understand the teacher research projects of the participants.

Research team communication log. The four researchers kept a log of all email communication with participants as well as a running list of thoughts about the study that were prompted by phone or in-person interactions with the participants or with one another. This log was used a source of triangulation.

Analysis

Using the key elements of the Merriam et al. theory (see Appendix A) as initial codes, recordings from individual interviews were analyzed by at least two researchers (in separate analysis). All four researchers were involved in this process and interviews were divided between us. Erin, Scott, and Michael analyzed the interviews they had conducted as well as the interviews of two other participants. Colleen analyzed five interviews not covered by the others. The interview data provided the primary data. The research team met several times to discuss the codes. We then chose to create profiles of each participant written by the researcher who had observed and interviewed that person. Profiles were written based on the research questions and we began to formulate common themes that emerged in multiple participants (see Appendix A). Other data sources (start-up meeting, observations, focus group interviews, project artifacts, and researcher logs) were used as secondary sources to provide context for the researchers as they wrote the profiles and formulated the themes. Each participant was sent the written profile via email and was invited to add or delete from the profiles; however, no changes were suggested for this member-checking process.

Findings

We begin with a graphic of participants for reader ease and then narrative participant profiles that include participants' general thoughts about teacher research. Common themes are then presented with evidence from the data in the areas of: (a) Motivated to become a better teacher and wanting to know more about their students; (b) Motivated to present at the upcoming state conference; (c) University collaboration; and (d) Concerns regarding time. Finally, we connect the experiences of these music teachers back to Merriam et al.'s key concepts of adult learning (see Appendix A). Participant responses are always presented in the order they appear in Figure 1, organized by teaching grade level and music content area.

Findings—Participant Profiles

NAME	TEACHING LEVEL	YEARS TEACHING	TYPE OF MUSIC CLASSROOM	TEACHER RESEARCH PROJECT
Lilly	K-5	4	General music	Composition in 3rd grade
Joe	K-5	8	General music	Strategies for working with children w/ Autism Spectrum Disorder
Steve	6-8	12	Band	Music theory – student perceptions of learning
Mike	6-8	5	Band	Use of instructional time in rehearsal
Ann	6-8	12	Orchestra	Strategies for developing student ownership in class
Ted	9-12	7	Band	Student-led ensemble sectionals
Hannah	9-12	16	Band and Orchestra	Rhythm development in the instrumental rehearsal

Fig. 1: Teacher participants

Lilly

Lilly was an elementary general music teacher with five years of experience and teaching in the same district as her husband, Mike (also a participant in this study). Her teacher research project involved looking at how she teaches music composition to her third graders. She designed five composition projects, each influenced by her reflection of how the previous one went and adding musical constraints with each subsequent project. She was very excited about the idea of change and research:

I definitely wanted to change, but never really done a study before. There are always things that I'm saying what can I do, how can I improve? How can I change it, and then going back and looking at the lesson? Where do I want to go, why didn't it work, and why aren't I getting the results I want? I just had to come up with a new direction to take them. (interview, 10/2010)

Lilly believed that doing teacher research was a transformative activity:

I think it's more important than I ever realized. Doing the research I made a true change in my teaching that will affect my career forever. Had I not been able to critically look through that lens, I don't think I'd been willing to take the risk to do it, and to push it as far. (interview, 7/2011)

She needed to get over the initial fear of conducting research, but after she had, it just felt like "good teaching." "Using the term research scares people. But I think it's so necessary. It's changed my teaching forever, and had I not done it, I would still be in my little tiny box" (interview, 7/2011).

Joe

Joe was in his second year of teaching kindergarten through fifth grade general music at the time of this study. He had an open and amiable personality that seemed to fit his work with young students, further reinforcing his decision to move from directing 5-12th grade band, which he had done for six years. When Joe accepted his current teaching position, he was informed that he would have a music class whose population would be made entirely of students who had Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He went from feeling scared and unprepared to teach such a class to exclaiming that this class "is the highlight of my week!" (interview, 9/2010).

Joe stated the purpose of his study was to learn how to have his students with ASD communicate with him musically. As a result of his data collection and reflection,

Joe modified his lessons, allowing him to try different and new activities. When asked what motivated him to continue to work on this project, Joe responded with:

> The kids. There are many music classes with that population of learner where the only sounds come from me. You can tell they're soaking it in. They can give you that look. And when they do give something back or give some type of reciprocal musical answer or musical idea back to you, it's really motivating when that happens because, for some of them, it's very far and few between. (interview, 6/2011)

Steve

Steve had 12 years of experience as a middle school band director. Following his school's promotion of formative assessment methods and his own belief in student-centered learning, Steve regularly surveys his students to determine how to modify and improve instruction. "I always try to get feedback on a project to see if they liked it, what could have gone better, what could have my instruction done better with it" (interview, 11/2010). "There is so much ground to cover in the topic of music, so getting opinions of students can be valuable in keeping student interest" (survey).

For his project, Steve created a questionnaire for his eighth grade band students asking for feedback regarding his use of theory, composition, and music history lessons during band rehearsal. The results corroborated his assumption that the lessons were perceived as valuable to their music education.

> It's just real interesting to see what middle schoolers think and what's important, what they value. They want to find out new things, that's what they want to do, compose or research, a lot of them had said something to that effect. (interview, 6/2011)

Having documented evidence for the value of a comprehensive music curriculum is also a motivator for Steve. He thinks his data would be valuable to share with his district colleagues as well as the administration, which is focused on reviewing teachers' scope and sequence in the curriculum. "I want to be able to show them that it is essential to do more of this than just the performance, which has been a struggle" (interview, 6/2011).

Mike

Mike teaches middle school band in mid-Michigan. The study was his second year in that position and he previously taught middle school band in another district. Mike was

one of the most enthusiastic participants about doing the study. His enthusiasm in the January focus groups led him to say, "I want to study it all!" Mike began with a study comparing traditional methods of counting rhythms and different syllable choices to a broad study of the use of rehearsal time. The final project involved Mike keeping a detailed record of rehearsal activities and the amount of time spent on each. The process influenced his lesson planning and teaching. Mike had thought about changing teaching practice, but has never considered it research. "I've probably done something in the past where I've brought a new idea or something; I guess I've never thought of it as a study" (interview, 10/2010). Most of his inquiry "stemmed from me having a problem in my class" (interview, 10/2010). He was still getting used to teaching middle school and saw this study as means to help him continue this process: "As I continue to get used to teaching middle school, I am continuously modifying how I do things to make my lessons more middle school applicable" (survey). Overall, his thought about the study was: "I just think it was a guy in a classroom trying to make things go a little better" (interview, 7/2011).

Ann

Ann had taught elementary and middle school string orchestra for 12 years, nine of which in her current school district. Ann is thoughtful, articulate, and clearly displays a passion for teaching. In an effort to help guide her eighth grade students' reflections of their class experiences, Ann wanted to create a short questionnaire for them to answer once or twice per month. After approximately four months of reflection, Ann then wanted to examine her students' comments and class behaviors to see if there is a change in how they approach music learning. Ann did not complete her project and this is discussed in the "Concerns Regarding Time" section later in the paper.

Ted

Ted was the director of bands at a large suburban high school. With seven years of teaching experience he was reflective of his teaching practices and was searching for strategies to better his teaching. He was interested in the concept of research and enjoys "speaking research." He spoke of two parts of his brain, the practitioner side and the researcher side: "Working with you [Scott] and Colleen is like working out of a different part of my brain. There's the teaching brain and the research brain" (interview, 1/2011). Ted's research project started out looking at the value of chamber ensembles and morphed into how students can be taught about student-run sectionals.[3]

Ted and his wife discovered they were pregnant. Due to the new life circumstances and other stresses of his job, Ted found it difficult to stay committed to his project. He was given opportunities to pull out of the study, but insisted that he stay on at a lesser level of commitment. His final project involved implementing student-run sectionals without the formal instructional sessions.

> I think it was beneficial, but not as beneficial as if I did the original plan. I think those younger players seeing the older players run sectionals, in years to come, if I ask one of them to run sectionals, they might remember those attributes and get effective results. (interview, 6/2011)

Hannah

Coming from a successful 14-year career as a band director at the middle school level, Hannah began teaching high school band and orchestra two years ago. The change in teaching levels and the diversity of teaching duties has challenged Hannah, and she sees the opportunity of doing research in her classroom as a way to gain perspective and a sense of direction for her program.

> [Doing research my own classroom] is exciting to me because it's another way for me to look at what I'm doing and trying to get a direction. But it's also frightening that you're looking at what you're doing and evaluating—is it working?—and kind of keeping yourself honest about what you're doing. (interview, 10/2010)

Through our interviews, Hannah was able to identify an area she would like to study. "One thing that I have been really interested in and did a lot of at the middle school is to try to bring music theory into the performing classroom because we don't have a music theory class here" (interview, 10/2010). She wondered, "How does understanding of music theory affect performance? How can theory be incorporated without taking away from rehearsal time?" (survey).

Hannah's original research idea "morphed" over time. Originally interested in rhythm and intonation, her discussions with the research team led to focusing on pulse. She incorporated new exercises, such as walking and playing. "I started noticing that there was a connection between counting and feeling" (interview, 5/2011) and students began moving more as they performed in their seats. Seeing the response in her students' playing and hearing their requests for more movement exercises were motivators to continue the exercises for several months. Thinking about pulse

drove my lesson planning and it drove what my assessment was and what I was looking for. It made me think a lot more about what it is that they're not understanding and how can I get to that in different ways. (interview, 5/2011)

Findings—Common Themes About Teacher Research

Motivated to Become a Better Teacher and Wanting to Know More About Their Students

All of the participants expressed interest in doing teacher research as a way to become a better teacher and many of them framed this within a desire to learn more about their students. Lilly said:

Every year when I look back I just never feel like I've hit the mark on what I wanted to accomplish. Although my students are always better than previous year's students I am always looking for the next thing. There is a lot I need to improve on and I'm hoping this will hold me accountable for doing that his year. (survey)

As a result of implementing composition and this study, Lisa stated, "I feel more confident now than I've ever felt that I'm sending musicians out into the world" (interview, 7/2011).

Joe stated that he was interested in participating in the study because, "I want to know how I can best serve my students" (interview, 9/2010). As part of his work in middle school band, Steve has enjoyed introducing students to music theory, composition, and music history to help them experience music on a deeper level. He said:

I'm really interested in finding out if they value the extra things that we do…. So I want them, you know I want to know if they are relaying [the study of theory] to the music now, and if I were to go through and do some score study and show them the chord progressions, and play it if that helps them to understand it… (survey)

Steve recognizes the value of investigating his students' perceptions about their class experiences. Hearing what they have to say is a motivator for changing his teaching practice. "Right now, we're implementing these common assessments between our two middle schools [on a quarterly basis]. So, it is helping me figure out how to hit what was important to [students] and keep it consistent" (interview, 6/2011).

Mike suggested:

I don't care how long I do this, or how long I do anything, I always try to…make my wheel a little rounder or spin faster. I'm always trying to get better at everything I do. I don't consider [this study] a leap or a bound. It's just a little baby step…In the big picture, if you can find small manageable things like this, it just makes you a better teacher. (interview, 7/2011)

When Ann was asked why she was motivated to join this project, she stated, "I am motivated by a desire to teach more effectively and to have students learn in such a way that they become independent with their skills and conceptual framework" (survey). All of Ted's teacher research ideas were guided by the motivation to provide "the most meaningful class (artistically, intellectually, etc.) for his students" (survey). Hannah's overall goal as a teacher was stated as: "to improve ensemble sound and deepen their knowledge of music, because I think kids who have more of an understanding are going to hold onto it for life more than those that just experience it on a surface level" (interview, 10/2010).

Hearing that a desire to learn more about students and become better teachers was a strong motivator for our participants, was not surprising given the volunteer sample. Professional development providers for music teachers should continue to consider how to capitalize on teachers' interest in students and work to provide opportunities for music teachers to explore reflection on music student learning through extended professional development. Although this move beyond "one shot" professional development has been regularly suggested in music education (Conway, 2007, 2011), it is still not the norm for music teachers.

Motivated to Present at the Upcoming State Conference

Two of the participants (Joe and Steve) were giving presentations at the state music conference in January and this presentation was a primary motivator for studying their classrooms from September to January. Joe was to present a session at the state's annual music educators' conference and believed that his preparation for the presentation would also contribute to this study: "Kill two birds with one stone" (interview, 9/2010). For the 2011 state music educator conference, Joe presented teaching techniques that he discovered to be successful with his students to other teachers who might also work with students with ASD. Joe continued to work on his research project after his conference presentation, though he did not collect additional video footage. When asked how his presentation and research project intersected, Joe responded

by saying that the conference was something in the middle of "one big, long process" (final interview, 6/2011).

For this study, Steve continued with practices he normally uses in assessing student learning and his own teaching methods. Yet, the difference was in documenting these assessments so that he could modify his teaching and share his findings with others through a district-level workshop, state music conference, or music education journal.

The need for music teachers to have opportunities to share their practices with one another has also been suggested in past music professional development literature. However, as with the case against "one shot" programs already mentioned, few opportunities to share promising classroom practices exist for music teachers (Conway, 2007, 2011). Music teacher conferences often focus a great deal on techniques for creating better sounding secondary ensembles that can sometimes be at odds with student-centered teaching practices.

University Collaboration

All of the participants valued the collaboration with the University that this project created. This concept of "University Collaboration" emerged as an important theme within the profiles. It is hard to know whether participants would have been as diligent in their teacher research work without it. Conway and Borst (1999) suggest: "It may be difficult for K–12 music teachers to find time to design and implement research. However, collaboration with the university professor, for whom research is part of the job expectation, makes equal-partner action research a possibility" (p. 3).

Lilly found many benefits in the university/school collaboration: "I think having you [Scott] point out what I don't see, because I'm in it all the time. Different aspects of the questions, different angles we can take. I think that's really helpful" (interview, 10/2010). A motivator for Steve in completing this project was the collaboration with the University. Asked if he would have conducted this study on his own, he said, "Probably not. You're doing the research and you know the terminology that scares everyone away, and ou know the collection and the analysis. That's the scariest part, I think, about doing something like this, is analyzing it." Having help from the University in designing the research study and helping with questions along the way was fundamental to Steve successfully completing his project.

The collaborative aspect of this study was one of the most beneficial aspects for Mike: "You really influenced me in taking this in a different direction. I don't know if I

would have done that on my own. Just being a part of something was a lot of it too" (interview, 7/2011). Ted stated personal and professional benefit from the collaboration of the study.

> The reason why I wanted to do this was feeling so invigorated and feeling alive. Not being static in my profession. Sometimes when I see an e-mail from Colleen. I say, you know what, don't get stuck in a rut. Keep things going, keep things fresh. Observe your teaching. Try to make it better. I felt that way when I got an email from you [Scott] too. When I saw e-mails from you, I said come on, try to get this done, Ted. I saw an e-mail from you going into a lesson. I taught better that lesson. (interview, 6/2011)

The need for collaboration appears as somewhat of a problematic finding as the resources needed to create and maintain this type of collaboration are considerable. It is unrealistic to think that faculty and graduate students in other institutions could regularly spend the amount of time that we spent on this project. Our project included seven teachers, three doctoral students, and an experienced faculty member. With focus group meetings, travel, and so on, the study was a tremendous expense in terms of time and money.

Concerns Regarding Time

All seven participants discussed busy lives and difficulty in sticking to schedules. For Ann, Ted, and Hannah the issue of time made completion of the teacher research project they originally designed impossible. Though Ann seemed to regularly reflect on her teaching practice and classes, right from the very beginning she was reluctant and nervous to entirely commit to the research project. Based on comments made during a focus group meeting and an individual interview, it seemed as if Ann was worried that this project would take time away from other tasks: time she did not have to give. After school ended, Ann expanded on her motivation to continue with the project even though it was difficult:

> I feel like I want there to be a record, in the world, of how busy teachers are and how we aren't given enough professional time to really do our own….curiosities. We just sit through these professional development days, which are highly structured, which somebody's talking to us about what they've thought about. (final interview, 6/2011)

Ann explained that she wanted an excuse to legitimize taking time for herself and self-reflection. In the end, Ann did not create or distribute her questionnaire; she felt that she did not have time to construct such a tool, especially since she felt she was spending all of her free hours developing a class website. Ann toyed with the idea of monitoring how her students and their parents used the website and using this information as her research study, but feeling overwhelmed, Ann ultimately discarded this idea.

Ted would have liked to implement his original ideas regarding preparing students for student-led instrumental music sectionals, however, school and life circumstances inhibited this:

> I feel guilty that I couldn't take it a step further. Towards myself, my own teaching, my own professional development. I don't ever want to be static. It's easy to fall back on the excuse that life happens. I've got a pregnant wife, extra-curricular conducting obligations, the thing is, once you turn static in this profession, student learning is compromised. I feel guilty that I couldn't find a way to do this more formally. (interview, 6/2011)

When concert time rolled around, however, Hannah went into concert mode (spending most class time in teacher-directed rehearsal) and stopped her movement exercise teacher research project, to both her and her students' dismay. It seemed that the study of pulse and her experimentation in the classroom was energizing and provided a sense of direction in her teaching.

> I mainly looked at it as something to get me going in a direction that I felt wasn't there. With this being my third year in the high school, I still felt that I was still looking for my direction. (interview, 5/11)

Yet, the demands of the concert schedule superseded her continued experimentations with pulse.

Although with a sample size of only seven teachers it is not reasonable to state generalizations, it is interesting to note that the largest issues of time were faced by the secondary music ensemble teachers. It may be that the performance requirements of the secondary music classroom make initiatives such as teacher research harder to manage.

Return to Adult Learning Theory

Considering these findings within the framework of adult learning theory described in the opening of this paper, it does appear that conducting teacher research is perceived as an adult learning activity. In considering the seven teacher participants as "adult learners" and their experience in the study as non-formal learning, there are several intersections between the experiences of our participants and key features of adult learning theory (Merriam et al., 2007). Features that were mentioned in the opening of the paper are discussed here in the context of this study.

As people mature, their self-concept moves from dependent to self-directed. Our participants were positive regarding the freedom they had in designing and planning their projects. These projects were separate from other adult learning that was being provided by their schools in terms of professional development, so we might suggest they were not "dependent" on their schools, but more self-directed in taking on this project. This finding connects to Standerfer's (2008) work with music teachers regarding positive reactions to programs requiring self-direction.

Adults accumulate a "rich reservoir of experience" throughout their lives. Our data suggest that these teachers' "rich reservoir" of experiences had prompted a wealth of research ideas, but that it was difficult to stay focused on one. These music teachers were so curious about their practice (many "rich" ideas) and yet had had little past research experience to study those topics, thus, for many of them it was hard to know what to study. In some cases their previous experiences ("rich reservoir") led them to fear the concept of research and this fear inhibited their ability to complete the project as completely as they were hoping to.

Adults focus more on immediacy of application than future application. This feature of adult learning also may have made staying focused on research projects more difficult for our learners. Music teachers are very busy and immediate needs such as performances, festivals, assessment, and advocacy for music often made teacher research difficult. We believe that the immediate needs of their classrooms made it harder for teachers to decide on and stick to one particular research topic.

Internal motivation is strong for adults. The very fact that our participants were willing to take part in a study of teacher research suggested they are internally motivated. In addition, all seven participants stayed involved throughout the year despite some disappointment with lack of progress and we believe this represents their internal motivation as well.

Adults need to see relevance in order to learn something. We examined this issue of relevance in a separate investigation that focused on teacher research as a professional development activity (Conway, Edgar, Hansen, & Palmer, 2013). In that paper we provide evidence that some of the teacher participants viewed teacher research as a relevant professional development activity and thus were able to learn.

Conclusion

We need a much deeper and broader base of research before the education profession can suggest the adult learning power of teacher research for music educators. Some of our participants experienced some of the transformative learning referred to in the music education professional development literature (Standerfer, 2008), but it is hard to measure and evaluate this learning. This investigation leads us to propose the following areas of inquiry for future research: (a) How does collaboration with faculty and/or colleagues interact with the learning of teachers doing research?; (b) What types of preparation or inservice might be most useful for teacher researchers?; and (c) What practices might support teacher researchers in their work? The adult learning theory of Merriam et al. (2007) was used as a framework for this inquiry; future researchers might examine other adult learning theories as well as other theories of motivation, collaboration, and teacher learning. We were inspired by the work of our participants and we hope their stories as told in this paper will inspire other researchers to collaborate with teachers to bridge the gaps between music education research and practice as well as consider the use of research to provide for inservice music teacher learning.

Appendix A

Initial Coding Scheme
Codes from Adult Learning Theory (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007):
- as people mature, their self-concept moves from dependent to self-directed
- adults accumulate a "rich reservoir of experience" throughout their lives
- adults focus more on immediacy of application than future application
- internal motivation is strong for adults
- adults need to see relevance in order to learn something

Categories of Emergent Themes

- wanted to become better teachers/wanted to know more about their students
- preparing for conference presentation
- university collaboration
- concerns regarding time

Notes

1. Action research and teacher research are considered synonymously for this paper. See Robbins (2014) and West (2011) for a discussion of the subtle differences between these terms and their uses in music education. We use the term "teacher research" to refer to all types of "practitioner inquiry" (Robbins, 2014).

2. Ann's first interview was not recorded due to technical difficulties in the attempt to record.

3. The term "sectionals" is used in music performance classes to refer to small group work with like instruments or voice parts (i.e., flute sectional).

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Do Not Go Gentle Into Practitioner Inquiry

Elizabeth Currin, University of Florida

ABSTRACT

Teacher researchers live at the overlap of theory and practice, consciously inhabiting dual worlds of thought and action. Using a poetic form, the author reflects on her roles as both teacher and student to comment on the pleasurably paradoxical structure and freedom involved in the inquiry process. By explaining the creation of her ode to practitioner inquiry within the parameters of the villanelle form, she embraces the significance of the process alongside the product, valuing both elements as vital for truly reflective practice.

Do Not Go Gentle Into Practitioner Inquiry

The journey's long between wondering and inquiry stance,
So do bear in mind, whatever your age,
Systematic and intentional don't happen by chance.

Teacher research need not involve IRB and grants,
5   Yet despite lack of lab coats and mice in a cage,
The journey's long between wondering and inquiry stance.

A diligent gardener who tends all her plants,
The practitioner must determine what data to gauge:
Systematic and intentional don't happen by chance.

10 Data analysis may well cause a few epic rants,
   And critical friends can sympathize with the rage.
   The journey's long between wondering and inquiry stance.

   Inquiry write-ups should provide more than a glance
   As vital preparation for the sharing stage.
15 Systematic and intentional don't happen by chance.

   Problematizing practice will help you advance,
   But don't expect magic at the turn of a page.
   The journey's long between wondering and inquiry stance:
   Systematic and intentional don't happen by chance.

*A*s a high school English teacher, I felt a self-imposed obligation to introduce my British literature students to representative examples from each of the United Kingdom's constituent countries. Though Dylan Thomas was the lone Welshman on my syllabus, his widely anthologized "Do not go gentle into that good night" was an easy choice beyond its mere convenience. This famous poem resonated with my students, who, as American twelfth graders, stood on the precipice of a vast unknown in the days leading up to graduation. As an optional extra credit assignment, I provided them with a template of the villanelle form and encouraged them to give voice to their feelings. Those who took me up on the offer most often drew from the swirl of emotions arising from the culmination of their K-12 educational journey. Though some were reluctant to consider themselves poets, the lure of bonus points and the comfort of the pattern guided them towards success.

Now, as a first-year doctoral student, I am the one in need of guidance, as I learn how to reconcile my teacher-past with my still inchoate future in order to strategically map out my present. Practitioner inquiry, living at the overlap of theory and practice, is an excellent resource to that end, a framework not unlike the villanelle template I handed to my students. Like the villanelle form, teacher research can be dazzlingly complex. A coach or facilitator must wrestle with how to provide needed structure to practitioners engaging in the process without being too task-oriented or mandate-driven. The amount of effort required might deter would-be participants in much the same way that some of my students doubted their ability to write villanelles. I, too, wondered whether or not I could actually pull it off to achieve the desired product. The template, however, bolstered our attempts and focused our thoughts in an intentional, systematic way, with resultant pride and insight.

The title of my poem reflects the need for teacher researchers to engage in the inquiry process with similarly fierce attentiveness. More than that, of course, my title alludes to Thomas's, and the poem itself incorporates the same villanelle style. Humbly originating from the Italian "*villanella*, a rustic song or dance [and] *villano*, a peasant" (Preminger, 1993, p. 1358), the villanelle is a 19-line poem with an iterative structure in place of more traditional rhyme schemes. I have honored its origins by aligning my villanelle with teacher research, which elevates the lowly practitioner to the level of knower and values local knowledge as critically transformative (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). Line 7 reaffirms this view with a nod to Lawrence Stenhouse's characterization of teacher inquirers as gardeners rather than—though no less valid than—large-scale farmers (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014).

The recursive nature of my poem adheres to the villanelle's definitive requirements, but it also ably represents the inquiry cycle, and the rules of the form stand in for the support and structure requisite for high-quality teacher research. Like a well-honed inquiry stance, the villanelle is at once static and dynamic. Critics of the villanelle might decry its formulaic façade, just as teachers might chafe at the seeming restraints of action research. On the whole, however, practitioner researchers thrive only with support, and poets (or students, or teachers-turned-students) who panic at the sight of a blank page can find comfort with a fixed form like the villanelle. Dylan Thomas and others show us that its tight structure need not forbid creativity. The structure becomes a part of, rather than apart from, the message.

For instance, the frequent-flyer words in my poem—journey, wondering, inquiry stance, systematic, and intentional—encapsulate the major elements of practitioner inquiry. These pieces take on added significance because of their repetition. The repeated lines of a villanelle need not monopolize the reader's attention, though. They can serve as a sturdy sort of rhythm to make the aberrant lines all the more noticeable. In my first stanza, for example, I point to practitioner research's applicability at any age, a vital component. Veterans may unwittingly intimidate first-year teachers, but all can benefit from the problematizing of practice, a concept evident in the final stanza. Such disruption of the status quo ironically relies on structural support, just as the awe of the villanelle ultimately comes from its fixed form. Such is what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) call the "constructive disruption" of inquiry (p. 86).

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Understanding Inquiry as Stance: Illustration and Analysis of One Teacher Researcher's Work

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ABSTRACT

The development of "inquiry as stance" is a foundational component of the teacher research movement. Yet, it is difficult to exemplify this construct to gain insights into its meaning and what it might look like in practice. The purpose of this article is to initiate discussion about the construct of stance through the provision and analysis of an eight-minute video clip depicting one teacher researcher's work. Three components of stance are discussed in relationship to the video example: (1) Data Collection as a Part of Teaching, (2) Roles of Inquirer and Teacher Blend Seamlessly With One Another, and (3) Commitment to the Creation of More Equitable Classrooms.

When I became a classroom teacher in the 1980s, I was immediately inundated with messages about the profession I had entered that troubled me greatly. As a teacher, I was supposed to follow the teacher's manual and do as I was told to do. In addition, I was kept overwhelmingly busy with paperwork and other tasks that diverted my focus away from the core work I had been hired to do—understand and teach each learner I was responsible for that school year. It didn't take long for me to discover that the culture of teaching was not at all as I had imagined it to be all the years I had longed to study teaching at the university and begin my career as an educator. Rather than teaching being an intellectual pursuit where one is empowered to make instructional decisions based on one's knowledge of the students coupled with one's knowledge of the field, I was preoccupied with daily survival in conditions that were often not conducive for me to meet the learning needs of every child.

Using a comparison between teachers and peasants within a Third World culture with hierarchical power structures, scarce resources, and traditional values, Kincheloe's (1991) writing in his book, *Teachers and Researchers: Qualitative Research as a Path to Empowerment*, captured my early career experiences in teaching perfectly:

Like their third world counterparts, teachers are preoccupied with daily survival – time for reflection and analysis seems remote and even quite fatuous given the crisis management atmosphere and the immediate attention survival necessitates. In such a climate those who would suggest that more time and resources be delegated to reflective and growth-inducing pursuits are viewed as impractical visionaries devoid of common sense. Thus, the status quo is perpetuated, the endless cycle of underdevelopment rolls on with its peasant culture of low morale and teachers as 'reactors' to daily emergencies. (p. 12)

Disheartened and discouraged by the culture of teaching I found myself immersed in so elequently described by Kincheloe, I left the classroom after four years of teaching to pursue doctoral studies with the hope of being better positioned in higher education to change the culture of teaching I had been living as a classroom teacher, and during that time, was fortunate to find the process of teacher research.

During my graduate studies, I learned that the concept "teachers as researchers" had been around for decades, tracing its roots to the work of John Dewey (1933), popularized by Kurt Lewin in the 1940s (Adelman, 1993), and shortly thereafter applied to the field of education by Stephen Corey (1953). The term "teachers as researchers" refers to the systematic and intentional study by teachers of their own classroom practice. As I read about, tried, studied, and learned more and more about the process as a doctoral student, I was hooked. Indeed, teachers researching their own practice could be a powerful mechanism to contribute to the transformation of the teaching profession itself. I was once again inspired by the words of Kincheloe (1991): "The plethora of small changes made by critical teacher researchers around the world in individual classrooms may bring about far more authentic educational reform than the grandiose policies formulated in state or national capitals" (p. 14).

Having been sold during my graduate studies on the potential teacher research holds for transforming the profession of teaching, I have been engaging in, teaching about, coaching, and studying the process ever since. Multiple models, iterations, and even names for the process (i.e., "teacher research," "action research," "classroom research," "practitioner inquiry," "teacher inquiry," "teacher self-study") have emerged through the years and have been actualized in varying ways for varying purposes

(Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). In my own work, I have defined this practice as teachers' engagement in a cyclical process of posing questions or "wonderings," collecting data to gain insights into wonderings, analyzing the data along with reading relevant literature, taking action to make changes in practice based on new understandings developed during inquiry, and sharing findings with others (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Dana, 2013). I have found this model of inquiry to be particularly useful to scaffold powerful job-embedded learning for educators (Yendol-Hoppey & Dana, 2010; Dana, Thomas, & Boynton, 2011; Dana, 2009) as well as support the learning of new teachers as they prepare to enter the profession (Dana, Silva, & Snow-Gerono, 2002; Dana & Silva, 2001).

Yet in over 20 years of work developing this model though inquiring into my own teaching practice and scaffolding other educators in the process as well, I have been haunted by a tension in teacher research. To provide entrée to the process, I break teacher research down into its component parts and take teachers through each part one step at a time:

(1) Develop a wondering, a burning question you have about practice;
(2) Develop a data collection plan to gain insights into your wondering;
(3) Collect and analyze data;
(4) Synthesize your learning and share with others through presentation and/or writing; and
(5) Take action for change based on what you have learned.

While simplifying the process by breaking it down into its component parts helps teachers access and learn how to study one's own practice, the breaking down of the process into its component parts can also result in teachers experiencing a feeling of finality, like they have come to the end of a long journey after they have completed "the last step." Therefore, teachers may begin to view inquiry as a linear process, and focus on the outcome, the ending of one project, one exploration, one wondering, . . . and then go back to the act of teaching, and "business as usual." As a linear *project*, teacher inquiry is not a part of teaching, it is apart from it.

If teacher inquiry remains apart *from* teaching rather than becoming a part *of* teaching, it has limited potential to transform the profession of teaching in the ways Kincheloe discusses in his writing. A teacher researching her own practice is not about the doing of a teacher research project that is completed at one point in time and is over. Rather, teacher inquiry is a continual cycle that all educators spiral through throughout their professional lifetimes—a professional positioning or stance, owned by the teacher,

where questioning, systematically studying, and subsequently improving one's own practice becomes a necessary and natural part of a teacher's work.

Inquiry as Stance Versus Inquiry as Project

The term "inquiry as stance" was first coined by Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle. When these scholars first began writing about inquiry as stance in the late 90s, they described it as follows:

> In everyday language, "stance" is used to describe body postures, particularly with regard to the position of the feet, as in sports or dance, and also to describe political positions, particularly their consistency (or lack thereof) over time. . . In our work, we offer the term inquiry as stance to describe the positions teachers and others who work together in inquiry communities take toward knowledge and its relationships to practice. We use the metaphor of stance to suggest both orientational and positional ideas, to carry allusions to the physical placing of the body a well as to intellectual activities and perspectives over time. In this sense the metaphor is intended to capture the ways we stand, the ways we see, and the lenses we see through. Teaching is a complex activity that occurs within webs of social, historical, cultural, and political significance. Across the life span, an inquiry stance provides a kind of grounding within the changing cultures of school reform and competing political agendas. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, pp. 288–289)

Since then, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) have authored an entire book entitled *Inquiry as Stance*, carefully choosing these words for their title to suggest that inquiry is more than the sum of its parts (developing questions, collecting and analyzing data, making one's study public, and taking actions for change based on what was learned through the process). Rather, inquiry is

> a worldview and a habit of mind—a way of knowing and being in the world of educational practice that carries across educational contexts and various points in one's professional career and that links individuals to larger groups, and social movements intended to challenge the inequities perpetuated by the educational status quo. (p. vii)

This is the essence of inquiry as stance. I believe this is why one engages in the process of inquiry in the first place. It is a way to live one's life as an educator to maximize

impact, making life and learning conditions better for all the children we teach. It is a way to transform the profession of teaching from the ways Kincheloe described it in his writing and I experienced it as classroom teacher.

Yet, as previously mentioned, tension exists between inquiry stance (one's way of being as a teacher) and progressing through all the steps of the inquiry process to produce a piece of teacher research. But which comes first, the adoption of an inquiry stance towards teaching or the production of teacher research projects? The posing of this question resembles the old adage, "Which comes first, the chicken or the egg?" It might be logical to think that stance comes first, but I have seen many teacher researchers approach the teacher research process first as a project they were required to complete to earn professional development points for state licensure or a new professional development initiative their school or district is trying (veteran teachers), or as a "university thing"—an assignment they had to complete for a college course (prospective teachers). While they initially approached their work as *project*, it was through the completion of the project that they developed *stance*. While it is possible that engagement in inquiry as a *project* can lead to the development of inquiry as a stance, there is no guarantee that this will occur. Therefore, it's important to raise this tension and explore it.

Several collections of teacher researchers' reports on their work illustrate the ways the concept inquiry as project might look like in practice (see, for example, Caro-Bruce, Flessner, Klehr, & Zeichner, 2007; Meyers & Rust, 2003; Brindley & Crocco, 2009; Perry, Henderson, & Meier, 2012). However, it is more difficult to find illustrations of inquiry as stance in practice—what it looks like and what it means to approach inquiry as a way of being and teaching. In an initial attempt to capture inquiry as stance, I created a short video clip that captures the story of teacher researcher Stephanie Whitaker, and the ways she approaches her work as a teacher inquirer.

Inquiry as Stance: An Illustration

In an effort to become a better teacher of English Language Learners and improve their achievement in mathematics, Stephanie Whitaker read numerous research studies in mathematics education that pointed to the importance of teaching mathematics for conceptual understanding, rather than teaching procedure only. With this research base in mind, she worked to transform her teaching of mathematics to ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students through engagement in teacher inquiry,

using the data she generated from her classroom-based research as practice-based evidence for the moves she made as a teacher, including when and how to question students' conceptual understanding of the mathematics constructs she teaches. Following the video, Stephanie's story is analyzed to reveal three components of critical importance in relationship to the development of inquiry as stance.

Click on Link Below For Video

http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/wtp31

Inquiry as Stance: Analysis of Illustration

While the illustration of inquiry and how it might play out in practice that is depicted in the short video clip shared above is incomplete (in this short video, we aren't actually able to see, critique, and analyze each component of Stephanie's research), it does bring visibility to three important components of the construct "inquiry as stance." These three components include:

1. The data collection for Stephanie's inquiry takes place as a part of her teaching, rather than apart from her teaching;

2. Stephanie's role as an inquirer and Stephanie's role as a teacher become seamlessly blended and integrated with one another; and

3. An underlying premise of Stephanie's inquiry is to create more equitable learning conditions for all by closing the mathematics learning achievement gap for her ESOL students.

Inquiry Stance Component #1: Data Collection as a Part of Teaching

Teacher researchers collect data using many different mechanisms including observations, student work, digital pictures, video, reflective journals, weblogs, surveys, quantitative measures of student achievement, critical friend group feedback, and literature (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). Some forms of data, such as observations and student work, closely connect to and are easily associated with the natural and normal acts of teaching and learning that occur in the classroom on a daily basis. Other forms of data collection, however, are sometime layered "on top of" the natural and normal acts of teaching. For example, a teacher researcher might schedule a time after school to interview a student or a group of students about their learning and how it relates to the teacher's research question, following an interview protocol developed prior to the event. In this case, the "interview" is viewed as a formal process and gets layered on top of daily classroom activity and routine.

When a teacher approaches inquiry as stance rather than inquiry as project, data collection becomes more and more a part of the natural and normal acts of teaching and less and less layered on top of daily classroom activity and routine. In Stephanie's case, she conducted an interview of Stoudamire as a natural part of her lesson and instructional activities. Furthermore, she collected data on all learners in her classroom as it was generated naturally and normally during the regular acts of teaching and learning. Stephanie viewed data collection not as an "add on" to what she does in the normal everyday act of teaching, but merely as an extension of what she does in the normal everyday act of teaching. Data collection became a part of, rather than apart from, her ordinary teaching practice.

Inquiry Stance Component #2: Roles of Inquirer and Teacher Blend Seamlessly With One Another

Research and teaching are generally conceptualized as two separate entities. A commonly held belief is that the role one plays as a teacher must remain separate and distinct from the role one plays as a researcher so as not to influence or "contaminate" research findings.

When a teacher approaches inquiry as stance rather than inquiry as project, the role of teacher and the role of researcher become seamlessly integrated with one another. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle (2009) call this important interplay "working the dialectic":

The term *dialectic* refers to the tensions and presumed contradictions between a number of key ideas and issues that have to do with research, practice, and knowledge. The first, and perhaps most important of these, is the assumed dichotomy between research and practice; the second is the twin of the first – the assumed disjuncture between the role of the researcher and the role of the practitioner. When research and practice are assumed to be dichotomous, then analysis, inquiry, and theorizing are understood to be part and parcel of the world of research, while action, experience, and doing are considered integral to the world of practice.

In contrast, practitioner research is defined, at least in part, by turning these dichotomies on their heads. With practitioner research, the borders between inquiry and practice are crossed, and the boundaries between being a researcher and being a practitioner are blurred. Instead of being regarded as oppositional constructs, then inquiry and practice are assumed to be related to each other in terms of productive and generative tensions. From this perspective, inquiry and practice are understood to have a reciprocal, recursive, and symbiotic relationship, and it is assumed that it is not only possible, but indeed beneficial, to take on simultaneously the roles of both researcher and practitioner. This means that when school-based educators "work the dialectic" of inquiry and practice, there are not distinct moments when they are only researchers or only practitioner. Rather, these activities and roles are integrated and dynamic. (pp. 93–95).

In Stephanie's case, who Stephanie is as a teacher and who Stephanie is as an inquirer are challenging to distinguish from one another in the video clip. As she interviews Stoudamire, Stephanie is both researcher and teacher. As researcher, Stephanie is systematically and intentionally exploring how she can help ESOL students develop conceptual understanding of mathematics. As teacher, Stephanie is processing Stoudamire's understanding of fraction denominators to make instructional decisions about where to go next in her teaching of this concept to this individual learner as well as to her whole class. Furthermore, as teacher, Stephanie uses her interview with Stoudamire as a teaching tool during whole class instruction to review the meaning of denominators in relationship to constructing models of fractions. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle state, there are no distinct moments in Stephanie's interview of Stoudamire where she is only researcher or only teacher. Rather, she occupies these roles simultaneously,

"working the dialectic" of inquiry and practice, and illustrating a second component of inquiry as stance.

Inquiry Stance Component #3: Commitment to the Creation of More Equitable Classrooms

While not explicitly stated in the video, Stephanie teaches a class of learners whose first language is not English. Oftentimes in the United States, these learners can be marginalized and lost in the traditional school system. Stephanie has made a commitment to help these learners thrive in a system that often fails to create equitable learning opportunities for English Language Learners. Rather than be satisfied with lower than average scores on mathematics assessments because her learners are not native English speakers, Stephanie's inquiry focuses on ways to close the achievement gap between her learners and others in her school by teaching mathematics conceptually rather than just procedurally as she has done in the past. Stephanie makes this pursuit the target of her own professional development as a teacher as she learns with and from her ESOL students about teaching mathematics conceptually and the impact such teaching can have on student learning through engagement in inquiry.

According to Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2001):

a legitimate and essential purpose of professional development is the development of an inquiry stance on teaching that is critical and transformative, a stance linked not only to high standards for the learning of all students but also to social change and social justice and to the individual and collective professional growth of teachers. (p. 46)

Cultivating an inquiry stance toward teaching means making a commitment to continuing one's professional growth throughout the professional lifetime that is led by a simultaneous commitment to high standards for all students. Stephanie's video provides a glimpse into what that commitment might look like in practice.

Conclusions

The purpose of this piece was to explore the notion of inquiry stance in relationship to the teacher research movement, and the tension that exists within the movement between inquiry as project and inquiry as stance. While numerous examples of inquiry

as project abound through the publication of a plethora of teachers' reports of their research, it is much more difficult to exemplify inquiry as stance, what this construct means, and what it might look like in practice. Yet, this construct is essential to fulfilling the underlying aims for the teacher research movement.

By constructing and analyzing a video clip of one teacher researcher's work in relationship to inquiry stance, I have attempted to provide the beginnings of a way to exemplify this construct, providing a small glimpse into the ways this construct might look like and play out in the everyday work of a teacher researcher. While an eight-minute video representation of the complexity of a teacher researcher's work admittedly falls short to do justice to the concepts of both inquiry as project and inquiry as stance, my hope is this video representation will spur continued dialogue and debate about the relationship between progressing through all the steps of the inquiry process to produce a piece of teacher research (inquiry as project) and the development of inquiry as a stance, a habit of mind and way of being in the profession of teaching. By making the construct of stance more explicit, I believe there is greater chance and opportunity for teachers to develop stance as a result of their completion of an inquiry project. As a result, the teacher researcher community will be strengthened and grow, and there is greater possibility to change the culture of teaching from the one Kincheloe (1991) describes as containing hierarchical power structures, scarce resources, and traditional values that serve to silence the voice of the teacher to a culture containing rich opportunities for teachers to engage in the intellectual pursuit of teaching, having a clear voice in their work as they learn with and from their students and take informed action to make life and learning conditions better for all.

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Teacher Research as Self-Study and Collaborative Activity

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights two insightful methods for advancing teacher research: practitioner self-study in relation to a range of texts, with which to examine one's educational landscape; and classroom interventions conceived as a Vygotskian activity, via teacher-researcher collaboration. Both approaches allow teachers and collaborating researchers to share individual expertise across institutional boundaries and engage in creative local action.

I came to educational research after more than a decade of classroom teaching at middle school grades in India. This was followed by doctoral training, after which I had the opportunity to collaborate with teachers and conduct classroom interventions at similar grade levels in Sweden. Such pursuits have allowed me to contribute to three profoundly human endeavours: education, science, and democracy. Along the way, I have striven for innovative means with which to realize human flourishing or the greater Aristotelian good in society. It is by reflecting on the pursuit of such endeavours that I argue in this paper for practitioner self-study and collaborative activity as insightful means with which to advance teacher research.

The theoretical premise in classroom studies I conduct is Vygotskian, guided by three of his many ground-breaking arguments. First is his contention that any educational process is one in which a child is able to educate him or herself through his or her own actions, resulting in newer and cultural forms of development. Vygotsky (1997) next recognized the unfolding of development in education to be active at

three levels: the student, the teacher, and the environment that gets forged between them. In articulating a methodology for studying environments in which a teacher's guidance advances or leads students' development, Vygotsky (1978) finally put forth the concept of activity, which he considered to be both the prerequisite and product—or tool and result—of any study. As a unit of analysis that can be thoughtfully deployed to study instruction in actual classrooms, there is an opportunity here to examine students' cultural development beyond mere biological maturation. It is by drawing on my experiences with teaching and research—in addition to adopting the Vygotskian premise of activity—that I ask: "In what ways could practitioner self-study and collaborative activity between teachers and researchers contribute to and advance teacher research?"

I admit that my attention to teacher research has come as a result of my interests in creating classroom environments, in which students could educate themselves via their own actions. This was the case in my years as a teacher and researcher. While my own schooling took place in competitive environments where students were sorted by various criteria and ranked, I came to teach at a school that lay emphasis on students cooperating with one another and teachers striving to make learning fun. By not having to restrict learning to textbooks or test scores, my school provided me with the space needed to experiment with my teaching and engage my intellectual curiosity with regard to education at large. In line with my training as an experimental physicist, I proceeded scientifically to inquire, observe, look for data, report, and reflect on ways in which one could sustain classroom teaching-learning in creative ways (Gade, 2004). In the absence of structured professional development programs—apart from an occasional workshop—I pursued my interests with passion, reading widely and encountering the wealth of perspectives with which schooling and education are conceived in different intellectual traditions. Such engagement contributed to my self-study as a teacher and continues to this day as I collaborate with teachers in their ongoing classrooms. Clandinin and Connelly (2007) articulate practitioner self-study as focused reflections on thoughts and actions in various educational landscapes. Such studies contribute to professional knowledge by transforming personal practical knowledge of practitioners into social, cultural, and institutional narratives. In finding resonance with experiences of other teachers and researchers, such knowledge has the highest potential of improving education. Given my experiences with teaching mathematics and science in different contexts and research, I now turn to self-study in relation to my reading of a selection of texts that I encountered in my journey.

Practitioner Self-Study

The K-10 school[2] I taught at in Hyderabad, India was founded largely on the teachings of the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. My scientific training and teaching of mathematics and science notwithstanding, I discuss the wider societal debate around the notion of truth in the first of three texts I reflect with and upon as part of my self-study. The notion of truth in our national motto in India reads, "Truth alone triumphs." Translated from the Sanskrit *Satayameva Jayate* and belonging to Ancient Indian *Upanishads*, I consider this saying to offer direction and purpose to one's everyday activity as well as ethical commitment to what is being pursued.

Interestingly, another text which offers guidance in relation to how truth should be pursued in one's life, is alluded to with greater clarity in the Buddhist saying below:

Believe nothing ...
... merely because you have been told it,
Or because it is traditional,
Or because you yourselves imagined it.
Do not believe what your teacher tells you
Merely out of respect for the teacher.
But whatsoever, after due examination and analysis,
You find to be conducive to the good,
The benefit, the welfare of all beings
That doctrine believe and cling to,
And take as your guide.

Written on a blackboard that lined our school corridor and visible for all to view and ruminate, I consider this saying to not only instill relentless questioning in one's life for truth and knowledge, but also to recognize that any truth being pursued must be conducive to all. With direct bearing on the kind of knowledge that teachers aspire to have, this text specifically advocated that knowledge have social relevance, bearing, and responsibility.

Next, I turn to the nature of truth given expression by Krishnamurti (1929) in his book, *Truth Is a Pathless Land*. Alluding to intuitive aspects of truth and knowledge, Krishanmurti offered up the following oft-quoted anecdote:

You may remember the story of how the devil and a friend of his were walking down the street, when they saw ahead of them a man stoop down and pick up something from the ground, look at it, and put it away in his pocket. The friend said to the devil, "What did that man pick up?" "He picked up a piece of Truth," said the devil. "That is a very bad business for you, then," said his friend. "Oh, not at all," the devil replied, "I am going to let him organise it."

The three texts cited above, widely known to many in India, lead me to highlight two aspects that are pertinent to wider societal practices in education. First, the kind of texts I mention are not only world making, but also exemplary of the kinds of texts that schools worldwide often use to initiate students into culturally whetted meanings. Second, it is the lot of school teachers in any cultural milieu to weigh in on such notions with their students, alongside parallel notions of truth in mathematics and science. As a classroom teacher, my own approach had been to engage in dialogue with students and attempt to broaden our horizons in line with Gadamer's rejoinder that the "other" in any conversation may be right (Fairfield, 2010). In parallel with Krishnamurti's pathless approach to truth, Gadamer suggests that personal understanding is not bound to any method, but obtainable by means of accessing social reality in hermeneutic terms. Gadamer's arguments seem conducive to another point that Krishnamurti emphasized: that to live was to be related to one another. It was in line with the latter's writings that the teachers at my school—one in which I taught for more than a decade—attempted to create a culture of relational and dialogic inquiry.

I now turn to examine texts that discuss the nature and pursuit of science, which for me includes mathematics as well. I begin by discussing my encounter with Jacob Bronowski's television series, *The Ascent of Man*. Through vivid footage and astute commentary, this series chronicles the development of modern-day civilization from its nomadic origins. Watching this series enriched my perception of science in three specific ways: that the practice of science its teaching included, was closely coupled with human values; that as a human enterprise science was driven also by an artistic and forward-looking imagination; and, lastly, that overall progress in science had an inbuilt historicity. Upon reading Bronowski's book (1973) of the same title, I began to consciously embed my teaching with explicit references to its wider societal practice, bring to discussion underlying dimensions of human values, and have students appreciate historical links within its various topics. Imparting such a stance within instruction allowed for overcoming the risk of treating science as separate findings that could be glossed over in textbook chapters. In parallel with the Buddhist dictum of questioning, Bronowski (1965) posits "Is that so?" as the central question asked when science sought truth and made sense of the world. Moreover, Bronowski added

that one needed to allow for dissent and have respect for another person's point of view. In tune with a dialogical emphasis practiced at school and as also advocated by Gadamer, Bronowski highlights the democratic character of science. Having bearing not only on classroom teaching, but also on vital stakeholder voice while conducting classroom research, Bronowski (1965) distinguishes between the findings of science from its societal practice:

> Science is not a mechanism but a human progress, and not a set of findings but a search for them. Those who think science is ethically neutral confuse the findings of science, which are, with the activity of science, which is not. (p. 63)

My attention to educational landscapes of mathematics and science was enriched by two other writings. In *The Golem: What Everyone Should Know About Science*, Collins and Pinch (1993) succinctly encapsulate the very act of classroom teaching:

> Every classroom in which children are conducting the same experiment in unison is a microcosm of frontier science. ... Think about what happens: the teacher asks the class to discover the boiling point of water by inserting a thermometer into a beaker and taking a reading when the water is steadily boiling. One thing is certain: almost no-one will get 100°C unless they already know the answer, and they are trying to please the teacher. Skip will get 102°C, Tania will get 105°C, Johnny will get 99.5°C, Mary will get 100.2°C, Zonker will get 54°C, while Brian will not quite manage to get a result; Smudger will boil the beaker dry and burst the thermometer. Ten minutes before the end of the experiment the teacher will gather these scientific results and start the social engineering. ... That ten minutes renegotiation of what really happened is the important thing. ... These are theorists hovering around, like the school teacher, to explain and try to reconcile. ... There is nothing wrong with this; the only sin is not knowing that it is always thus. (pp. 150–151)

Collins and Pinch provide the confidence sometimes needed to continue with teaching, given that the chatter and noise in its conduct could become an issue with teachers from neighbouring classrooms. Not relegating practical issues of teaching in educational landscapes to the background, I now mention another text that introduced me to a dialectical approach in conducting science—one I come across once again by reading Vygotskian literature in my doctoral work. Promoting this view and in his chapter entitled, *Not All in the Genes*, evolutionary biologist Richard Lewontin (1997) argues against reductionist approaches in the pursuit of science and, as an example, points to the importance of the environment in the evolution of life on earth. Lewontin's views allowed me to more fully understand Darwin's theory of evolution and the concept

of Vygotskian activity that I was to encounter later on. Lewontin also maintained that the answers one obtained in science depend to a large extent on the questions that were asked. The educational landscape of mathematics and science could thus be a nuanced one, and depended on the perspectives with which questions were conceived and formulated. I now turn to self-study of texts that shed light on the educational landscape in Sweden.

Unlike instructional landscapes in India which could vary from rote-driven learning environments to those which focused on creativity, even as multiple linguistic backgrounds of students were catered to, I found teaching in Sweden (which transpired in Swedish) to be more uniform in comparison. Yet, I embellish such cursory observations with my self-study of three texts that shed greater light on the country's unique educational landscape. The first text is from children's literature writer Astrid Lindgren, whose stories about playful Pippi's spirited and unpredictable antics are regular reading for most children. Not only did a student or two dress like Pippi at the schools I visited, but the sense of fun and frolic that Pippi inspired was also common across wider children's literature. In comparison, the tales that children traditionally grew up with in India were more steeped in folklore and mythology, though these too were "world making" and not without wit and wonder.

The second text, *The Education of the Child*, by Ellen Key (1910), predates Pippi by almost half a century. With her forthright style, Key drew specific attention to children's needs and their evolving personalities. She maintained,

> The educator wants the child to be finished at once, and perfect. He forces upon the child an unnatural degree of self-mastery, a devotion to duty, a sense of honour, habits that adults get out of with astonishing rapidity. Where the faults of children are concerned, at home and in school, we strain at gnats, while children daily are obliged to swallow the camels of grown people.

Key addresses quite contemporary issues in schooling and research, with her candid as well as vehement opposition to competition among students in schools: "Every contest decided by examinations and prizes is ultimately an immoral method of training. It awakens only evil passions, envy and the impression of injustice on the one side, arrogance on the other." I mention Key in light of the widespread attention and subsequent frenzy created by cross-national comparative tests, both in Sweden and other countries worldwide.[1]

Echoing Key and speaking to citizenship issues of education at large, the final text I reflect upon allows me to highlight the spirit of social equality that I have found pursued with great intent in Sweden. My search for writings in English that shed light on this aspect led me to one which explained how John Dewey came to be an epistemic figure in Swedish discourse. It was in this text that I came across the concept of *Folkhemmet* or "people's homes" in Sweden, which for me seemed to be the basis for the egalitarian outlook being practiced in schools,

> The foundation of The people's home [Folkhemmet] is fellowship and a spirit of togetherness. The good home is not acquainted with privileged or disadvantaged people, there are no favourites and no one is excluded. In the good home nobody looks down on anyone else, nobody tries to get advantages at someone else's expense, the strong do not oppress or exploit the meek. In the good home equality, consideration, cooperation and helpfulness prevail. (Olsson & Petersson, 2005, p. 41)

In alluding to, however briefly, ideological and national concepts that embed different cultural and intellectual traditions, my objective has been to not only offer geographical and disciplinary flavour, but also consider how these aspects could formulate and guide practitioner thinking and action in the everyday of educational landscapes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2007). I now turn to discuss my collaboration with another teacher-researcher.

Teacher-Researcher Collaboration

My engagement with Vygotskian perspectives in my doctoral work and initial conduct of interventions in Sweden brought me to three primary conclusions. First, if researchers wished to create productive learning environments in classrooms, they must work alongside teachers. Second, in working with teachers in their classrooms, researchers had to make efforts to overcome the deficit perspective that was held against teachers in individual and institutional ways. Finally, to conduct such studies, researchers needed to draw on frameworks which greater facilitated teacher-researcher collaboration. In keeping with these conclusions, I now outline my collaboration with a teacher named Lotta at her Grade 4-6 school.

My association with Lotta began when I sought to understand the teaching-learning dynamic in her grade six classroom. In a pilot study and as participant observer, I attempted to understand the narratives of her students as they learnt the mathematics

that was expected of them. Speaking in situated ways of their experience with learning mathematics, I found students' narratives to satisfy the key feature of Vygotskian activity, that of simultaneously being a prerequisite and product (or tool and result) of any study. Drawing on narratives of Lotta and her students in this study, I observed that participant narratives had the potential to speak both of and for ongoing practice (Gade, 2010). Even as I anonymized Lotta as "Lea" in this writing, I made it a point to share my written work with her as it went through various drafts before publication. Contributing vitally to democratic as well as stakeholder validity, such actions enabled me as researcher to secure Lotta's trust as teacher. Over the summer holidays that followed, Lotta went on to obtain project funding for the topic entitled, "Mathematics and Communication," to be utilized with her new group of grade four students in the next year. It was project-related work during this academic year that sowed the seeds for the extended teacher-researcher collaboration discussed in this paper. The first example of such collaboration was when Lotta reported that she wanted to find a way to rectify her students' incorrect use of of the mathematical = sign. Accordingly, I used the theory of explicit mediation (Wertsch, 2007) to design and—with Lotta—jointly conduct a four-stage action cycle in response to the problem (Gade, 2012; Blomqvist & Gade, 2013). While still referring to Lotta as Lea in reporting, our action research efforts enabled us to examine practical implementations and a theory of explicit mediation simultaneously as teacher and researcher. Moreover, such experiences emboldened us to design and conduct further classroom interventions. For example, we had Lotta's students make use of a specific category of talk designated as "exploratory" (Mercer & Dawes, 2008) and examine their understanding of everyday measures (Gade, 2014). Conducting this intervention as a plenary, Lotta's students responded to improbable questions such as: "Can Eva and Anton measure the length of Sweden on foot?" and "Can Lars and Iris measure their age in decimetres?" In the course of our collaboration, this intervention was important in two ways. First, and at the outset, Lotta and I decided to analyze her plenary talk jointly, with the objective of co-authoring a journal article. Second, and as I shall soon discuss, I went on to unpack the very manner in which our collaboration developed over time.

Three frameworks help me flesh out teacher-researcher collaboration with Lotta, whose importance as a collaborative activity is advanced in this paper. Such a focus is sharpened by conceiving Lotta as researcher, her professional context as research site, and her instructional practice as the focus of our research (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Moreover, adopting this stance helps address the problematic theory/practice divide and overcome the deficit perspective held against teachers in the wider educational debate. This is done by recognizing their ability to deepen and enrich professional understanding through engagement with the ideas of others, in open conversations sustained by long-term relationships (Hollingsworth, Dybdahl, & Minarik, 1993).

Encapsulated by the term "relational knowing," the first framework I use alludes to the ability of teachers and researchers to relate to themselves, their students, and others as a primary manner of knowing. The second framework I draw upon recognizes the potential that exists when teachers and researchers talk with one another about the actions they take, as they collaborate on instruction in ongoing classrooms. Termed "cogenerative dialogue," such talk is also considered a more effective form of teacher preparation than just holding routine teacher workshops, wherein prescriptive examples offered to teachers may not be of use to them (Roth & Tobin, 2004). Such dialogue is also a means with which to counter hegemonic tendencies of societal and institutional contradictions, which teachers face individually and risk internalizing in everyday schooling. My final framework has the potential to counter the false status of heroism that society tends to confer on teachers who work independently, often in isolation, and against all odds. The notion of "relational agency" counters this problem by recognizing the ability of teachers and researchers to work across institutional boundaries and pool resources towards shared goals they could jointly achieve (Edwards, 2010). Allowing teachers and researchers to collaborate across school and university confines, this notion recognizes the ability of both to reflect on joint instructional interventions. Exemplifying the use of each of these frameworks, I have discussed how Lotta and I drew upon each other and her students to exercise relational knowing in my pilot study (Gade, 2015). I also discuss how our intention to jointly analyze her plenary conduct and then co-author a journal article was an example of relational agency, as each of us pooled resources across our school and university. Finally, our joint analysis of the plenary talk was accompanied by co-generative dialogue in relation to our design, conduct, students' participation, and our afterthoughts. Even as I discuss yet another framework, that of an expansive learning activity (Engeström, 2001) with which to grasp my collaboration with Lotta in the concluding section of this paper, I now turn to reflect on insights from contemporary research on creativity and the nature of creative partnerships between people.

Contemporary research no longer views human creativity to be either a naturally driven process or personality based, but rather an activity which focuses on the generation of an end product that is novel, appropriate, useful, and valuable to a particular social group (Sawyer, 2011). This perspective allows me to consider teacher-researcher collaboration with Lotta to be a creative enterprise, wherein our design and conduct of classroom interventions were end products that were not only novel, but also very much deployable within ongoing instruction. Either with the = sign or with exploratory talk, our interventions were activities that were not only instructionally useful, but also had direct educational value to Lotta, her students, and to me as researcher.

I next turn to John-Steiner (2006), who discusses findings from extensive study of creative partnerships in art, literature, and the sciences. Evidencing how collaborating partners are sustained by the interest each other brings to a creative project, John-Steiner points to the delicate balance that is struck within partnerships with respect to individuality, interdependence, and mutual trust:

> When individuals join together and build upon their complementarity in scientific disciplines, they expand their reach. The strength of these partnerships is as much in their common vision as in their complementary abilities. Collaboration offers partners an opportunity to transcend their individuality and to overcome the limitations of habit, and of biological and temporal constraints. (p. 57)

Both Sawyer and John-Steiner allow me to view my collaboration with Lotta as benefitting from the complimentarily that both of us brought to the table as teacher and researcher. By designing and conducting well-thought-out interventions, we were able to overcome the limitations Lotta faced in her individual capacity, one which I too faced in understanding how Vygotskian constructs played out in classroom scenarios. In parallel to the frameworks with which I understood our collaboration earlier on, John-Steiner's identification of four patterns of collaboration help to distinguish the roles, values, and working methods of participants, summarized in the table below.

Table 1
John-Steiner's Four Patterns of Collaboration

PATTERNS	ROLES	VALUES	WORKING METHODS
Integrative	Braided roles	Visionary commitment	Transformative co-construction
Family	Fluidity of roles	Common values and trust	Dynamic integration of expertise
Complementary	Clear division of labour	Overlapping values	Discipline-based approaches
Distributed	Informal and voluntary	Similar interests	Spontaneous and responsive

(Adapted from diagram in *Creative Collaboration*, John-Steiner, 2006, p. 197)

Following John-Steiner and in relation to my pilot study, I found the nature of relationships between Lotta and me in that study to be spontaneous and responsive. At the time of this pilot our roles were informal and voluntary, making our collaboration distributed (see Table 1). Our subsequent conduct of classroom interventions was more complementary, based on shared values about the kind of interventions we wanted and went on to conduct. Our division of labour was clear, with Lotta conducting her plenary as teacher and me audio-recording her plenary talk as researcher. I next argue that our analysis of data for the purpose of co-authorship involved a fluidity of roles, for which we drew on mutual trust and exemplified a family pattern of collaboration. It was only when we pursued co-authorship in relation to Lotta's plenary talk (Gade & Bomqvist, under review) that our collaboration took on a visionary commitment of empowering ourselves through research. Our roles in such attempts were braided and our methods transformative, leading to what John-Steiner identifies as an integrative pattern of collaboration. While not all forms of collaboration necessarily exhibit the four patterns identified by John-Steiner, taken together the category of patterns allows me to view how my extended collaboration with Lotta qualified the three human endeavors identified earlier in this article. In other words, our collaborative efforts were educative (for Lotta, her students, and me as researcher), scientific (in pursuing creative and imaginative ways), and democratic (involving each of us in the conduct of the study).

Teacher Research: Conclusion

I draw my arguments to a close by summarizing my combined experiences with teaching, self-study, and teacher-researcher collaboration. In doing so, I first single out the importance of understanding what Clandinin and Connelly (2007) call "educational landscapes." Whether in national contexts or in disciplinary contexts of mathematics and science, it is within these landscapes that practitioners think and take action in situated ways. As I have attempted to show, such thoughts and actions are not culture free but guided by these landscapes in non-deterministic ways. My own take on the importance of practitioner understanding of educational landscapes, exemplified in the form of my self-study, produced a narrative that embodies as well as provides a stimulus to an important and vital aspect in teacher research—that of practitioner agency. This characteristic is critical in understanding and advancing teacher research if professional contexts are to be research sites and instructional practices of teachers the focus of any educational research (Cochran-Smith & Donnell, 2006). Not only is such agency critical to take part in the everyday conversations as put forth by Gadamer (Fairfield, 2010) but also in the democratic pursuit of science advanced by

Bronowski (1965). Such human agency also plays a central role when practitioners seek truth or knowledge that is conducive to Buddhist well-being, on the one hand, and to Aristotelian good, on the other. Moreover, it was such agency that Lotta and I both drew upon and displayed, in bringing to fruition our teacher-researcher collaboration within her classroom and school.

The notion of expansive learning activity mentioned earlier on merits revisiting. Forwarded within a larger activity theory framework, this construct draws attention to human learning which is not merely reactive, but one that emerges as new forms of thinking and doing—in addition to being transformative in spirit within collaborative activity (Engeström, 2001). My collaboration with Lotta was an expansive learning activity, in which three frameworks enabled me to shed light on the moments which contributed to these forms of work and action (Gade, 2015). In proceeding from nascent beginnings of observing each other and building trust, we set our sights on co-authorship during the course of extended collaboration. In addition to practitioner self-study of one's own educational landscapes, I find such collaborative activity to be indispensable to teacher research. It is not difficult to identify such collaboration as being Vygotskian (1997), given that Lotta's students were active, Lotta and I were active, and the interventional environment that we forged between us was active as well. In such collaborative activity, Lotta and I were able to weigh practice and theory simultaneously, on even terms. Furthermore, there was also the potential to study the oft-perceived theory/practice divide, overcome the deficit perspective held against teachers, and redress its possible hegemonic effects. Taking such steps as practitioner and collaborating researcher enabled us to realize our own inquiry into Lotta's instruction as a stance for powerful and affirmative action (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

The environment we forged was not only a dynamic one, but also one in which we pursued knowledge that was vital to our advancement. Such collaborative activity is conducive for teacher research and much needed local action in schools. In sharing individual expertise across institutional boundaries, our solutions were both collective and creative. This collaboration also helped us broaden the very scope of educational research by asking questions that were pertinent to the settings in which the study bore fruit. It is towards these purposes and ends then, that I consider individual self-study and collaborative activity to be two sides of the same coin, simultaneously drawing upon and informing educational action in the everyday of educational landscapes.

Acknowledgment

Notes

1. A colleague in Sweden told me that the problem with such attention was that children from countries who do poorly on these tests are at risk of growing up and thinking they are just no good.

2. Vidyaranya High School for Boys and Girls

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Utilizing Retrospective Miscue Analysis Strategies With Fifth Grade Readers: Focus on Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this action research endeavor was to change the culture of an accuracy view of reading to one of comprehension in a fifth grade classroom. The goal was to establish a common vocabulary and to revalue the process of reading. A constant comparative method of data analysis was used throughout the study to observe changes in students' view of reading and use of miscue vocabulary. By the end of this study, students actively monitored comprehension, rather than trying to produce an oral reading event with 100% word accuracy.

*A*s reading instruction is continuously pushed to the forefront of American education systems, teachers are often confronted with a contradiction between what they believe to be the most valuable aspect of reading and the assessment tools they use to determine reading ability. Many school districts, including Rebecca's, have shuffled through the maze of finding a reading assessment system that efficiently determines the instructional reading level of all learners in a classroom. However, many of the assessment systems that inevitably become adopted by countless school districts weigh the accuracy and speed of students' reading as the foremost indicators of a child's reading ability. While fulfilling a mandate from her school district to find the instructional and independent reading levels of each of her fifth grade students utilizing the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmarking System (2011), Rebecca became interested in investigating the importance of analyzing students' miscues more closely. She was being told to interpret her students' scores from this assessment in a way that explicitly followed the criteria for benchmarking levels as

outlined by the publishers. Little room was left for her input as a teacher and her own professional judgment in the placement of her students on her school's "Data Wall."

Rebecca had always felt uneasy about determining a student's reading level or reading ability based on one assessment system and the method of implementation of this system in her district. When she learned more about miscue analysis and retrospective miscue analysis from Linda, she realized that accuracy models do not provide enough information about a reader to help inform instruction. Accuracy models also seem to devalue those reading behaviors that we want to develop in students. Therefore, our ongoing discussions led us to more systematically observe Rebecca's classroom through an action research process. The purpose of the study was to help Rebecca learn how to value her students' reading behaviors and help her students learn how to revalue themselves (Goodman, 1996). Specifically, the study addressed how varied and ongoing assessments might shift the culture and conversations in the classroom from one largely focused on accuracy to one focused on meaning.

Situating Models of Assessment

The accuracy of a student's oral reading ability is usually formally assessed during a timed oral reading of text that is specifically designed for assessment purposes (Theurer, 2011). During these assessments, the teacher marks an error when the reader's response (what the child says) is different from the expected response (what is in the printed text). The teacher then determines the student's reading level by calculating the percentage of errors the student made. In this assessment model, errors are weighed equally and do not take into account whether or not the error was meaningful.

> Under most guidelines, all miscues carry equal weight, whether the miscue changes the meaning of the text significantly (e.g., substituting *sentences* for *scents*), moderately (e.g., substituting *desserts* for *doughnuts*), very little (e.g., substituting *the* for *a*), or not at all (e.g., substituting *mommy* for *mom*) (Halladay, 2012, p. 57)

Betts (1946) published accuracy guidelines for determining independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels. His scales posit that independent reading levels are met when a student performs an oral reading event with at least 99% accuracy. Instructional levels are met when a student reads aloud with between 95% and 99% word accuracy. Ideas about using percentages of word accuracy in oral reading to assign students' reading levels have not changed in recent years. The Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark

Assessment System (2011) (BAS), for example, uses the following criteria for assigning reading levels for intermediate and middle grade readers (Levels L-Z, Grades 3-8):

- Independent: 98-100% word accuracy with 70-100% comprehension
- Instructional: 95-97% word accuracy with 70-100% comprehension, or 98-100% word accuracy with 50-60% comprehension
- Frustration: Below 95% word accuracy with any score for comprehension

In addition to the BAS, numerous other reading assessments utilize oral reading accuracy as an indicator of reading success and ability. While accuracy is certainly necessary to some extent for reading comprehension to take place, 100% accuracy during an oral reading experience is not. In fact, a misconception exists that implies comprehension automatically results from accurate reading. Accuracy models of assessment tend to ignore the fact that high-quality miscues do not prohibit readers' ability to understand what they read. According to Halladay (2012), "the paired criteria for decoding accuracy and comprehension rest on the assumption that the two standards will generally be achieved together. In other words, the reading levels assume that accurate oral reading and good comprehension typically go hand in hand" (p. 55). Additionally, Goodman (1996) asserts that "most readers self-correct only those miscues that are disruptive to reading and do not usually self-correct predictions that make sense as the reader is constructing meaningful text" (p. 602).

Many American teachers are mandated to assess students using a universal screener for reading proficiency. Students who do not meet benchmark criteria on these screeners are then assessed using an additional tool. Students are not ignorant to the fact that when they are pulled for more "tests" it means that they did not do something right the first time. Students who are assessed repeatedly tend to perceive themselves as having some sort of reading deficiency. "Struggling readers have been evaluated often and they believe that such experiences are to let them know what their problems are" (Goodman, 2008, p. 8). Miscue analysis coupled with Retrospective Miscue Analysis offers a chance to help these students perceive themselves as readers in a different way—focusing on what they do well as they read.

Miscue analysis, then, sits in contrast to the accuracy models of assessment described above. First, reading miscue analysis is grounded in the belief that students use multiple strategies simultaneously throughout the reading process. Therefore, in miscue analysis what would typically be considered an *error* in oral reading accuracy is termed a *miscue* instead. This is because the term *error* indicates a mistake that needs to be corrected, whereas *miscue* indicates that students are making meaning while reading texts.

Miscue analysis is theoretically guided by psycholinguistic principles in that

Psycholinguistic Theory argues that readers use their knowledge about language, and the world in general, to drive their thinking as they engage in the reading process. The theory suggests that as they read, readers make predictions about what the text will say based on their knowledge in these areas. (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, p. 58)

Within the Reading Miscue Inventory frame, all of the miscues made by a student during an oral reading event can be analyzed, allowing the teacher to code each in terms of syntactic and semantic acceptability. This information can be utilized when developing lessons tailored to the specific needs of an individual student or group of students. The information is also highly valuable when determining the benchmark reading level of students.

Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) can function both as an assessment tool as well as an instructional approach. During RMA, teachers have the opportunity to share their analysis of a student's reading with the student. After teachers have analyzed their students' miscues from oral reading events and developed instruction based on this data, teachers can meet with students to discuss what they do while they read. Students revisit portions of the original oral reading experience to gain insight into the kinds of miscues they make while reading. This insight is usually very valuable to readers who teachers have labeled as "struggling," in that they are able to see that not all miscues during their reading should be considered unacceptable.

RMA sessions should not only include a discussion of student's miscues, but also a follow-up strategy lesson that is based on individual need. "For the purpose of informing instructional practice, the teacher may then look for patterns in these mismatches to disclose what readers know about… language cueing systems" (Moore & Aspegren, 2001, p. 494). At times, teachers tend to teach reading strategy lessons to entire groups of students that may or may not need practice with that particular strategy. Handsfield and Jimenez (2009) point out that "different children may find different strategies useful at different times. To require that all students make connections at one moment negates these differences" (p. 179). Participation in and instruction using RMA virtually guarantees that students are receiving instruction in reading strategies that are relevant and worthwhile for them to learn and practice.

Further, "RMA research has proven that when readers talk about and reflect on their personal reading style there is a direct positive impact on reading ability"

(Theurer, 2010, p. 63). RMA can work in a collaborative setting as well. During Collaborative Retrospective Miscue Analysis (CRMA), students work in small groups to help each other reason through miscues. A single student may volunteer to share a portion of his or her oral reading with the group while the others listen and follow along with the text. Goodman (1996) suggests that RMA "is especially supportive of students revaluing themselves when two or more readers participate" (p. 604). Through CRMA, students can take on the role of the teacher for each other, asking questions about what caused readers to make specific miscues in their reading and offering suggestions in a common language along the way.

Setting the Context

The school district in which Rebecca works mandates that all students be formally assessed for independent and instructional reading levels using the BAS (2011). Additionally, teachers must assess students with this tool three times throughout the school year. The data gathered from these assessments is analyzed at the school, grade, and district levels to help determine reading instructional strategies and groupings for students at all grade levels. The school and the district do not collect or analyze other data from teachers in their determination of a child's reading ability. The BAS requires teachers to view all miscues as errors and to code each error individually in order to obtain a word-reading accuracy score for each student.

Rebecca's school, Boyer Elementary School (pseudonym), is located in a Midwestern town of about 120,000 people. The town is primarily middle class and is the home to two universities. Boyer Elementary is a public school that serves kindergarten through fifth grade students. There are four class sections at each grade level and a population of around 650 students. Rebecca's fifth grade classroom served as the setting for the current study. Twenty-eight students participated, including 16 boys and 12 girls. Four students (three boys and one girl) have specific learning disabilities with individualized learning goals for reading and math. One female student in the class is gifted, and two other students (one boy and one girl) are currently applying to receive gifted education services. The cultural population of this class is 75% Caucasian, 11% African American, and 14% Asian.

During the six weeks of data collection, sources of information included the BAS assessments; marked typescripts of oral reading events and student retellings from selected readings; transcripts from whole-class, small-group, and individual

discussions and strategy lessons; and field notes of observations from individual reading conferences and group discussions. Because BAS is the mandated assessment for the entire district, we chose to use this data as a baseline for students' reading ability as viewed by the district and school. Additionally, all these data forms allowed us to determine the validity of assessments whose primary focus is accuracy and speed. For the purposes of this study, validity refers to the degree to which data collected from a specific instrument supports any inferences the teacher or school administrator makes about a student's reading process. In other words, what is the appropriateness, meaningfulness, and usefulness of the specific inferences made based on the data the instrument provides (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000). Magnitude coding (Saldana, 2013) and a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) of data analysis were used throughout the study to observe and reflect on changes in students' view of reading and use of miscue vocabulary.

Learning From Nate

Our observations and reflection began with Nate. Nate provided a good example of a reader whose reading process was going unnoticed because of a lack of varied assessments. Nate was an above-average reader in Rebecca's class. Scores from previous years on the BAS indicated that his reading instructional level was slightly above grade level. To establish a baseline level, we chose a benchmarking text that was three levels above his previously assessed level. As Nate orally read the text, miscues were noted on a typescript. Nate read the nonfiction selection with appropriate fluency, paying attention to punctuation and phrasing. Along the way, Nate stopped several times to remark about a new fact he'd learned and make inferences about the text. At one point when the text described the high altitude at which China had built a railroad, Nate pondered, "I wonder how high up the highest railroad in North America is."

When Nate completed the oral reading portion of the assessment (about one-third of the length of the entire text), Rebecca asked him to finish reading the text silently. When he finished, Nate and Rebecca had a conversation about what Nate had read. He was able to give information about key details, provide his own interpretations of the text, and utilize the text to provide evidence for the statements he made. For example, Nate was able to use his background knowledge to determine that the permafrost on which the railroad was built related to permafrost that "gold miners in Alaska have to get through to get the gold" (Bowdish, 2008, p. 4). Nate earned a perfect ten out of a possible ten points on the comprehension portion of the assessment. However, Nate

only read orally at a word-accuracy rate of 94%. Regardless of Nate's perfect score on the comprehension portion of the assessment, his accuracy score placed the reading level assessed at frustration. This frustration level is what Rebecca is required to record and report to school administrators for Nate's reading ability, even though she knows he is a capable reader.

Using Nate's oral reading responses, we analyzed his accuracy percentage based upon high-quality miscues. That is, we went through the typescript with noted miscues and analyzed them to determine whether or not each miscue resulted in a loss of meaning. It was determined after controlling for high-quality miscues from Nate's oral reading that Nate read with 99% "accuracy," using high-quality substitutions, omissions, or insertions—with only 1% of his total miscues resulting in either partial or complete loss of meaning (this occurred when Nate substituted an unknown vocabulary word, "rivets," for a non-word, "rivities").

Our reflection of these data prompted us to assess the accuracy scores from the BAS for the other students in the class. We found that 68% of the class made high-quality miscues during oral reading that resulted in partial to no meaning loss. Table 1 reflects the analysis of the participants' word accuracy percentages and comprehension scores both before and after high-quality miscues were analyzed and removed from word accuracy percentage calculations.

Table 1

John-Steiner's Four Patterns of Collaboration

STUDENT	BEFORE Analysis of High-Quality Miscues	AFTER Analysis of High-Quality Miscues
Nate	94% accuracy 100% comprehension Reading level: Frustration	99% accuracy 100% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Jack	94% accuracy 100% comprehension Reading level: Frustration	98% accuracy 100% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Derek	96% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Rebecca	98% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent	100% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Ava	97% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	99% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent

STUDENT	BEFORE Analysis of High-Quality Miscues	AFTER Analysis of High-Quality Miscues
Madison	100% accuracy 50% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: No miscues to analyze
Rajvir	95% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Rachel	96% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Heather	96% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Andrea	96% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Miranda	97% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	99% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Chris	96% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Alex	97% accuracy 60% comprehension Reading level: Frustration	98% accuracy 60% comprehension Reading level: Instructional
Michael	96% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Jake	97% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Meredith	98% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	99% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Dustin	96% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Elizabeth	96% accuracy 50% comprehension Reading level: Frustration	98% accuracy 50% comprehension Reading level: Instructional
Amelia	96% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	98% accuracy 90% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Connor	97% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	99% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent

STUDENT	BEFORE Analysis of High-Quality Miscues	AFTER Analysis of High-Quality Miscues
Laura	97% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	99% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Independent
Brandon	97% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Cindy	97% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Nick	99% accuracy 50% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Matt	97% accuracy 70% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Andy	99% accuracy 60% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Zach	97% accuracy 80% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change
Chad	99% accuracy 60% comprehension Reading level: Instructional	N/A: Analysis resulted in no change

While comparing these two sets of data, we noticed that a student scoring 94% on word-accuracy and 100% on comprehension is considered frustrated at the assessed reading level in the BAS system for grades 3-8. However, a student who reads with 100% word accuracy but only scores 50% for comprehension is determined to be reading at an instructional level. We also noticed that 68% of the students would actually be considered at a higher reading level (independent or instructional) if Rebecca were allowed to control for high-quality miscues before reporting their scores to the district. Finally, in our ongoing reflection and discussion, we felt that the most problematic observation from these data was that readers like Nate, Jack, and Alex were considered frustrated readers. However, we considered them to be among the strongest readers in the class.

With the mandated assessment, we knew that the readers in Rebecca's class might be learning that accuracy was more important than comprehension. We also knew that we wanted students to learn the difference between low- and high-quality miscues to make learning more purposeful.

Building a Culture of Meaning Making:
Learning From Each Other

After coming to the realization that students in Rebecca's class may be placing a higher value on reading with 100% word accuracy rather than on comprehension, we focused our instructional efforts on changing the culture of reading in her classroom. To alter the perception that good reading is perfect reading, we decided to explicitly instruct Rebecca's students in the language of miscue analysis, so that they could begin to value their own strengths as readers.

Whole-Group Instruction

We began this process of changing the culture through whole-group instruction. Rebecca focused mini-lessons on defining the terms "miscue," "substitution," "omission," and "high quality" to give students a vocabulary to describe more precisely what they were doing as readers. She displayed examples of students' typescripts on the white board and explained how each was marked to show what the text said and the response the reader gave. The purpose of these initial examples was to keep things simple at the start with high-quality miscues until the students understood some of the terms. Two of these examples follow.

                                                                      the
- *But now a new phenomenon breaches the isolation of ~~this~~ rugged terrain.*

   The
- *~~Its~~ outermost layer is called the crust and is made up of huge sections…*

As a whole class, they discussed the differences between the readers' responses and the text and determined together whether or not the miscues disrupted the reader's ability to make meaning from the text:

Rebecca: Why did the student substitute the words "this" and "its" for "the" in these sentences?

Ava: Well, it didn't really matter if they said "this" or "its" because it still makes sense with "the."

Rebecca: That's right! They're high-quality miscues because they don't mess up your comprehension.

After talking through several examples of high-quality miscues during the previous lesson, Rebecca developed mini-lessons to present examples of high-quality miscues that did not need correction but the reader corrected anyway. In some examples that were presented, the reader substituted an acceptable word within the sentence and self-corrected the miscue, as in the example below.

giant (self-correction)
gigantic (first response)

- *The International Space Station, or ISS, is a ~~giant~~ research facility now being assembled…*

- *…they have to examine the potential impact on humans, both physically and psychologically, of living in a space station* (Kees, 2008)

a

the

When Rebecca asked why students thought that they needed to correct a miscue that clearly didn't change the meaning of the text, Mandy responded, "Because you get a bad grade if you don't read all the words right." At this point, Rebecca was able to compare the students' previous discussion about the necessity of correcting miscues that do not disrupt meaning.

Throughout the weeks that followed, Rebecca invited students to discuss high-quality miscues that she unintentionally made while reading aloud to the class in order to analyze them for quality—did the miscue need to be corrected or not. Students used a shared vocabulary to talk about why Rebecca read contractions such as "wasn't" when the expected response from the text was "was not." This began to happen so frequently within Rebecca's read-aloud events that after one week of having students call out miscues, she had them indicate them on sticky notes to discuss when the read aloud was finished.

Occasionally, Rebecca intentionally made miscues that disrupted the meaning of the text she was reading aloud to her students. Conversations focused on the information students used to determine whether these miscues were acceptable or not. Students were able to identify the exact words that disrupted comprehension and were able to supply alternative words to correct the low-quality miscue.

Individual Instruction

After some initial whole-group instruction, Rebecca began to simultaneously instruct each of the students in the language of analyzing miscues for acceptability and quality. She met with students one on one during regular reading conferences to discuss their oral reading. During these meetings, students read aloud from self-selected books or guided reading books that had been previously assigned to them. She used the In-Process Comprehension Rubric (Wedwick & Urbanc, 2012) (see Figure 1) to analyze their reading, rather than complete a traditional running record. This rubric allows teachers to listen for miscues that result in a loss of meaning. By using this tool during reading conferences with her students, she was able to provide instant feedback about what they were doing as readers and direct strategy instruction based on their needs. At the same time, she was able to refer to the whole-group mini-lessons and use consistent vocabulary with students regarding their miscues.

In-Process Comprehension Rubric

Reader: _____ Date: _____ Grade _____

Title: _____

Does the sentence make sense the way the reader left it? _____

Yes _____ Total _____

No _____ Total _____

Number of Sentences Read _____ Comprehension Score _____

Divide total Yes by total number of sentences for Comprehension Score.

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Transitioning 3	Confident 4
Phrasing	Monotonic with little sense of phrase boundaries, frequent word-by-word reading.	Frequent short word phrases, choppy reading; improper stress and intonation that fail to mark ends of sentences.	Mixture of run-ons, mid sentence pauses, and possibly some choppiness; reasonable stress/ intonation	Generally well phrased, mostly in clause and sentence units, with adequate attention to expression.
Intonation	Monotonic reading.	Some changes in voice pitch/ expression that may not match the text meaning.	Appropriate changes in voice pitch/expression that reflect comprehension of text.	Appropriate changes in voice pitch/expression that reflect comprehension of text and add dramatic emphasis.
Miscues Omissions, Insertions, & Substitutions	Low quality miscues leading to a complete breakdown of comprehension.	Mostly low quality miscues that usually prohibit comprehension.	Inconsistent use of high and low quality miscues.	Mostly high quality miscues that show confidence in properly editing the text
Self Monitoring & Correcting	Low quality miscues are not corrected	Inconsistent use of correction when necessary for making sense.	Uses correction but may not recognize when it's necessary and when it's an overcorrection.	Consistently corrects only low quality miscues.
Retell	Fragmented and disjointed even with probing and questioning.	General retell with probes and questions, details and personal interpretation.	Acceptable retell with details and some personal interpretations.	Highly independent retell with details and high levels of personal interpretation

Fig. 1: Wedwick, L. & Urbanc, S. (2012). Assessment and instruction in reading in an RTI classroom. In Bakken, J. P. (Ed.). *Response to intervention in the core content areas: A practical approach for educators* (pp. 145–166). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.

Much of the one-on-one discussion between Rebecca and her students focused on meaning-making during reading, as well as the conscious act of monitoring understanding throughout reading. While students were easily able to monitor comprehension while listening to Rebecca or their peers read aloud, data acquired by using the In-Process Comprehension Rubric revealed that some students were not consistently monitoring comprehension during their own experiences reading aloud. During one-on-one conferences, conversations began to focus on explicit instruction of monitoring comprehension during reading. Rebecca tracked students' comprehension and meaning-making during the reading process and used that information to immediately show students what they were doing while reading. Rebecca met with students who were struggling with monitoring their comprehension two to three times per week. At each meeting, she collected information about students' reading on the In-Process Comprehension Rubric and used the data to instruct and set goals with these students. All of the data was kept in Rebecca's reading conference binder. We observed improvement in the comprehension monitoring skills of these students throughout the course of this study based on improved scores on the In-Process Comprehension Rubric.

Small-Group Instruction

Students continued to participate in regular reading activities such as book clubs and small-group discussions throughout this study. While observing students' reading discussions during book clubs, we noted that when students orally shared portions of texts they were unlikely to correct miscues that did not disrupt meaning. Additionally, students were more actively engaged in listening and following along as their peers read aloud sections of their novels. This was evident during discussions when students pointed out low-quality miscues to each other and asked their peers to reread. Students also began praising their peers for not correcting high-quality miscues during these shared reading times.

During one small-group meeting, five students seated around a table, who would likely be described as "struggling readers" by some teachers because they were not meeting grade level expectations on district-mandated reading assessments, engaged in a conversation that was not led by the teacher. The students fluently and accurately discussed "miscues" made during their oral reading. They described their choices when they made "miscues" and seemed to be using a shared vocabulary in which they explained their predictions and the acceptability of their miscues. We took notes and observed as the small group continued to discuss Jack's use of the word "mom" rather than the expected response of "mother" during his oral reading.

Alex: I think that's an acceptable miscue. It's high quality.

Elizabeth: Why?

Alex: Because "mom" means the same thing as "mother." "Mother" is not a word I would normally use every day. I would say "mom" instead. Plus, I can still tell you what the text means. It didn't change any meanings.

Elizabeth: You know, I think you're right. "Mom" is an okay thing to say there. It's acceptable.

These students have been instructed not to look upon the inaccuracies they make during their oral reading as errors, but rather as miscues. They have learned the vocabulary that is necessary to effectively and efficiently explain how they monitored their comprehension during reading.

Small-Group Instruction Extension—Cloze Procedure

Based on the data collected during independent reading conferences and an analysis of the In-Process Comprehension Rubric, we could easily recognize that a handful of students in Rebecca's class were consistently making miscues that demonstrated only partial semantic or syntactic acceptability. That is, students were making miscues in their reading that made sense either up to and including the miscue, or from the miscue to the end of the sentence, such as the example below.

> *when the*
- *Scientists describe the seismograph's measurements ~~with~~ numbers (Herenger, 2008).*

While the response of "when the" for "with" is not completely semantically or syntactically acceptable for the entire sentence, it maintains acceptability up to and including the miscue. It would make sense for the sentence to say, "Scientists describe the seismograph's measurements when the," and then go on to state when scientists describe the seismograph's measurements. In another example, the substitution of "in advance" for "is evidence" still maintains partial semantic and syntactic acceptability because the phrase "in advance of a major earthquake" could make sense in a different context.

- *Earthquakes over 5.0 on the scale can cause damage, while a measurement of 7.0 is ~~evidence~~ of a major earthquake (Herenger, 2008).*
  in advance

Because several of the students made these similar kinds of miscues in their oral reading, we wanted to try a different approach to evaluate choices they were making during reading. Linda had previously used a process similar to a cloze procedure, such as "The Reading Detective Club" by Debra Goodman (1999), to help students evaluate their word choices. Therefore, we flexibly grouped students based on similarities of their miscues to engage in a series of cloze activities. During a cloze activity, students are asked to fill in a blank within a sentence in the context of a full narrative. "A cloze differs from a 'fill in the blank' exercise comprised of isolated sentences in that it is a method applied to a passage, and is therefore contextualized" (Steinman, 2002, p. 291). Students must read the entire sentence and passage to select words that are missing from the selection. We were curious to find out if students who consistently made only miscues that were partially semantically and/or syntactically acceptable during oral reading would also choose words in the cloze activity that were similarly partially acceptable. Rebecca met with each of five students individually to explain the cloze procedure and how to complete the activity (see Figure 2). Students completed the cloze activity independently, and we analyzed their responses in a small group for semantic and syntactic acceptability.

Cloze Procedure

Name _____ Date _____

LANGUAGE ARTS ACTIVITY - Cloze

READ THE STORY BELOW. SOME OF THE WORDS HAVE BEEN LEFT OUT ON PURPOSE. FILL IN THE
BLANKS THAT WILL MAKE THE STORY MAKE SENSE.

Gwendolyn and Sharrie were about to take the _____ test of their lives. It was a long _____
test and they had to be able to divide a 4 digit by 1 digit number. _____ of them had been working
hard on this skill. Gwendolyn was _____ in Math and Sharrie was _____ at reading and
writing skills.

Their _____, Mrs. Lawton had worked very _____ to teach them this math skill.
Gwendolyn was _____ she knew how to do the problems _____.

Sharrie was a little _____ and hoped she could remember each step. Mrs. Lawton _____out
the test_____ and everyone was very _____. Gwendolyn smiled at Sharrie and
whispered " _____," Sharrie _____ back at her and went to _____ on her
test. The children had thirty _____ to complete the fifteen _____. Everyone was quiet
and were _____ on doing their best _____.

Soon Mrs. _____took up the test papers and told everyone to take a fifteen minute _____. She
would _____ the papers while they were gone. Mrs. Lawson came outside and called the students
_____ the classroom. She had a big _____ on her face and started to call each student's
_____ to pick up their papers. Sharrie's name was _____ third.

She went to _____ her paper and looked down at the _____ on the top of the _____.
It was an _____ and a comment was _____ by Mrs. Lawson with a big smiling face on it.
Sharrie could not believe she had _____ an A. Gwendolyn's name _____ called fifth. She walked
slowly up to _____ her paper from Mrs. Lawson. There at the _____ of the page was a big red
_____. Gwendolyn almost _____ all the way back to her _____.

She knew she was _____ at division, she just couldn't believe she didn't miss a single problem.
School was _____ for the _____ of the day.

Fig. 2: Example of a cloze passage used to determine students' use of semantically and syntactically
acceptable substitutions

As it turned out, each of the five students who completed the cloze activity
demonstrated a similar pattern of substituting partially semantically and syntactically
acceptable words in at least two of their responses. Below are examples of students'
responses that demonstrate partial semantic and syntactic acceptability (words and
phrases supplied by students are underlined):

- Sharrie <u>turned</u> back at her.
- Mrs. Lawton passed out the test and everyone was very <u>nice</u>.
- She went to get her paper and looked down at the <u>test</u> on the top of her paper.
- Gwendolyn almost <u>dropped </u>all the way back to her seat.
- Sharrie smiled back at her and went to <u>take</u> on her test.
- She walked slowly up to <u>the teacher</u> her paper from Mrs. Lawton.

   Obviously, students used prediction strategies to fill in blanks. However, they were clearly not actively monitoring comprehension throughout the entire passage. This group of students participated in a CRMA focusing specifically on those miscues that resulted in only partial semantic or syntactic acceptability:

Rebecca: I noticed that lots of you were doing the same things as you read. You're making good choices, but you're only reading part of a sentence and filling in a blank. It's making sense up to that part, but not all the way through the whole sentence. Can you find an instance on your sheet where you did that?

Chris: I put, "She went to <u>pick</u> her paper and looked down at the grade."

Rachel: Why did you pick the word pick, Chris?

Chris: I think I probably meant "pick up."

Ava: I did one that said, "Gwendolyn almost <u>got</u> all the way back to her <u>eyes</u>."

Jack: Well, we could say, "Gwendolyn almost got all the way back," and that would make sense! But, eyes? That doesn't work. Why did you pick eyes?

Rachel: I think she picked eyes because maybe it's because her eyes were looking at the A.

Ava: Yeah! Her eyes were looking at the A.

What Did We Learn?

Based on all of the instruction surrounding miscue analysis that happened in Rebecca's classroom, we learned that students could benefit from explicit instruction in the language of miscue analysis. We learned that students could learn and use the vocabulary of a reading process focused on comprehension rather than word accuracy. We learned that students could actively monitor comprehension while reading by recognizing whether a miscue was high or low quality. We learned that a vast majority of the students in Rebecca's class were more capable readers than the mandated assessment suggested.

By listening to discussions that students had during small-group meetings, in book clubs, and in one-on-one reading conferences, we began to notice a shift in the reading culture of this group of students. Students began to listen for meaning, rather than mistakes during oral reading events. They were actively discussing whether or not substitutions, omissions, or insertions during reading were acceptable based upon whether or not they disrupted comprehension, rather than on whether the exact words were found in the text. Students began to understand that the most important aspect of reading is comprehension, not accuracy of oral reading.

Finally, we learned the value of engaging in action research to improve one's practice. It was through systematic observation and the subsequent reflection of these data that guided Rebecca's instructional decisions. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) define teacher research as intentional, systematic inquiry that helps to privilege the teacher's voice and point of view (Pappas & Tucker-Raymond, 2011). For Rebecca, engaging in a cycle of observation, reflection, and action allowed her to trust her professional judgment and to develop a habit of inquiry.

Where Do We Go From Here?

By virtue of being a self-contained elementary classroom teacher, one-on-one time to complete traditional in-depth Reading Miscue Inventory was limited. We elected to use data gleaned from the BAS because we were concerned about having enough instructional time to collect adequate data on students to analyze for our action research since the school was mandating this particular assessment system. However, we believe that the use of the mandated benchmark assessment for analysis in our

research provided us with valuable insights, along with the other assessments we used, into determining the actual instructional and independent reading levels for each of the students. This inquiry experience allowed Rebecca to value the importance of varied assessments when helping students improve their learning.

Further, even though Rebecca firmly believes in the consideration of high-quality miscues when calculating a student's word accuracy after an oral reading event, this doesn't mean that her school district will consider alternative and varied assessments to monitor students' progress. She is mandated to administer the district-wide assessment and to strictly follow the criteria for scoring these assessments as set forth by the publishers, which leaves very little, if any, room for her professional judgment. She, as well as other teachers in her district, is limited in making final benchmark leveling decisions based on her knowledge of students' reading miscues until her school district is exposed to the value of analyzing them.

The time limitations for this research study impacted our ability to recognize the long-term effects of Retrospective Miscue Analysis strategy instruction on reading comprehension and ability within a fifth grade classroom. While in the short term we were able to gain insight into Rebecca's students' thinking as readers, we were unable to ascertain whether RMA strategies will have long-term effects on the reading competency of the students. More practice and data collection are necessary to make generalizations about students' long-term reading growth based on these instructional strategies.

At the outset of this journey, we wanted to know if we could change the culture of an accuracy view of reading to one of comprehension. We approached this process through a series of whole-group, small-group, and individualized instruction. The goal was to establish a common vocabulary and to revalue the process of reading and the smart choices that readers make as they read. One of the most obvious influences for how teachers and students view the process of reading is the way in which some assessment systems value reading. We believe that Rebecca's school and district are similar to many other districts that use only one assessment to determine a student's instructional and independent reading levels and that consider word-reading accuracy the key factor of a student's reading competency.

As educators, we need to be sure to place value on our own professional knowledge of the abilities of each of our students. If we blindly follow the guidelines for reading levels that place a heavy emphasis on word accuracy in oral reading, we are not only doing a disservice to our students by not challenging them with texts that they

can ultimately read with a high degree of comprehension, but we are also missing out on opportunities to provide skill-specific instruction for individual students. Benchmark leveling systems provide these guidelines with which to judge our students in addition to our own professional knowledge, not instead of it. It is our fervent hope that students *make miscues* during reading. This way, educators will gain valuable insight into the cognitive functions that their students are using during oral reading.

Throughout this research study, Rebecca and her students were able to begin and carry on a dialogue about what they were actually doing as readers. Discussion about acceptable versus not acceptable miscues in oral reading took place on a daily basis as she met with small groups to discuss their strengths, conferenced with individuals and gave immediate feedback to students while listening to their reading, and instructed her readers in the language of miscue analysis.

What matters more in reading instruction of students: accuracy or comprehension? The goal of reading is to understand text, not to recite the perfect pronunciation of every single word on a page. Why, then, do some students believe that the expectation is perfect accuracy in an oral reading event? Why do some students believe that good readers know all the words? We encourage administrators to trust teachers' professional judgment to look beyond the assessment numbers—to allow an analysis of all data that informs teachers when determining the strengths and weaknesses of students' reading strategies. At the same time, we encourage teachers to not blindly follow the cut scores for independent and instructional reading levels. Instead, use the information that you have spent time collecting about your students to design meaningful instruction based upon the needs of your individual learners. You know them better than any publisher. Provide them with the reading instruction that you know they deserve.

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Teachers and Parents: Learning From Each Other Through Home Visits

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ABSTRACT

Using a narrative inquiry approach, the author examines how children, teachers, and parents benefit from the practice of conducting home visits. The author reflects on her own research and practice and imagines possibilities for enhancing parent engagement through home visiting. Central to this paper is how the knowledge gained from families through home visits can be used to enrich curriculum and create an inclusive learning environment in the classroom. Suggestions on how to help break down the barriers teachers and administrators face in planning for and conducting home visits are discussed.

Why Home Visits?

Research demonstrates the positive impact parent engagement has on student learning and other educational outcomes (Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 2005; Jeynes, 2005; Redding, Langdon, Meyer, & Sheley, 2004). With more immigrants moving into Saskatchewan communities, and increasing First Nations, Métis, and Inuit (FNMI) student enrollment, it is imperative that educators work to provide high quality education for all students. Increasing parent engagement within a school can assist in providing the best possible chance for all students to achieve greater success at school (Jeynes, 2005). It is through positive encounters that teachers and parents begin to form a relationship built on mutual trust. Parents are placing their confidence in us as educators with their precious children and believe in our abilities to do what is best for them. When we take

the time to meet with them and listen to their stories, we show parents that we care about their children.

My research began with a review of the literature. I asked myself what is parent engagement? Parent involvement, common within schools, includes asking parents to act as a volunteer, birthday baker, play dough maker, chaperone, and so on, where parents are "serving only the school's agenda by doing the things educators expect them to do" (Pushor, 2010, p. 9). I learned that parent engagement, in contrast, is reciprocal—a partnership—where educators work alongside parents to enhance teaching and learning for children (Pushor, 2010). Parents are asked to "share their knowledge with teachers as together they make decisions about children's programs, the homework policy, the school's continuous improvement plan, or classroom curriculum delivery" (p. 9). The educator is not placed above the parent in a relationship such as this, positioned as expert knower of children, teaching, or learning. Instead, what the parent knows and what the teacher knows are both used in the schooling of a child.

> It's not that family involvement is bad. Almost all the research says that any kind of increased parent interest and support of students can help. But almost all the research also says that family engagement can produce even better results—for students, for families, for schools, and for their communities. (Ferlazzo & Hammond, 2009, as cited in Ferlazzo, 2011, p. 12)

As I entered into my own research, I found it important to differentiate between the two concepts because parent involvement does not require the educator to work collaboratively with parents. Further, it is parent engagement that leads to greater student success. Jeynes (2005) discovered, "Parental expectations and style may create an educationally oriented ambiance, which establishes an understanding of a certain level of support and standards in the child's mind" (p. 262). When children understand that their parents and their teachers believe they can achieve great success in school, it helps children to succeed.

Educators' assumptions and beliefs about families and students can be detrimental to a child and family's school experience. When we as educators place ourselves above students' families and judge them from what we have heard, we create deficit thinking about a family without really getting to know them. Flessa, Gallagher-Mackay, and Ciuffetelli Parker (2010) explained, "Deficit frameworks about families typically take the form of unsubstantiated assertions about families' supposed lack of interest in their

children's education or lack of support for school-based goals and priorities" (p. 11). When educators act as the professionals who have the answers, voices of students and families are silenced.

Through my studies, I came to understand that when we reach out to a family and learn their true story, we can become a partner. All families love their children and truly want the very best for them. When we treat a family with respect and honour what they know about their child and what they have to say, we help them to become the best they can be.

> Regardless of income level or education background, all families can—and do—support their children's success… When schools engage families in ways that are linked to improving learning, students make greater gains. When families are engaged in positive ways, rather than labeled as problems, schools can be transformed from places where only certain students prosper to ones where all children do well. (Henderson, Mapp, Johnson, & Davies, 2007, p. 3)

Where all students do well. What a terrific statement. If every school could help parents work to ensure all students do well, it would change the education system and our province for the good of all.

I began to look at my practice of conducting home visits with a new perspective. Home visits can provide a place for educators to begin to build relationships with all families.

> I can't think of an easier way to begin building mutual liking and respect than to give parents a home-court advantage. Bonds of trust begin to build the moment I walk into a parent's home and compliment his or her hard work in raising an amazing child…The relationship starts when I take that first step toward the family instead of hiding behind my classroom door. (Smith, 2013, p. 76)

Successful home visits occur when educators accept everyone despite how they may differ from the teacher or the hegemonic notion of families. "When one group or type seems to be implicitly better than another, it is what sociologists call a hegemonic construction" (Heilman, 2008, p. 9). Hegemonic notions can prevent educators from looking at family's strengths. Instead, if believed, hegemonic notions can blind educators from seeing every family's ability to support their children in their own unique way. Learning from parents' stories can shift or change assumptions about families and help educators see all families' strengths.

Home visits provide many benefits for the student, the parents, and the teacher. Meyer, Mann, and Becker (2011) outlined three key themes that arose in their research:

> …First being in the homes provided the opportunity [for teachers] to learn about their students' backgrounds and home life, offering clues to help explain student's behavior in school…Second, teachers felt like the visits provided a more personal and comfortable home setting in which to get to know individual children…. The home visits also created a potentially less threatening opportunity for teachers to introduce themselves, and establish a relationship with parents. (pp. 194–195)

The research of Meyer and colleagues (2011) showed that home visits improved student attendance, classroom behavior, and academic performance:

> The strongest impact appear[ed] to be related to teachers' perceptions of improved attitudes of both students' and parents' toward school, and the parents' attitude towards the teacher. Finally, results suggest that teachers believe, at least moderately, that the visits resulted in parents playing a more active role in supporting their child's learning. (p. 195)

This research helped me to fully understand why I believed in conducting home visits. When relationships are made with families, families feel safe and trust the school enough to share their stories. When teachers truly listen, we learn more and break down the assumptions and beliefs that can be damaging to a family's success in school.

Perspectives on Home Visits

Through a Child's Eyes

When I move backward in time, I recall bits and pieces of my kindergarten teacher's home visit. I do not remember particulars, but I can picture her smile, her voice, her laughter, and the attention she held for my mom, my little sister, and me. I could feel that she liked both me and my family; I remember liking her also. Later, on my first day of kindergarten, I was not afraid to go to school. In fact, my mother tells the story of walking me to school and thinking that she would get to bring me right to the kindergarten door. Instead, when we arrived at the school, I turned and said, "You can go now mom, I can go in by myself." I wonder now if it was that initial home visit that made me feel so comfortable and confident at such a young age of not yet five.

Through a Teacher's Eyes

When I returned to the town I grew up in 22 years later to teach kindergarten there, I remember thinking that I could not learn anything from conducting home visits; I grew up in this town after all. However, because I still could bring to mind the feeling of my own kindergarten teacher visiting me, I knew it was an important piece of my job.

I was nervous about the format for the visits, so I planned every minute. I took ideas from other kindergarten teachers whom I believed had experience and knowledge greater than mine. I felt anxious going to my very first home visits. Would they be happy to see me? Would it be an uncomfortable setting for me? Would they think I was judging them? Would they be judging me? What if I said something wrong? What if the child did not want to see me? So many questions, so many fears. I determined one thing, however, I would place my focus on the child. The state of the house, the yard, the family make-up would not be important to me. I felt I needed to connect with the child and, if I did, everything else would go fine.

I now have conducted over 300 home visits in my 11 years of teaching in the small town in which I live. In the beginning of my career, it was the children who received the greatest benefit from these visits because I felt the children were able to make a connection with me. If there were tears the first day of school, I could distract them by asking questions about what was near and dear to them, "How are your pet rats, Tom and Jerry? How is your pirate play structure coming along? Did you go swimming last week?" These connections helped children know that they were cared about in my classroom, that they were important to me, that school was a safe place with this new person, their kindergarten teacher. "When teachers take time from their busy schedules and familiar school environment to visit a student's home, this further demonstrates that teachers really care" (Meyer et al., 2011, p. 192). I have never once needed to use a name tag for children on the first day of school, for visiting at least a half an hour or more with each of my students at their homes prior to school starting made their individual names and personalities unforgettable to me. When do we as teachers ever get to spend an entire half an hour with each of our students and their family? It was as I grew older and gained more experience that I learned about the benefits of home visiting for me as an educator.

Home visits taught me a whole story about a child. I was able to see first-hand how a child's reality was lived each day. I was then able to make adjustments to our kindergarten curriculum based on what I perceived their needs to be. Perhaps a child needed more space or time alone. Perhaps some needed more attention, more enrichment, a focus on science or music, or learning opportunities more inclusive

of their culture or religion. I was able to take what I learned from my visits and enrich our classroom with authentic, meaningful activities. When we as teachers know more about our students, we are able to meet their needs and teach the whole child with compassion and greater understanding.

Learning From a Parent

The first time I went to Cassandra's[1] house I was incredibly curious because Cassandra and I had attended school together but we were never close. Although we grew up in a very strong Mennonite community, I was not Mennonite. Her family religion and culture was different than mine. I wondered what I would learn from the home visit. I had many preconceived notions about this family. I had heard from other educators that they did not value education; among other assumptions as well, this statement made me the most nervous. How would I be accepted, as the teacher, even though I was someone Cassandra knew years ago? Armed with stories, our classroom mascot stuffed animal, a craft, a book for the child, and my camera, I took the familiar bus route to her place, past the farm where I grew up, to see her son.

When I think back to that first visit with Cassandra, I can recall a neat, comfortable, large older home that was at that time being renovated. It was moved onto a field surrounded by a large garden, pasture, and grain fields. When I knocked on the door, Cassandra answered, we smiled at each other but did not say much. I cannot remember clearly but I imagine I talked too much; I usually do when I am nervous. She led me into her living room where we sat down together to meet her son, Jacob. I read him a story, invited him to complete a craft, talked with him about what we would do in kindergarten, and admired the pretty little baby by Cassandra's side, and the little toddlers who quietly watched our visit with curiosity. Once I completed everything on my agenda and asked Cassandra if she had any concerns, I was off to the next house. I had a schedule to keep and I did not want to be late for any visits.

In my mind, the visit was a success and, perhaps it was, because I was invited to return many times to meet siblings in the years to come. I have visited this home six times, and have learned so much from the family about who they are, and what they believe and value. My home visits with Cassandra became more relaxed as the years went by. I knew what to expect, and I am certain she did as well. Near the end of my Master's degree, I began to think about what parents thought about home visits. Were the changes I was making to this practice effective for them? Were the parents noticing the changes to my practice and did they think they were positive changes? I decided that I wanted to pursue this topic in my Master's project through a narrative

inquiry. I wanted to conduct recorded conversations with a parent to learn about her experiences with my home visits, to hear her perspective.

Through a parent's eyes. During my research, Cassandra stated, "Yeah you are more relaxed with your visits; it's not as (looking at her watch) okay now it's time to do this next part. Yes definitely, [more relaxed] now it's okay, well you have a question, we'll talk about that instead" (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014). Over time, my focus shifted from what I wanted to accomplish for myself as teacher to what the child needed and wanted in the moment. I learned that the home visits were not about serving my needs but the needs of the child and the family. My needs became secondary and, because of this change, I gained understanding. I learned more about families and the child through giving up control of the visits.

With new understanding of the family, I realized that what I had heard from my teaching colleagues and what I had believed about this family previously was not truth. It was the teachers' story of the family (Huber, Graham, Orr, & Reid, 2010). Huber et al. (2010) explained:

> *Stories of families* are composed around dominant cultural, institutional, and social narratives; they are stories often experienced or told to individuals or families when they are seen by members outside of the family to be living in ways that conflict with dominant narratives. (p. 80)

Educators sometimes base their opinions about families on what colleagues or community members have told us. This is an unfair and unjust way to teach a child. Home visits help teachers "reinvisio[n] parents as caring experts on and active participants in the lives of their children" (Allen et al., 2002, p. 318). When we reach out to a family and learn their family story, their own intimate, knowing, and complex story of themselves (Huber et al., 2010) as they are living out their hopes and dreams, we can become partners. In this way we can reject the stories of families and accept the families' stories (Personal communication, D. Pushor, July 2014).

It was through our home visits that I learned that Cassandra's family valued education in many ways. Their children learned about the land by helping garden. They learned about taking care of animals because they took care of their cows, a pig, horses, and many dogs. They learned from their Bible every day through prayer and study. Such an education, learned in the home, is different from what a child learns through his/her formalized schooling. Both what is learned at home and what is learned at school contribute to a child's education, both are important and make up the child's education as a whole individual. Pushor (2013) explained:

> Our role as teacher, in this view of schooling as a support to a child's education, becomes one in which we walk alongside parents for the time we are with them to support them in achieving their life's work for their child. (p. 9)

Schooling is one form of education, however it does not include the entire learning in a child's lifetime of knowledge attainment. When a teacher truly believes this, she can begin to weave together a curriculum that supports learning from the home as well.

I also learned that this family, although different in religion and culture from me, was really not that different from my own family. Just as my family did, they valued hard work and working together to get farm work done. They had fun together. They talked of fishing trips to the lake and, like my husband and me, the parents worked hard to teach their children about their religion. Faith and attending Church was important to them. I came to understand that their children needed to attend their Church's extra sacred holidays because it helped form their identities. It was not that the children were absent from school because the family did not value education. As educators we often assume that when children miss school to attend a Church or family event, it is a day of no importance, a wasted day. However, I began to understand, through listening to Cassandra in her home, that these days were important because they helped the children feel belonging, and identity, as Old Colony Mennonite children. To ensure their culture's survival, their children needed to feel connected to it; they needed to learn to value it too. Attending these events built fellowship, connections, pride, and love for their culture and community. I would never have learned all this through school interactions with this family. The home visits provided a different atmosphere, place, and feel. The focus was also not on many students but on one. These visits built trust between Cassandra and me and I naturally became a learner because of our many conversations together.

Home Visits Providing Reciprocal Benefits

When I asked Cassandra what she remembered about our home visits that was significant to her, she recalled:

> A lot of excitement, the kids were thrilled at the thought that *their* teacher was coming to *their* house to see *them*. Not coming to talk to mom, coming for *them*. That was very significant for my kids. I know a few of my kids you didn't teach [because I home schooled them] and they were very disappointed that they never had that experience. (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014)

A child's first teacher has the awesome responsibility of introducing them to the life of school. When the first experience with the teacher is a positive one, a relationship naturally develops. This relationship will support many aspects of a child's learning journey. Jeynes (2011) concurred, "The elementary school teacher, in particular, should visit the home of all of her or his students to be cognizant of each child's strengths and weaknesses and to build a partnership with the parents" (Jeynes, 2006, 2010a, 2010b, as cited in Jeynes, 2011, p. 12). When a child witnesses a trusting, respectful relationship between their parents and teacher, they too become trusting of the teacher and more comfortable with her or him.

Home visits also help the parents. As Cassandra explained, "Most moms are willing to do whatever it takes to make the child more comfortable because kindergarten is a huge step, whether it's your first or fifth [child], or your last" (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014). A home visit with the teacher can help a parent feel more at ease sending their child to spend many hours of their day apart from home with a new person. When I asked Cassandra how our home visits benefited her, I was awestruck at her answer:

It's made me more comfortable with teacher, parent, child interactions altogether because, like you said, we've had a relationship from way back and you do get preconceived notions. You become more relaxed when you come into my home as a, you come here as a guest, not a teacher… so I learned how to talk to you a little more freely and that has helped me with all the teachers. Just to know that, not to know because you do know that, they're people too, but to feel that a little more. (Recorded conversation, October 24, 2014)

The home visits helped Cassandra see teachers in a new light. She was more comfortable discussing issues with her children's teachers because of the interactions she had experienced with a teacher in her home. This learning was very valuable to me as an educator. I had not realized that our visits also benefited the parents.

It has taken me 11 years to realize that home visits not only benefit me, and the child, but they also can benefit the parent. Previously, when I would prepare for and conduct a home visit I would create an agenda for me. Now I wonder, why did I not spend more time attending to what was important to the parent? When I conduct home visits presently I continually remind myself to let the child and the parents take the lead, and I follow. In this way I hope that our visits benefit the parent as well. This is true engagement, where everyone benefits from the encounter. The conversations I had with Cassandra awakened me to this possibility. I wonder if other parents perhaps feel the same way.

Overcoming the Fears of Home Visits

For Parents

Parents often are not sure about agreeing to a home visit. They are worried about being judged as failing to meet an educator's standards of proper parenting. Cassandra spoke about that:

> Now I would say, it's not a big deal. Jennifer's not there to look at how messy your house is, she doesn't care about that. She's coming to make the kids more comfortable with her, and that's what I would tell them. I know the first year or two I was a little nervous too. I was like, "Oh my house!" I mean we were in renovations. Oh my goodness! When you came over you weren't looking all over the place, you were going in to sit down and do your thing….have fun. I was like okay, it's okay. (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014)

The family deserves to feel valued and important. As a teacher you are arriving as a guest in the family's home and this position changes the dynamic of the encounter. This is an important aspect of home visits. When a parent arrives in our classroom, it is our turf and we are welcoming them as guests; we are in control and it is our agenda that is being served. When we are the guests, the roles are reversed. What can we learn from the parents and family? What can they learn from us? Pushor (2007) explained:

> Being guests means learning about the community which educators are entering, spending time and energy to know the context, the history, the culture(s), and particularly the people who reside there. Educators as guests ask what they can learn from parents and community members about their children and about teaching and learning, rather than positioning themselves as people with expert knowledge to share. (p. 10)

When teachers practice the guest role, we then realize how to be a host when our children's parents arrive in our classrooms. We can welcome them in, and create time for important conversations about the children and their learning. The partnership that develops is thus richer and more meaningful for the parents and the teacher.

For Administrators and Teachers

Many administrators and teachers are reluctant to engage in or afraid of the practice of home visits. They feel that when it is not something for which the school divisions make time or allow payment, it is unnecessary. Furthermore, some administrators are

afraid for the safety of their teachers because, in some instances, teachers are visiting neighbourhoods in which the context of poverty plays out with high crime rates or other social issues. This assumption that homes and neighborhoods are unsafe is one that is worthy of challenge. In reference to our students' homes, Brizard (as cited in Mathews, August 18, 2011) stated, "Our students go there every day. Why can't we?" (n.p.). If our students' homes are safe for them, why are they not also safe for us to visit, especially when we follow well-planned protocols for home visits?

Teachers who are afraid of being judged, as I thought I may be, who are afraid of what to say, or of how to fill the visit up with conversation for a half hour can focus, as I did, on the children. When we walk through the door and listen unhurriedly to the child talk, it makes the child feel special and valued. When we share a bit of ourselves with the child and their family, it helps the family see us as a partner, a friend, someone who can be trusted. I have found that no matter how anxious I was about the visit, when I gave my attention to the child the visit went well. Almost every child will speak of the home visit at some point in our year together. "Remember, Mrs. Heinrichs, when you came to my house and we played with my kittens? Or, "… we went to see my new baby goats?" Or, "… we had ginger snaps and iced tea?" Or, "… we sat in my garden and you watched me do somersaults on the trampoline?" Anyone who has ever worked with a small child can attest to the fact that children long to share their accomplishments with important people in their lives. How great for teachers to be the cheerleaders for so many precious little people!

Visiting families in their homes can be extremely beneficial if educators approach the experience with care. An initial telephone call to each of the families is important. The teacher can explain s/he would like to visit in the family's home if they are comfortable. The teacher can also suggest to the family that, if they would prefer, they could meet at a nearby park, restaurant, or at the school. It is essential that teachers explain that the visit is focused on meeting the child and learning from the parent about their child in order for the teacher to teach the child to the best of her/his ability. The message that the teacher wants to portray is that the parent has the most knowledge of this child and is the expert; the teacher is coming to learn from this expertise.

Rose, a pre-kindergarten colleague, explained that she will always be an advocate of home visits because of her experience with one particular mom. This mom had a little girl who was experiencing difficulties in school. Because the mom did not attend parent teacher conferences, Rose decided to ask the mom if she could visit the family's home. The mom agreed. A very quiet, unsure, frightened mom became open, honest, and engaged in their conversation. Rose believed that this mom had a

history of negative school experiences and was not comfortable in a school setting. Differently, in her home where she belonged and knew safety, she was able to open up to Rose in ways that benefited everyone involved. Rose noted that it was often at home visits, rather than in school, that she learned the most about her students (Personal communication, October 2014). Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003) concurred, "The best way to communicate empathy for parents, and to keep the child in focus, is to mine the parent's wisdom about their child" (p. 68). When educators ask parents for advice and truly listen to their knowledge of their child, parents are pleased to share what they know.

Using Home Visits to Inform Curricula

Knowledge about families gained through home visits can then be used in the classroom to make curricular decisions. The teacher can ask parents to share their family's culture—a special dish for Chinese New Year, a jingle dress from a powwow, or a story read or told in class by a parent—ensuring that all children and families are reflected in the curriculum and that everyone is seen to be equally valued and important.

When resources only include the dominant culture and religion of a community, many children are unable to see themselves in the curriculum. When classrooms honour only families who are traditional or hegemonic in form, children from "other kinds of families" (Turner-Vorbeck & Marsh, 2008), or families who are not composed of a mother, father, and two or three children, will not feel valued when they are unable to see themselves in their classroom environment, literature, discussions, and activities. When educators truly believe in high quality education for all, they can work to provide the best possible chance for students' success and well-being by acknowledging and welcoming all families. Asking families to create a photo book about their family is one way to celebrate all kinds of families in the classroom (Eng, 2013).

When I visited each home this year I brought a small blank photo album to each family. I shared my family's photo story. I then asked each family to help the children create a story about their own individual families. I invited them to include pictures of everything that is important to the child and their family. Once these books were complete, we placed them in two special baskets in our reading corner. These little books are the books that the children read the most. I will often find two or more children reading together, talking about their families and learning from each other. The message we have created for my students is, *we are all important, we are all special,*

and let's celebrate our families together. Home visits can provide the teacher with essential learning about a child's culture or family which can inform classroom curriculum.

Learning From Home Visits About Parent Engagement

In our recorded conversations during this narrative inquiry, I asked Cassandra for input on my home visit practices and then I invited further input regarding any of my current teaching practices. She offered a few wonderful ideas on how I could engage parents more greatly. In June, I invite new kindergarten children to visit our classroom for one hour. I introduce myself, read them a story, ask them to explore the classroom, and to play with the other children. Cassandra suggested that I include parents in the children's orientation visit in order to make everyone's transition into kindergarten easier. Picking up on her suggestion, I noted that I would like to have refreshments available and I wondered if I should also invite current kindergarten parents to join us. Cassandra thought that some current parents may come because "kindergarten is a big step for mom and child … most moms are willing to do whatever it takes to make the child comfortable" (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014). The parents with the past year's experiences of kindergarten could share with the new parents all they know about a child's first year in a formal school setting. Any questions parents are too shy to ask the teacher may be asked of a fellow parent.

Cassandra also thought that it definitely would be a good idea for me to visit a new child's home when they enroll mid-year in kindergarten. Reflecting on the home visits I have done in the past, I wonder now why I did not think to ask new families if I could come to their home for a home visit. Why did I not break out of the mold of only doing home visits at the beginning of the year when time and mileage is allotted? I had a young student last year who started in January. I did not ask to visit the home. However, this little girl and her family became our family's neighbours in June and, after many conversations together, we have become friends. Her father is Chinese and her mother Filipino. I learned that the father is Buddhist. He taught me some valuable, beautiful lessons on Buddhist faith, lessons that dispelled some of my misconceptions about this faith. Once again, I learned we are more alike than different, but if I had never engaged in our rich conversations, I would have never known. I just wish I had asked to visit with them when their child was still my student; I would have then had the chance to contribute my learning from this father and family to our classroom curriculum.

This year, in contrast, when a little girl transferred to our school in October, I immediately asked the mother if I could come and visit. I was surprised when she quickly responded with a yes. The relationship I had before the home visits with the child was definitely different than the relationship I have now. I believe that our relationship connected us more deeply and gave me greater knowledge concerning the child. I am now more privy to the child's strengths, loves, fears, personality, family bonds, and small triumphs. It is in their home that children are able to shine and their true spirit often is displayed. Sometimes classrooms can be difficult to navigate and a child struggles to let his or her true spirit emerge. This little girl has some social difficulties and yet I feel like I have patience with the behavior; could it be because of our home visit?

A final possibility for integrating home visits more deeply into my practice may be with having parent teacher conferences in homes rather than at school. I asked Cassandra for her opinion on this idea. She expressed that having parent-teacher interviews in families' homes would be a wonderful change. "If the parents have something that they would like to be brought up… they might feel more comfortable bringing up any small issues that they have if they are in their own home" (Recorded conversation, October 16, 2014). I just recently completed my November parent-teacher conferences and only two parents were unable to attend the interviews. Perhaps I should be calling these parents and asking them if they would prefer I come visit them in their homes instead of them coming to school? I wonder why the two families did not attend the interviews. Was it because of their large families and so many little ones? Perhaps there may be no one to take care of the babies if they leave and come to interviews? Perhaps they are not comfortable on the school landscape? I will only know if I call them and make the offer to come to them instead.

Closing Thoughts

My research experience has caused me to look at home visits differently. I understand that walking through the family's open door is the first important step to beginning a relationship, a partnership, and a team. Administrators and teachers who believe all parents, despite their life circumstances, hold knowledge that is important and essential in teaching their child will work to build a relationship with their students' families. Building relationships with parents and families is the starting point in making the school an inclusive, welcoming place where success can happen for all. Home visits provide a comfortable, safe, and familiar atmosphere for children to meet their teacher,

and for parents to begin to teach the educator about their child. When teachers truly listen to parents' concerns, hopes, dreams, and stories, teachers gain knowledge from the families' lives which they can utilize to directly benefit the student. The wealth of resources parents and families can offer is worth the time and effort it takes to create partnerships that mutually benefit all—students, their families, and teachers.

Note

1. Pseudonyms are used throughout the article to protect the anonymity of parents, children, and colleagues.

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Empathy in the English Classroom:
Broadening Perspectives Through Literature

Alanna Jamieson

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates a novel study of Dickens' *Oliver Twist*, used as a platform through which to discuss empathy and to promote deeper understanding with 18 grade eleven students in an English Language Arts classroom. Students' experiences, perceptions, emotions, and relationships as they read, discuss, and write about the novel were explored through the use of narrative inquiry. The data, gathered through interviews, classroom writing samples, and field notes, provided rich examples of empathetic responses and insightful thinking by students.

One of the more rewarding parts of my career as a high school English teacher is that it gives me the opportunity to connect and develop relationships with my students. I believe that a healthy classroom is fundamentally based on relationships. I also feel strongly that reading fiction can improve our understanding of others. Essentially, I believe that empathy lies at the heart of good teaching, just as it lies at the heart of the English curriculum.

Reading novels helps students connect with other people. Empathy is literally the experience of one mind learning to understand the thinking of another. When we respond strongly to a text, the emotional components of our neural maps become active, with neurons firing within the emotional centre of the brain (Jones, 2008). Reading fiction, therefore, can be a powerful vehicle to open up empathetic spaces within the classroom. According to Dolby (2012), the study of literature is an important component in creating compassionate citizens, as it allows us to remain ourselves while

living and learning vicariously through the lives of its characters. Greene (2000) similarly suggests that empathy is fundamentally tied to the imagination:

> [Imagination] is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called "other" over the years. If those others are willing to give us clues, we can look in some manner through strangers' eyes and hear through their ears. (p. 3)

The act of learning to consider the perspective of another, perhaps of someone completely different from you, is one of the most powerful lessons of the English classroom. It is an experience in which I endeavour to have all my students participate.

I believe that classrooms are built on relationships and empathy, on the dynamic that exists between teacher and student, and any learning that occurs (or fails to occur) stems from that affective relationship. To maximize learning, there needs to be both intellectual and emotional support; students do not learn when they are stressed, anxious, or feeling intimidated. Lending support to others can build confidence and promote learning. "Emotional scaffolding includes the gift of confidence, the sharing of risk in the presentation of new ideas, constructive criticism, and the creation of a safety zone" (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002, pp. 51–52). Therefore, good teachers understand that emotion is a central part of literacy, both in terms of developing classroom relationships, and also towards the books we read (Dipardo & Schnack, 2004).

Human beings are fully capable of seeing the world from another perspective, and of experiencing others' emotions (Dolby, 2012). While some students struggle with understanding others, my responsibility as a teacher is to try to help them improve in this area. Just as a teacher must learn to empathize with her or his students, all students should be given the opportunity to see through new sets of eyes. One of the most powerful tools teachers have in their quest to help nurture empathy in students is a variety of literature and the means to explore it.

Defining My Research Question and Theoretical Framework

According to Merriam (2009), teacher research derives from questions that challenge and perplex the mind. After more than 10 years of teaching high school English, in a diverse variety of settings, the one constant has been the number of students I have

encountered who struggle to read and write. My thinking about my practice usually boils down to some variant of how to better help students acquire strong literacy skills. My research, completed for a Masters of Education thesis, focused on identifying *who* is struggling to read in my class, *why* they are struggling, and what might the possible solutions be.

Merriam (2009) suggests developing one's theoretical framework allows one to interrogate the theories that lie behind our daily routines and practices. As a teacher researcher, I tried to identify "the lens through which [I] viewed the world" (p. 67). Upon reflection, I believe feminist theory is the philosophical underpinning for all of my work. I admired the attempts by other researchers to empower students and to value the knowledge and lived experience they bring to the study. As a result, I was very much interested in hearing the stories and representing the words of my students, my research participants. Narrative inquiry was, therefore, particularly well suited for interrogating my research question. Like Clandinin and Huber (2002), I wanted to "represent people, not as taken apart by analytic categories, but as people who [are] composing lives full of richness and complexity" (p. 162). As a teacher researcher, I wanted to use empathy to understand my students better, and to help empower them to become stronger and more confident readers.

The pervasive literacy vs. literature debate has been an ongoing discussion in my own high school and district, and beyond, for many years. I understand that as English teachers, it is important that we address our students' literacy abilities and challenges. However, I feel that one of the best ways to do this is to introduce them to texts that will invite them to extend their learning, and which have a significant amount of depth. As the teacher, one must provide scaffolding, and offer multiple access points into the text. I also feel strongly that students should also, simultaneously if possible, be independently reading texts of their own choosing. The skills-based approach favoured by many in my own district, which focuses on targeting and correcting basic literacy skills at the expense of the study of literary texts, is, in my opinion, too fragmented and regimental. I fear that a steady diet of this type of pedagogy would end up throwing the proverbial baby out with the bathwater, because I see deeper, contextualized reading under the guidance of a skilled teacher as the most logical approach to addressing literacy deficits.

Alanna Jamieson

A Qualitative Study in an Eleventh Grade English Classroom

Empathy is central to the kinds of teaching and learning that I both observed and participated in as a researcher in my classroom during this study. My research involved working with 18 participants drawn from my two grade eleven English classes to better understand their perspectives and the challenges they faced as the class embarked on and moved through a study of the classic Dickens novel *Oliver Twist* (1837-8). The thesis is entitled, *Which Boys and Which Girls? Seeing Beyond the Gender Gap in Literacy*, and examines how students' backgrounds, perceptions, and relationships impact their reading practices and attitudes during a study of *Oliver Twist*.

The study lasted six weeks, from April to June 2012. My 18 participants were were 16- and 17-year-olds, mostly from middle-class homes. Several had experienced challenges such as the loss of family members, being kicked out of family homes, living in a series of foster homes, and significant reading/learning difficulties. Despite these challenges, the students all shared a genuine desire to do well and to improve their literacy skills. The participants were further separated into two groups: I received permission to use the class work and writing samples of all 18, and then I chose four from this larger group to interview, with the hope of gleaning more insight into my research from the students' perspective. My data consisted, firstly, of transcripts from three semi-structured interviews with these four students, two males and two females, who represented a range of literacy abilities. These interviews were conducted for approximately 30 minutes with each student, at the beginning, middle, and end of the novel study, and were audio-recorded. I transcribed the audio-recordings, and I supplemented this data with field notes and work samples, including assessments, personal essays, and journal responses, from all 18 students who were participants in the study.

The data analysis process involved tracking an evolving set of themes which emerged inductively from the data, based upon my research question (Which boys and which girls struggle to read challenging texts and why?), but open to other directions as well. The analysis was an ongoing process, whereby I reviewed my notes and transcripts frequently, started a dialogue with the data, and noted my observations both as initial analysis and to generate a list of criteria I looked for in the next round of data collection. My themes or descriptive categories were initially quite fluid, but in time I was able to narrow down the number of categories to five broad themes (one of which was empathy) that seemed representative of student experience. Once I established this, I then added as much as possible to each theme, using a series of codes to make sense

of all the data. At this point, I was able to write the outline for my thesis. Ultimately, I looked for the best way to arrange the material into a narrative retelling of my findings (Merriam, 2009).

Since stories help us make sense of our experience (Bruner, 1991), I was interested in determining how students engaged with the story of *Oliver Twist* and I interpreted their responses to the text. One of the primary models of narrative inquiry I employed was Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, which "allows inquiries to travel *inward, outward, backward, forward, and situated within place*" (p. 49, emphasis theirs). This model gives narrative inquirers a specific set of parameters to guide one's thinking about the stories that comprise their research. These parameters include the three dimensions of the temporal, the personal and social, and the specific place wherein the research has occurred. Temporal issues are addressed by looking backwards and forwards; in other words, the researcher looks "not only to the event but to its past and its future" (p. 56). The personal and social dimension points researchers inwards and outwards; inwards towards an understanding of the participants' inner thoughts and feelings, and outwards towards the larger social context or environment of the study. The final dimension is place, which entails the physical setting or location of the study, or where the inquiry occurs. In part through the use of this model, the student narratives provided an in-depth perspective on the complex lives of my students as they engaged in dialogue with the novel, *Oliver Twist*, and in relationships with their classmates, and me, the teacher.

Literacy Strategies Open Up a Dialogue on the Treatment of Those We Label as Other

Oliver Twist is the story of the eponymous poor little orphan boy as he attempts to make his way in the world, in search of a home. Oliver was born in a workhouse, and as a young child was indentured to the parochial undertaker. To escape his poor treatment there, he runs away to London where he quickly encounters Fagin and his gang of child-thieves. Through abuse, heartbreak, and betrayal, the attentive reader is right there at Oliver's side. This seems to me the great strength of this novel: through a deep identification with and sympathy for the protagonist, the text offers us the possibility of opening a dialogue about the treatment of those we see as other (Greene, 2000). According to Greene, "we who are teachers would have to accommodate ourselves to lives as clerks or functionaries if we did not have in mind a quest for a better state of things for those we teach and for the world we share" (p. 1). For me, a large part of this quest involves using literature as a way to promote empathy and consideration of "alternative realities" (p. 3). In this section, I describe some of the ways I tried to create those possibilities.

In the beginning, I framed the novel with a guiding question: Do we live in a just society? I decided to focus on the text as an example of social criticism. To help with this, my students needed to understand some of the background of the time period (Jago, 2004; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). I accomplished this through an introductory PowerPoint presentation and supplementary readings. In my classroom, I approach novels as a new world that students must discover, a world that is entirely alien to them, and it is my hope that the background information will help them find their way and give them a frame of reference. *Oliver Twist* would make very little sense, for example, if students did not understand The Poor Laws, which established the unpopular workhouses, when Dickens is clearly attacking these new pieces of legislation that he felt blamed the poor for their situation (Smiley, 2002). In order to understand the biting satirical tone of the narrator, we discussed Dickens' background, especially the years in his young life when he was abandoned by his family and forced to work in a factory, as well as some of the history of the period. For example, we reviewed the solidly entrenched class structure of Victorian Britain and the gender roles of the day. We also studied the poem, "The Chimney Sweep," by William Blake, as another example of social criticism that looks at the poor in a similar way. Given the blatant injustices of the era, I sensed that student interest was piqued. They seemed engaged in the conversation, and there were many volunteers in our class discussions.

As we read the novel, I continually encouraged my students to make connections with the characters through a variety of close reading strategies. In addition to "front loading," a term Gallagher (2009) uses to refer to both activating or building background knowledge in students, I started the novel with an intense focus on the opening eight chapters, following Gallagher's advice to start with the "guided tour" and end with the "budget tour" (p. 79; Jago, 2000). The guided tour involves close reading, in-depth analysis, and the modelling of reading strategies. Once the students have an understanding of the plot and main characters, the teacher can then shift to the budget tour, meaning he or she can step back and allow the students to read more independently. In the opening weeks, my students were asked to read one or two chapters at a time, and we spent approximately 30 minutes out of each day's class analyzing their content either as a whole class or in smaller groups. Ample opportunity was provided for students to ask questions and seek help during these first eight chapters. I also frequently gave my students a purpose for reading. For example, I asked them to record one comment and one question on sticky notes for each chapter read. The next day, they had to sign up to share part of these notes with the class, and these formed the basis for our discussions. This strategy ensured greater reading accountability and it encouraged everyone to participate in the class discussion.

Once the novel was underway, I tried a variety of different strategies mixed with a great deal of group work in an attempt to reach all of my diverse learners. The group work activities were very popular, and I found that my students took them very seriously. I formed groups of mixed ability, ensuring I had at least one strong reader in each group. Students then remained in these small groups for the remainder of the *Oliver* unit, generally meeting once or twice a week. We set up focus groups to look at specific aspects of the text, we made study guides aimed at helping a weaker reader, and we created expert groups on characters where the groups created drawings, symbols, and analyses of their particular character (see Figure 1, below). We had been studying the novel for a few weeks when the character group work took place. A number of my students remarked that the reading had gotten easier, even some of the weaker readers, which supports Jago's claim that most students can read a classic novel with specific support (2000). I think the successful group work was part of the support for struggling readers: there were lots of access points to allow students to get into the book, and the smaller groups contributed to more active learning.
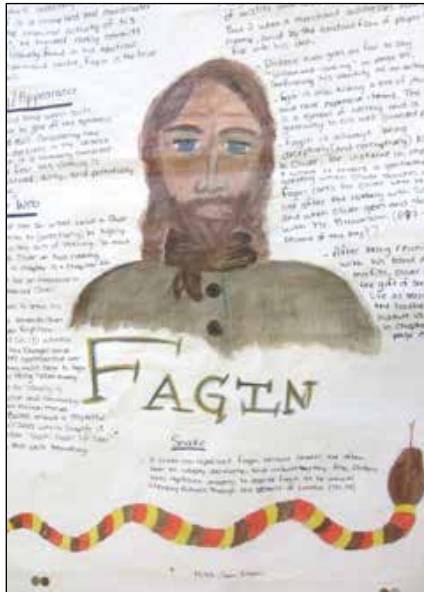
Fig. 1: Students' character portraits

The novel, *Oliver Twist* stirs many instances of empathy in its reader, most notably the early descriptions of Oliver and the other orphans. Just after birth, he lies struggling to breathe, all alone on a small mattress. His mother is dying, the doctor ignores him and the "nurse" is drunk. This is one of the many images of sadness and neglect that are common in the novel, and in some way make it the perfect vehicle to discuss empathy. When we read this and other scenes like it, I pointed out to my students that I felt Dickens specifically engineered this scene and others like it to create empathy in the reader, and that it would take a hard heart indeed not to be moved to pity by scenes like this. Feeling sympathy for characters is not something I had ever specifically talked about before with my classes. I think it was effective, because many of my students seemed engaged with the text, and they felt a strong connection to Oliver. According to Charlotte, he is "just an innocent boy who is trying to understand life, and along the way he is hurt and abused mentally and physically solely due to his social class, and I have a tremendous amount of sympathy for him" (Writing Sample, May 7, 2012).

Creating Deeper Understanding Through Empathetic Connections With Characters

Towards the end of the novel, I asked my students to choose both their favourite character and the character with whom they could most identify. The two most frequent answers were Nancy and Oliver. As mentioned previously, my students in general demonstrated a deep empathy for Oliver, and this connection seemed to help sustain many of them through some difficult reading territory. If readers have some kind of emotional connection, then the experience of reading the novel will be more meaningful, especially with a novel like this (Jones, 2008). Students in my classes particularly seemed to admire Oliver's resiliency, frequently mentioning that he holds fast to his morals, no matter how bad things get. Tracy described Oliver as being memorable "for his impeccable morals when put into situations with Fagin and the thieves. He is incredibly respectful and behaves himself, even when everything goes wrong for him. Something is special about Oliver that makes him likeable by everyone" (Writing Sample, May 3, 2012). For Isabelle, Oliver was her favourite character because

he has had a really horrible life and very few people have ever shown him love. Yet he's this sweet boy. He treats others amazing when they treat him horrible. He has this light inside of him, this undying hope that perhaps his circumstance will improve throughout the book. It shows strong character and that he is not a product of his environment. (Writing Sample, May 3, 2012)

Many other students echoed this admiration for Oliver.

Some students connected with Oliver because they had experienced personal difficulties in their past; for example, times they felt lost and all alone in the world. Bianca identified with Oliver because of his status as underdog. She said,

> I can relate to Oliver the most [of any character in the book]. We both want to do what's right and if we don't it kind of stays on both our consciences. He gets abused and I grew up getting bullied so I can understand his feelings better. (Writing Sample, May 3, 2012)

Similarly, Tracy agrees that "he has an extremely gentle manner, and I just feel so bad for the horrible things that keep happening to him" (Writing Sample, May 7, 2012).

Nancy is a controversial and enigmatic character, and she certainly held my students' interest. As a woman, a prostitute, and as someone involved with Sikes, she would have held very little power in the social milieu of Victorian London. She belonged on the outskirts of society, yet she was incredibly brave and self-sacrificing. Isabelle identified the most with Nancy because

> she takes what happened to her and uses it to help Oliver. I try to do the same. If I see someone going through a hard time, similar to what I went through, I usually try my best to help them. I feel like Nancy did this with Oliver because they were both found by Fagin at a young age and introduced to a life of crime. (Writing Sample, May 3, 2012)

Isabelle pointed out an interesting part of Nancy's personality. She was able to empathize with Oliver, it would seem, because she saw a younger version of herself in him. Nancy was able to put herself in his shoes, just as these students were able to do with this character. Ruth also identifies with Nancy, even though, she said

> I am not a prostitute, nor am I involved in any illegal activities; however, I still connect with her. She is a girl living in a man's world trying to be strong in the hardest of times. I am the only girl in my family, and know what it is to be looked at as a girl. I understand how it feels to try and find yourself in a strange world. (Writing Sample, May 3, 2012)

Ruth perceptively picked up on the fact that Nancy's gender is seen as a weakness in the world of the novel, and it would appear that she has had similar experiences

within her own family. The idea that my students can be so far removed from Nancy's character in time and circumstance, yet still see a part of themselves in her, is a great strength of this character-driven novel, and a good reason to include novels such as this in the English classroom.

Not all of my students, however, were so enthusiastic. One of my participants, Dylan, either could not or did not read the novel. He also showed no signs of empathy for the characters and seemed unable to identify with any of them. Dylan was the only student in both classes who would not open a book for the reading period, and he was also the only one of my participants who really showed no obvious signs of improvement as the year progressed. His blatant dislike (or fear) of reading caused me to believe he might have had some sort of reading disability. He had never been tested however, even though his father told me that he had always struggled with reading. Dylan was my reality check as I attempted to analyze my results. As positive as much of my research has turned out to be, it is exceedingly difficult as a teacher to reach out and help every one of the students in your class. For each student you manage to help, it seems there are always others for whom you feel you could have done more.

Of all the students I taught that year, Tara had the most in common with characters like Nancy and Oliver. She also struggled with literacy skills and was having difficulty in the course. Her story in the following section describes a student's experience while reading the novel, and illustrates the importance of creating the classroom space to enable students to connect with characters.

Empathy as a Path Toward Deeper Reading, and Vice Versa

Tara was a 17-year-old girl in my grade eleven English class. She was a quiet, unassuming student who was very perceptive, but lacked confidence in her abilities. The past year was very difficult for her as she had recently lost a sibling and was struggling to find a way to cope with this tragic loss. When I first met Tara, she entered my second semester English class with a failing grade from the first semester and a host of psychological problems she was in the midst of trying to overcome. Tara's story is told in her own voice and illustrates, among other things, how one struggling student discovered strong connections to the characters in *Oliver Twist* through empathetic reading.

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Tara's story.[1] The biggest difference over the years in English is that I read a lot more now. Last year there wasn't as much support and I almost failed the major paper. I just couldn't get into books; they seemed hard or else really bland. I never went on Sparknotes; I just kinda flipped through the pages and scanned everything. It was kind of like reading but not really. But I knew I had to improve my English mark and that I needed to be able to read, so I started trying to read more. I seem to like the more challenging books. I've always been that way: I am less interested in the texts from the first semester which were easier and I was bored in grade nine. Now I'm actually starting to realize what I was doing wrong in the past...I wasn't reading, and I wasn't really focused on the work.

I usually read before bed and during school. It is calming for me when I need time away. It's an escape. When I get a good book, I *love* reading. If I'm not feeling up to going to class because I'm so stressed out I'll just sit down and read. It's like a sanctuary; I'll just get into the book and forget about everything else. I always empathize with characters in books; I always put my life in their shoes. I like helping out people as much as I can. I tell every one of my friends, my cell phone is always on; I don't care if you text me or call me at two am, I'm up if you need me.

There is definitely value in reading a novel like *Oliver Twist*. The book is still relevant. I think of his life as how my life could have been. I'm able to put myself in his place and to experience his life. It helps me to connect to poor people and to see their life. There's a whole bunch of these things that are in this book, and they're still around, they're just not noticed as much. We still have a lot of problems to fix. But are we gonna fix them? I don't know. I'm enjoying the novel, especially the drama that's involved and how all the characters come together. And just the mystery of it. I kind of like his writing style; I mean, it's a little hard at points but I would read another Dickens novel for sure.

Oliver is my favourite character—point blank. He is lost in the world not knowing what to do, and I find this very intriguing. I wouldn't be able to do that; I would be changed. I would be devastated, my whole entire life would go downhill, but he keeps on going. I identify with Oliver the most because, although I have a great mother, my father is a drunk who doesn't care about his children as much as he should. I would say my dad is like Sikes. And my stepdad treats me like I am worthless, so I guess my points of view on life are the wrong ones. But even with everything that happens to him, Oliver is still such a caring, kind person who dreams to live a happy life. I have dreams, too.

I hope that Oliver's dreams will come true just like I wish for mine to come true. I want to live my life to the fullest.

Nancy's murder was an emotional part of the book, and I can't believe the detail put into it. I was shocked when I read it. She's speaking and she's begging him not to do it and he still does it. I don't understand how a person can do that. This chapter put a lot of feelings and overwhelming thoughts into my head, and it made me second-guess human nature because of what Sikes did. It also makes me think of today's society and all the men who have killed their wives or their whole family. Yes, in those ages, the men were always controlling and they could do whatever to their wives but I don't think it's changed that much. In the news right now, there is a murderer who killed his wife mostly because she wouldn't listen to him.[2]

Reading the book at home is really hard because I have so much going on. I have so much work for all my other classes and I'm trying to get all that done. At the end when I'm done all my work I want to go to bed, and I can't read because I'm too tired. The students who don't read the book can't understand it or they don't think they have time to do it. A big reason would be they just don't think they *can* do it. I didn't even know who Charles Dickens was before we read the book. I thought *this is a huge novel and I'm not going to be able to get into it and this is gonna suck because my final exam's going to be on it and I'm going to fail, like always*. But then I read the novel and I love detail, myself. I love putting detail into my own writing, so I really like the detail that he puts into it. Students are not prepared for books like this because of the novels nowadays, they're not as detailed, they don't have all of the things that Dickens put into his books. Today books are just all action or plot. That's why this book is really, really good. It makes you focus on the details. After I finished reading, I find that I'm focused more on my work. It's changed me.

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Finding Yourself in the Text: Delving Into Tara's Story

Tara's story raises many interesting points. Firstly, it suggests that it is never too late for reluctant or struggling adolescent readers to discover the pleasures of reading. Secondly, the story underscores the necessity of teachers providing students with time to read during the school day. It is obvious that Tara struggled with self-confidence and

feelings of anxiety. Building trust and relationships with her teachers has helped Tara see herself differently as a student. She is no longer someone who "will fail, like always," but someone who is capable of improving, of setting and conquering her goals for the future. She needed both support and motivation to improve her literacy skills. Using Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional narrative inquiry space model (2000), which includes the personal/social continuum, the temporal, and place, I delve into one moment from Tara's story in more depth. The point of inquiry is Tara's comment that she "always empathize[s] with characters in books." She goes on to say that, in this book in particular, she is "able to put [her]self in [Oliver's] place and to experience his life." Comments like this illustrate Tara's strong sense of empathy. Inquiring narratively along the personal and social dimension, Tara's strong ability to empathize appears to have helped her to connect with this novel, and with books in general. She talked of seeing many similarities between her life and Oliver's, and she was able to put herself in his shoes, talking about the characters as if they are real people. She made the connection between Nancy's murder and the many examples of domestic violence, which still permeate our society today, showing her awareness of the phenomenon of men who beat their partners. She even compared her father to Sikes, as he struggled with alcohol and apparently had a violent temper as well, so it is appears she was able to see herself in the text in many ways. Tara's reading of the text showed her ability to empathize with the characters, making personal connections to her reading, and to deepen these to construct social commentary on the issue of domestic violence.

In terms of place, Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) second dimension, I would say that our classroom became a tiny community during this novel study, wherein a space opened up which allowed students to experience these feelings of empathy. Tara also stated that the group work did help her tremendously when she was able to be there. Tara needed to feel safe before any learning could occur, and she found this safe space in the classroom, and quite frequently within the pages of a book. Temporality is the third dimension of the narrative inquiry model. Temporally, Tara made big changes on her own as a student over the year of the study. Ironically, these improvements came at a time of great trauma in her personal life. Before this year, Tara said she did not like reading at all. In grade eleven, starting with a novel study in the fall, she quickly developed a love and an appreciation for reading. It is incredible to think that a student who admitted she did not like reading one year ago could become so engrossed in *Oliver Twist*. I believe her strong empathetic side (and, perhaps, her increased sense of confidence as a reader) allowed her to connect with the novel in such a profound way. The importance of student confidence and motivation is one of the lessons I have learned from Tara's story.

Concluding Thoughts

Prior to conducting this research, I had not explicitly inquired into the value of using literature as a vehicle for opening up the possibilities of caring for one another in the classroom (Noddings, 2005). I knew intuitively that literature could do this, but it was something I took for granted. After completing this study, I began to see the possibilities of teaching a novel such as *Oliver Twist*, a novel very much concerned with issues of social justice and with caring for one another, as a platform through which to discuss empathy and promote deeper understanding among my students. In opening up spaces through which students could feel connected to characters, and simultaneously, could demonstrate their concern for some of the more marginalized members of our own society, I believe I helped the students see the author's purpose. It gave them a means through which to engage with the text, to achieve what Gallagher (2009) calls reading flow. In addition to caring about the characters, students must also see the point in reading the novel. They must both value literacy, *and* believe that they can improve their literacy. The relationships that have been established inside the classroom are essential to coming to a common purpose for reading. There needs to be a sense of trust between (and among) the students and me, their teacher (Dipardo & Schnack, 2004).

I think it is a powerful moment when a student, or indeed any of us, is given a window into another world through narrative. By inviting us to care about Oliver when no one else does, Dickens allows us a glimpse into an unknown time and place from the perspective of the most disadvantaged in society. In the current educational climate, where there is a push for texts to be relevant and accessible, I worry that we may not be allowing enough "windows" into other worlds (Jago, 2004). I believe reading *Oliver Twist* provided such windows for my students, and the students' voices as represented in this article are evidence of the need for close reading of challenging texts. In this novel study, students gained new perspectives through the power of story, the power of connecting to characters, cutting through the many cultural and temporal differences that exist between my students and those characters in a Victorian novel.

Notes

1. Tara's story was pieced together using interview transcripts. I interviewed Tara on three occasions: April 14, May 10, and June 7, 2012.

2. Tara is referring to a local woman who was brutally beaten and murdered by her husband in the community.

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Responding to Uncertainty: Teacher Educator Professional Development Through Co-Teaching and Collaborative Reflection

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ABSTRACT

This exploratory paper describes the collaborative planning, reflection, and teaching for two teacher educators in the process of professional development and acclimation to new faculty positions in a College of Education. As a result of intense and reflective conversations, they discovered a mutual interest in the writings of Schön (1987) and found that his work on uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict served as a useful heuristic for understanding their shared experience of co-teaching a curriculum course. Their experiences of reflection in and on action, and their subsequent commitment to changes in their practice as teacher educators, are told in a narrative format to help other college educators see the personal as well as professional growth and development that occurred for both.

Large class sizes are becoming more common at many universities and teacher education courses are proving no exception. The tensions between modelling best practices and managing a large number of students have become a very real challenge as teacher educators confront this issue in a myriad of ways at all levels. This may be perhaps more frequent among undergraduate teacher preparation courses. As two developing teacher educators, we wished to reflect upon and weave together our individual stories of collaboration in teaching, planning, and changing a course assigned to us as new instructors of a college curriculum course. This reflective narrative presents our unique experiences in which our pedagogical values conflicted significantly with the reality of a teaching assignment where

uncertainty was greatly present. We began our positions as new teacher education faculty at a public, regional university in a rural part of the south. Faced with class sizes exceeding 40 students in classrooms meant for 30, we took a risk by trying something neither of us had done before—combining our classes and co-teaching the course to nearly 90 elementary education students. We found ourselves in a place where "uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflict" (Schön, 1987, p. 6) permeated nearly each day of the semester as a result of several factors that challenged our confidence as teacher educators. It also, however, made teaching this particular course an opportunity for us to improve our own teaching practice. While the experience caused both distress and discomfort, it ultimately led us through an iterative process of collaborative reflection, which informed our active and significant professional growth as faculty. We were and are deeply committed to supporting our students' professional preparation while also enriching our own. In this descriptive study, we reflect on our arc of professional growth and the specific factors and processes that helped us respond to the challenges presented using collaborative reflection as the lens through which we saw each of these factors.

Teacher Educator Professional Growth

We draw upon the literature in teacher educator development and reflective practices to provide a context for our inquiry. Teacher educator growth and development emerges as educators actively seek ways to grow as professionals in their practice, both individually and as members of a professional community. This occurs in collaborative research (and reflection on that research), co-teaching, and individual and collaborative reflective practices. This development is often framed as a journey. This metaphor "reflects some of the joys and hardships that travelers [teacher educators] experience during their efforts to climb mountains, to cross borders and to explore new territory" (Swennen & Bates, 2010, p. 2) in order to grow and develop professionally.

Most teacher educators at institutions of higher education collaborate on research. Griffiths and Poursanidou (2005) detail their process of collaborative research in their efforts to teach social justice concepts to beginning teachers. They suggest that collaboration is a "complex set of processes" (p. 154) including: context, relationships, and institutional factors such as support at all levels including the department and program. Webb and Scoular (2011) reflect on their collaborative action research project and the ways they came to frame their work through discussion about the literature in action research and reflection. Co-teaching, though often mostly researched

at the K-12 level, is an emerging source of professional growth and development at the post-secondary level. At this level co-teaching manifests itself in a few different ways. There is the collaborative process of teaching the same course simultaneously, yet working together on content, integrating differing content areas into one course, teaching separate yet complementary content courses and teaching the same course and content together. Hug and Moller's (2005) research focuses on their collaborative work across two courses with shared assignments making connections between science and literacy. They detail the ongoing conversations as well as the personal and professional impact of learning together that lead to deeper understanding of teaching in an integrated manner. Similarly, Enfield and Stasz (2011) deliberately created an integrated course teaching math, science, social studies, and language arts methods with a common syllabus and common readings. The classes met separately and together at different times during the semester. In their study, Enfield and Stasz (2011) argue that co-teaching requires a creation of shared norms and common understandings. Ferguson and Wilson (2011) co-taught a reading methods course to 30 students in order to model co-teaching methods that the pre-service teachers were most likely to find in K-12 classrooms. The authors initially were stymied by issues of power and responsibility, but were able to develop and grow professionally and personally through the experience.

Reflective Practice

Reflective practices also offer a source of growth and development for educators. To improve one's practices as a teacher educator, reflection in and on action is a useful method of providing professional development for teacher educators. Minott (2010) describes his experience in "grappling with the daily challenges of teaching" (p. 325) and how reflection builds practical knowledge to improve teaching practices. Reflection on being a part of a community of practice and the growth that occurs within individuals and across the group has emerged in the literature. Gallagher et al. (2011) share their growth as new teacher educators through the establishment of a self-study research group. Barak, Gidron, and Turniansky (2010) analyzed their stories about becoming educators in an intensive program in order to understand the interconnectedness between the growth of the individual and the group.

While many theorists offer ideas on reflection and reflective practice, Donald Schön's (1987) work resonated with us because he addresses the problem for professionals of having to navigate what he terms "the zone of indeterminate practice" (p. 6) by challenging the traditional model of professional knowledge, and further to seek

"making sense of uncertainty, performing artistically, setting problems, and choosing among competing professional paradigms" (p. 20). For Schön an *uncertain* situation is problematic in several ways in that it lacks a technical solution and exceeds the bounds of professional understanding. A *unique* case is one that "falls outside of the categories of existing theory and technique" (p. 5) and therefore cannot be solved by simply applying some previous understanding, rule, or technical solution. The standard models present in professional knowledge would not suffice. Another key component of the indeterminate zone of practice is *value conflict*. In many situations there is a competition among values. In public schools, for example, there are current debates on the overreliance on educational technologies; this debate reflects competing priorities regarding funding, focus, and curricular decisions such as the choice to use student- or teacher-centered instructional strategies (Cuban, 2009). Uniqueness, uncertainty, and value conflict were important catalysts for our growth through co-teaching and co-planning, as well as collaborative reflection. We acknowledge that Schön is not without his detractors including those that offer alternative views on reflective practice (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Eraut, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). However, we feel that his work served as a useful heuristic for us as we sought to understand our shared teaching experience described in this paper and the issues of uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict that arose.

Gallagher et al. (2011) write, "Teacher education is complex work involving curriculum, pedagogy and research, yet most teacher educators are provided with little professional development support or mentoring" (p. 880). Often growth and development is secondary to competing priorities of research responsibilities, service requirements, and other teaching and workload issues. Despite these challenges, many teacher educators are still committed to professional growth through multiple experiences such as formal or informal co-teaching and other collaborative work with colleagues related to their research and/or instruction with teacher candidates.

While the research and theory on collaborative reflection for teacher educators is emerging, the related body of literature on co-teaching, collaborative research and reflection, outlined above, informs our work and is one in which we hope to contribute our unique experience. In using collaborative reflection to decide on co-teaching a large class of preservice teachers (89 students), our experience was less deliberate than for Enfield and Stasz (2011) and Ferguson and Wilson (2011), and was more of a collaborative response to supporting each other and providing our students with both our knowledge and expertise. This study is methodologically similar to Griffiths and Poursanidou's (2005) co-teaching experience in which we present, as they did, a highly reflective narrative of our experience.

Our Collaborative Reflection and Personal Growth as an Iterative Process

In this next section, we detail information about the factors and the process that led us to the idea of co-teaching and co-reflection as a means to address our own indeterminate zone of practice and then describe the impact of that subsequent co-teaching and co-planning experience on the students and our own development as teacher educators. Throughout this process, collaborative reflection as an active and fluid support for professional growth constantly informed all aspects of our practice.

Context, Relationships, and Institutional Factors: Telling Our Stories as Carrie and Nancy

Recently we, Carrie and Nancy, joined the teacher education faculty at a public, comprehensive university located in a rural mountain region in the southeastern United States. We now convey our story as two teacher educators who were each assigned a section of a curriculum class. We spent time over the summer meeting and preparing for the course. That year the average class size for the University was 19 and the student-faculty ratio in education programs was 13-to-1; over 82% of classes at the University reported an enrollment of 30 or less. Upon our arrival at the institution, Carrie's course had 53 students enrolled while Nancy's had 36 students. Although the numbers were a concern, we felt confident in the syllabus and activities we co-designed for the course that met once a week for 160 minutes.

One week before the semester, the course was changed by the department from two to three credits and the content expanded from an emphasis on K-2, primary curriculum to include the 3-6, upper grades, continuum. This sudden change in the course structure forced us to rapidly modify the course design to accommodate the expanded content. Carrie had taught a similar course as a graduate instructor and was able to offer relevant resources to address the content needs. During the first week of classes we met with our sections individually and attempted to implement our co-designed activities. Carrie was unable to fully complete many of the initial activities because it took so long to organize and hear from 53 students. Nancy's first class experience was similar. With nearly 40 students in a small room she had to find extra chairs so that students could squeeze around the tables in a room that was uncomfortably warm even with the windows open, which resulted in distracting street noise.

After the first class our confidence was shaken. Immediately after the class we met, since the sections met at the same time, and the frustration was palpable. Schön (1987) writes that it is usually a surprise that jolts us out of our routine response to our professional responsibilities. Carrie was overwhelmed by the sheer numbers in her class and wondered how she was going to implement best practices for teacher education with so many students. Nancy was also concerned that the physical space would prevent good instruction from occurring as group work or any movement within the classroom was difficult. She also felt uncertainty with the course content added just before the course began as she did not have prior experience with teaching upper grades curriculum. As collaborators, we sat down to discuss what happened and explore our feelings; we quickly realized we had no precedent knowledge from which to draw for the current predicament. This context was unique to our experiences and the departmental/institutional support shifted us to a place of great uncertainty.

In those moments following the first class, the uncertainty and value conflict in the zone of indeterminate practice was already present and we shared our concerns over cramped and uncomfortable classrooms that threatened the possibility for forming relationships with the students and creating a sense of community. We struggled also with the desire to make the class engaging and meaningful, one of the core values we both held as teacher educators, while also making it manageable. We felt this to be an unknown journey, but were grateful to have each other as fellow travellers in this unfamiliar territory.

Following the first class session our "knowing-in-action," the tacit knowledge of what leading teacher education classes like this curriculum course should be like, was challenged (Schön, 1987). In the days following the first class meeting, we drew support and strength from the opportunities to debrief with each other about the challenges we faced with separate sections of the course. We had already established a strong relationship by collaborating on the planning of the course and, as a result, had laid the foundation for the collaborative reflection in and on action that would follow.

Nancy and Carrie: Our Initial Response Supported by Collaborative Reflection

Schön describes reflection in action as the ability to "reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (p. 26). We had a week until our second class meeting and immediately began to think of appropriate actions to take in response to our situation. The first ideas were of a technical nature. To address Carrie's concern, we asked if we could even out the sections. We learned that of the rooms used by our department only one room (Carrie's) could hold more than 40 students. So Nancy wouldn't be able to take any of Carrie's students into her already crowded space. We sat in Carrie's office exploring possibilities that would help us address our concerns over the quality of the content delivery in both sections. In the midst of these conversations, it was clear to us that we had already relied on each other for creating and designing the content so perhaps we could rely on each other for delivering the content as well. Co-planning led us to the idea of co-teaching based on the strong collegial relationship we had already established. We decided to combine the sections and collaboratively teach this new section for the rest of the semester. Neither of us had co-taught a college course, but both of us realized that co-teaching was the best way to provide students access to both our expertise and for us to support each other. After gaining consent and support from the department head, we then asked the department office manager to find us a large classroom in another building to hold both sections. Our entry into co-teaching was a co-reflective response to uncertainty and in hopes of addressing the students' needs. We were excited at the prospect of overcoming the contextual dilemmas by relying on our developing collaborative relationship and on the potential growth we might experience as teacher educators as a result of this new approach. This excitement may have prevented some of the power issues that occur in other co-teaching descriptions (Ferguson & Wilson, 2011).

We Begin Anew

The second week of the semester, we met as a whole group (89 students) in a lecture hall in the adjacent sciences building. We were very excited to be co-teaching as collaborators and shared with the students our thinking behind, and rationale for, this combined section. Modelling collaboration as well as reflection in action, we felt, was an added benefit for our students as well as a "two heads are better than one" approach which meant that we could draw from both of our skills, content knowledge,

and experiences in teaching the course. While the physical environment of a theatre arrangement presented some challenges to class activities, we adjusted our design of the course and developed what we felt was an effective use of our time by instituting content presentation via lecture-discussion during the first half followed by group-focused "stations" for the last half of class which gave students hands-on application of the material presented in the lecture-discussion. After co-presenting content through PowerPoint, video, and print material, followed by opportunities for students to ask questions and discuss as a whole group, we split the class into three smaller groups and had each rotate through stations that were facilitated by both of us and Lacey, our graduate assistant. Smaller group, station activities included: focused lesson planning practice, participating in a mock Morning Meeting, interacting with Montessori materials, and video analysis of classroom discipline. We met weekly both before and after each class session to plan the class events (e.g., lectures, station activities) and to collaboratively reflect on our impressions of how the class went and how the students were responding. While we could see there were some snags in the process, due to the class size and classroom space, we felt overall that this co-teaching model was working and that our collaborative efforts were a positive model for our teacher candidates.

Our Students Respond

At midterm, a formative assessment was conducted with the students by an outside faculty member to gather data on how the class was progressing and to elicit feedback from the students on their satisfaction with the course. Many co-teaching descriptions in the literature are deliberate and pre-planned, so we thought it best to seek feedback as we were still actively planning the course. Co-teaching experiences often result in benefits as well as drawbacks for instructors and students. Students sometimes experience confusion with who is their real instructor and disillusionment at differing grading practices or differing opinions of the instructors (Ferguson & Wilson, 2011). We avoided some of those issues by maintaining responsibility for grading our own original course enrollments. The results of the formative assessment were not just focused on the issue of having two instructors for the course, but on other issues such as content. The results did indicate that students felt that the class was too large, the room was not suitable for majors in an education course, much of the content was repetitive from prior courses and that, overall, the class was boring and lacked interaction. While not shocked by these results, we certainly were disappointed as we felt we were trying an innovative approach to this class that would address our own previous uncertainty.

By teaching as a team instead of as two colleagues in isolation, we hoped that the students would benefit from our combined knowledge and expertise.

We Respond in Turn

We next implemented new instruction we believed to be engaging for students in an effort to address their comments that the class was boring. In our crafting of the lectures we began to embed "turn and talk" opportunities in which students could reflect on a question posed in the lecture and talk with a peer about their thoughts. Some student clusters were occasionally willing to share with the whole group the results of their think-pair-share, although this was uncommon. The embedding of paired discussion seemed to help students feel less passive and to also encourage more connection with the class and with each other. A few students recognized our efforts to be responsive and more artful in our approach, and shared with us that they noticed that we tried to make the best out of the class. They also affirmed that the stations were working well, so we continued to use this model as the second half of the course proceeded.

Other comments from the formative student evaluations were less easy to address. As instructors, we often invited each other to comment during our lectures in a "tag team" approach which we thought would be lively and add fluidity to our instruction. We hoped this would resonate with students as we drew from both our bodies of experiences and expertise. While providing the initial lecture/discussion, we also might interject a comment or example when we felt it was appropriate. This practice was perceived by many students as "interrupting." We never felt that it was interruption as we were very comfortable with each other based on the relationship we had built and deepened in our co-planning, co-teaching, and collaborative reflection. In co-reflecting on this particular student feedback, it was clear that our perception of what we were doing was very different from what the students perceived and that we had established shared norms of discourse with each other but not with the students (Enfield & Stasz, 2011). After our discussion and analysis of these specific formative evaluation data, we attempted to become more formal in our interactions with each other in front of the class.

The student data for this class also suggested that our teacher identities were evident to our students and that, perhaps based on their own backgrounds and experiences, they had a definite preference in the teaching styles of their instructors. Carrie was perceived as "aggressive" because her emphasis was on content and moving

the course forward with purpose and focus. As a mid-thirties Midwesterner, she did not use typical Southern discourse patterns with students (Johnstone, 2003) while Nancy, a native Southerner and older, was seen as more approachable and nurturing by students. Our personalities were among those things we could not change, but this element of the student feedback gave us a wealth of information upon which to reflect and, in many ways, was the motivation for connecting this experience to our inquiry on our own professional growth as teacher educators.

With these interventions we also sought solutions to our dissonance between our views of best practice and the realities of these external circumstances as expressed in the midterm assessment results. We were able to make modifications to our instruction that aligned with our values of active learning where possible and as described earlier. We tried to also make more personal connections with students, all 89 of them, so that we could monitor our efforts as reflected in their participation and interaction in the lecture-discussions and station activities. In our debriefing conversations we agreed to focus on the key concerns of the students over which we had control, namely those that related to content presentation and structure.

Collaborative Reflection Leads to Professional Growth: What We Learned

In this section we share the results of our professional growth as teacher educators. While Schön's characteristics of the indeterminate zone of practice—uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflict—were evident in the situation in which we found ourselves, they were also evident in the unique personal histories and professional experiences we and our pre-service teachers brought to bear on this experience. As Lunenberg and Hamilton (2008) assert, both are interwoven and must be examined in tandem and within the context of each other.

For Nancy, building community is one of the most rewarding aspects of teaching. She feels that so much is achieved both in teaching courses and in mentoring students by creating meaningful connections and caring relationships with students. Noddings (1984) describes these reciprocal relationships between the "cared by" and "cared for" and emphasizes the need for both students and teachers to be active and aware participants within these caring relationships. In grappling with the class size and the unrealistic expectation that connected relationships could be possible with 89 students, Nancy affirmed a commitment to this value and sought to strengthen this in

her other classes at that time and since. For Carrie, getting students to think critically about teaching and learning in the public schools is paramount. Carrie came to realize, however, that directly challenging students to think critically has its limitations at the undergraduate level. As with working with younger students, mutual respect is key to engaging in deep learning. While not fundamentally changing her identity, Carrie became more intentional in cultivating non-academic interactions with students in this and subsequent courses to encourage mutual understanding and respect.

Carrie also felt confident in knowing the content needed for the course, but lacked confidence in her unfamiliar role as full-time faculty member in this new geographic location. With some prior experience as a teacher educator, Nancy felt the tension between generally knowing what to do but feeling uncertainty about a new institution and a unique course. While Carrie's uncertainties stemmed from the newness of the position, Nancy's stemmed from her prior experience with teaching graduate level courses in instructional technology and not undergraduate curriculum to pre-service teacher candidates. We also shared sources of uncertainty as both of us grappled with the imposter phenomenon (Clance & Imes, 1978) in our novice roles as elementary teacher educators. Co-planning and co-teaching served two essential purposes: it allowed us to rely on each other's strengths in delivering the course and provided intellectual and emotional support as we discovered and subsequently embraced the practice of collaborative reflection. Similar to Hug and Moller's (2005) study that emphasized ongoing conversations, we feel the most important outcome of our co-planning, co-teaching, and co-reflecting was the deep and meaningful manner in which it sustained our professional growth while establishing a collegial relationship with a fellow faculty member.

Our situation presented value conflicts for us to demonstrate and engage in effective practices in teacher education. What we found in our reflective conversations were the aspects of our practice which we could not compromise and that we would seek to implement, to the best of our abilities, despite external barriers and limited affordances. These core values were more clearly articulated and subsequently fomented as a result of the conflict we experienced in our unique and uncertain teaching situation. We found that we value: active interaction between students and with instructors; hands-on exploration of course content; building community through connected relationships; and reflective collaboration between colleagues including us, the two instructors. We were in a constant state of reflecting in and on action, or what we came to call collaborative reflection, during the semester. Toward the end of the semester we saw how, as a result of this process, we could critically evaluate our actions using Schön's ideas as a heuristic to make meaning of our experience and learning.

We found that despite our struggles, or perhaps because of them, as teacher educators this experience contributed greatly to our professional growth and development. For us, our framing of the situation concerned the need to support each other in our first semester in new positions as teacher educators. At the heart of this process was our interest in going beyond survival and a standard-technical solution towards ensuring we met the needs of our students given the distinct characteristics of the situation. We also realized the importance of remaining true to our values as teacher educators by providing engaging, meaningful instruction. And, we hoped to learn how to be more effective teacher educators in this course as well as those we would teach in the future. Our experiences, while not exactly like Enfield and Stasz's (2011) deliberate attempt at co-teaching, led to similar conclusions:

> Engaging in practices as we describe here require a willingness to take risks, to be fearless, and to make oneself vulnerable. Such actions are intuitively counter to stereotypical roles as professor. Thus we recognize that our willingness to engage in this project was serendipitous in that we were both willing to take risks, be vulnerable, and expose our faults to one another. In short, we were willing to take a stance that co-teaching would be effective for our students given the course and context. (p. 14)

Epilogue

To teach pre-service teachers effectively, many best practices must be modelled: relationship building, differentiation, and group work. We were experiencing the "contradictions between the content and process of teacher education" (Loughran & Russell, 2002, p. 3). The content we wanted to teach was not well matched to the time and space or to the large numbers in our section and the learning space itself inhibited modelling best practices. The formative assessment data provided by the students, although painful at times, indicated that their concerns were similar to ours and we were determined to be responsive in our instruction. We agreed to focus on the aspects of the course which we could change. As for the other issues beyond our control, such as the classroom in which we would have to remain, we simply acknowledged these openly and again told our students explicitly why we thought this combined and co-taught course was of benefit. Underlying this message to our students was a systemic uncertainty. We felt uncertain because we were new to the institution, the students, and the course. As we moved into problem solving, started to unpack issues to resolve, and identified possible action, the uncertainty increased.

As a result, we redoubled our efforts at addressing each uncertainty collaboratively and reflectively.

While much has been made of reflection in action, there is great worth in continuing to reflect *on* action and to use that reflection to change practice. As Minott's work (2010) suggests, reflection on teaching can lead to practical knowledge, and for us, it was also collaborative. Our teaching practice has changed as a result of this experience as we spend more time getting to know our students and their prior knowledge. We also make our teaching strategies and intentions more explicit to the teacher candidates we teach so that we model approaches such as collaboration and co-teaching in ways that are clearly representative of our values as teacher educators. As colleagues we continue to have active dialogue and to support each other in growing as professionals.

As colleagues, we are also intentional about making time to converse about the complexity of our practice as teacher educators and to address other circumstances that relate to uncertainty, uniqueness, and value conflicts while seeking solutions through collaborative reflection. As we encounter issues in our individual practice, we feel free to explore and implement solutions, be they familiar and technical or unfamiliar and innovative. The framework taught us then, and reminds us today, that there are multiple ways to respond to uncertain and unique issues of practice in the teacher education classroom.

Both teacher educators as well as the teacher candidates that they teach may apply technical solutions to unique problems, which is logical given the challenges of teaching in both contexts. However, engaging in a process of reflection on *and* in action as suggested by Schön—we contend collaboratively—can serve a twofold purpose. First, more effective practical solutions are created and implemented in a unique situation, and second, educators develop a process by which in future situations of indeterminate practice, frustration is avoided and solutions are approached reflectively and artfully. Additionally, educators can gain deeper understandings of their professional practice and support their own professional and identity development.

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Burrowing Into Female Teachers' Temporal Constraints Experienced in the Midst of the Research Process

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this qualitative study is on three female teachers' experiences as teacher researchers in the midst of conducting first-time research studies about their own teaching/professional practices. Inquiring into participants' accounts of their research experiences revealed complex personal and professional obligations shaping the amount of time that participants felt able to invest in the research process. The findings of this paper have implications for better understanding teacher research as a sustainable professional learning endeavour and for considering the complexities teacher researchers must navigate as part of their professional development.

I wish somebody had talked to me about
   what [research] might look like in terms of time
   to really consider that it is not you being a student
   who has no responsibilities outside this particular project
   as a [full-time] educator
   there is always something going on
   plus I have a teenager and a toddler

(Susan[1] excerpt from found poem based upon three interviews between July 2013 and July 2014)

*I*n this excerpt, an experienced teacher, Susan, describes the experience of conducting a first-time research study as more time-intensive than she had originally envisioned, due in part to other obligations of which she had to be mindful. Scholars have documented that while teacher research engagement (Borg, 2010) may provide deep professional learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle,

1993, 1999, 2004; Zeichner, 2003), they also note that engaging regularly in research may be challenging for teachers due to busy teaching schedules and professional responsibilities (Chandler, 1999; Massey, Baber, Lowe, Ormond, & Weatherly, 2009). Overall, the literature tends to agree that time for research is limited for teachers, a finding that is usually attributed to the contextual busyness of teaching (Borg, 2007, 2009, 2010; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Thornley, Parker, Read, & Eason, 2004). While Susan's comments in the opening excerpt resonate with earlier findings, her observations also show a multiplicity of personal and professional responsibilities that she had to juggle as she engaged in research relevant to the context of her teaching.

The focus of this qualitative study (Merriam, 2009) is on three female teachers' experiences as they engaged in teacher research for the purposes of a Master of Education degree. In this paper, I maintain a focus upon participants' understanding of research engagement in the midst of the research process. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: 1) to problematize and better understand time constraints as teachers conduct teacher research; 2) to document teacher researchers' perceptions of the benefits and challenges associated with research engagement in the midst of the process. The findings of this paper have implications for better understanding teacher research engagement as a sustainable professional learning endeavour (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2004; O'Connell Rust, 2009) and for considering the complexities that female teachers must navigate as part of their efforts to professionally develop and learn.

Literature: Benefits and Constraints of Teacher Research Engagement

Stenhouse (1981), often credited with the early conceptualization of "teachers as researchers," wrote, "the basic argument for placing teachers at the heart of the educational research process may be simply stated... Teachers are in charge of classrooms... [and] the teacher is surrounded by rich research opportunities" (pp. 109–110). The proliferation of teacher research by and about teacher researchers suggests that many in education agree (Craig, 2009; Leeman & Wardekker, 2013). Scholars note the influence of Corey (1953), Dewey (1933), Lewin (1948), and Stenhouse (1975) as individuals who fostered the idea that teachers could and should engage in systematic inquiry of their own classroom practices as a way to improve and enhance their knowledge of teaching (Borko, Whitcomb, & Byrnes, 2008; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990; Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Fichtman Dana, 2013; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009).

Teacher research may be broadly described as a process of methodical inquiry undertaken to better understand the complexities of one's teaching with the intent of improvement and change the heart of its initiative.

For the purposes of professional development, the sponsors of teacher research are abundant (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009) and have been documented to include: university-school partnerships (Arhar et al., 2013; Hall, 2009), professional learning communities (Lieberman, 2009; Zeichner, 2003), and professional development schools (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Leeman & Wardekker 2013; Vrijnsen-de Corte, den Brok, Kamp, & Bergen, 2013), among others. University teacher education programs, according to many scholars (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Shosh & Rappe Zales, 2007; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009), also play an important role in the fostering of professional learning through teacher research by encouraging teachers to take on inquiry puzzles about their own classroom practices.

Looking across how teacher research is supported, advocates of teacher research contend that it serves the field of education in several ways. For example, in how teacher research can contribute to the knowledge base of educational research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Craig, 2009; Lieberman, 2009; O'Connell Rust, 2009) and enable teachers to contribute to educational policy development (O'Connell Rust, 2009; Rust & Meyers, 2006). Teacher research has also been found to foster critical thinking (Hagevik, Aydeniz, & Rowell, 2012; Kraft, 2002; Mitton-Kukner, 2013), content area knowledge (Babkie & Provost, 2004; Huillet, Adler, & Berger, 2011), improved instructional practices (Grove, Dixon, & Pop, 2009), and inclusive forms of pedagogy (Capobianco, Lincoln, Cannuel-Browne, & Trimarchi, 2006).

In contrast to the benefits of teacher research are the known challenges that research engagement can create for teachers. Scholars note that due to full-time teaching commitments (Borg, 2007, 2009; Massey et al., 2009) within diverse classroom contexts (Li, 2006; Magos, 2012), teachers struggle to sustain research practices. Other factors that constrain the investment and quality of teacher research include a lack of institutional support (Anwaruddin & Pervin, 2013; Borg, 2007; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Thornley et al., 2004) and limited resources and/or funding for such endeavours (Borg, 2009, 2010; Fowler & Procter, 2008).

As part of this discussion, one of the most common barriers identified for teacher researchers is a lack of time. Scholars agree that a lack of time tends to influence the quality, depth of investment, and desire of teachers to initiate and/or continue with their research efforts (Borg, 2007, 2009, 2010; Fowler & Procter, 2008;

Leeman & Wardekker, 2013; Li, 2006; Kraft, 2002; Magos, 2012; Reis-Jorge, 2007; Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Thornley et al., 2004). A lack of time for research is generally attributed to the contextual constraints of schools, as teachers must manage multiple responsibilities (Ellis & Armstrong, 2014; Leeman & Wardekker, 2013), full teaching loads (Borg, 2007, 2009; Fowler & Procter, 2008, Tavakoli & Howard, 2012; Reis-Jorge, 2007), dense curricula (Thornley et al., 2004), and diverse student needs (Li, 2006; Magos, 2012). Although temporal constraints are depicted as a common trial for teacher researchers, little is known about their complexity beyond the demands of teaching.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this qualitative study is informed by several concepts: teacher research engagement (Borg, 2010), a narrative view of teacher knowledge (Xu & Connelly, 2009), a performativity-performance approach (Morison & MacLeod, 2013), and teacher time pressure (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). Borg's (2010) definition of research engagement encompasses two broad areas associated with the research process: the active conduct of a research study as well as the practise of reading and drawing upon empirical research. While the overall intent of this study is upon teacher researchers' experiences as they actively conduct research about their work in K-12 and higher education classrooms, I was also attentive to participants' use of published research in how it was employed to inform their thinking as they developed research proposals or literature reviews.

Viewing participants' accounts of their research experiences narratively was also an important concept informing this study. Xu and Connelly (2009), drawing upon the work of Connelly and Clandinin (2000), defined a narrative view of teacher knowledge, as "a narrative construct which references the totality of a person's personal practical knowledge gained from formal and informal educational experience" (p. 221). Attending carefully to participants' research experiences, in and outside of educational contexts, provided insights into how they understood research and the importance of significant others shaping their perceptions of learning within the research process. Thinking in this way allowed me to consider what Morison and MacLeod (2013) refer to as a performativity-performance approach, particularly the "relational specificities and the mechanisms through which gender trouble occur" (p. 567). Morison and MacLeod's conceptualization enabled me to mindfully examine participants' accounts of their social interactions within particular contexts, making "gender trouble" (p. 567) explicit when it occurred. Given my purpose to explore female teachers' experiences as novice

researchers, their approach supported my efforts to inquire deeply into participants' stories being attentive to how their highly structured lives shaped their perceptions of how time was to be used in relation to their research efforts.

Refining my thinking about the role of time in teacher researchers' experiences was Skaalvik and Skaalvik's (2011) notion of teacher time pressure in how increasing workloads in schools constrains the amount of time teachers are able to dedicate to different tasks. Attending to the time pressure participants reported in response to numerous personal and professional responsibilities provided insights into participants' time constraints and how these informed their understanding of research engagement.

Methodology

Informing qualitative research, Merriam (2009) wrote, is a researcher's desire to understand "*the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13, author's emphasis). Viewing the phenomenon of female teacher researchers' experiences qualitatively, I had a focused interest in participants' accounts of their teacher research experiences, particularly their learning in the midst of the process, what they identified as meaningful, and how they made sense of their research efforts. All three participants designed their studies[2] to answer questions that were relevant to their classroom practices, professional identities, and/or educational contexts. Both Susan and Carly focused upon student learning experiences and Teagan was looking closely at perceptions of a particular curriculum program. All three felt their topics would inform their teaching and professional practices. This work builds upon a previous study conducted in Turkey (2009-2011) in which I explored three female teachers' experiences as novice teacher researchers (Mitton-Kukner, 2013, 2014, under review).

In June 2013, I invited Susan, Carly, and Teagan, three experienced teachers, to take part in a study about their experiences as teacher researchers. I met the participants as they were taking courses as part of their graduate studies. I taught Susan and Teagan in two different courses that happened in 2012 and 2013, respectively, and I met Carly through a former graduate student. Susan and Teagan were invited to participate when they were no longer students of mine and once I learned that all three of the women had made the decision to do a thesis as part of their graduate studies. At the time of the study, two of the participants, Susan and Teagan, were married and had children, and Carly was engaged. Presently, I am in the second year of this study;

the thesis timeline is different for each of the participants due to different start dates in the process, although I anticipate they all may complete requirements by December 2015. For the purposes of this paper, I am focused on their experiences over a 12-month period (July 2013-July 2014); this period encompasses different stages of their research engagement.[3] To date, I have conducted nine individual interviews of approximately 35-60 minutes apiece. The interviews have been timed to coincide with different stages of the formal thesis process (Phase one: Research proposal development and ethics approval application; Phase two: Data collection; Phase three: Data analysis; Phase four: Write-up of findings). During this 12-month period, I interviewed Carly four times (June 18, 2013; June 28, 2013; September 11, 2013; March 20, 2014), Susan three times (July 16, 2013; November 28, 2013; July 16, 2014), and Teagan twice (November 20, 2013; April 1, 2014). Other data sources include: field notes, participant-generated artifacts, and blog entries from a blog to which we all contributed.

Inductive analysis enabled me to pinpoint frequent patterns across participants' narrative accounts. For example, participants' references to time methodologically allowed me to consider their positioning in different personal and professional contexts with important others. Once I had established commonalities, I was able to identify relationships amongst time, personal and professional obligations, and research engagement. Inductive analysis of the data led me to the decision to represent participants' research experiences as found poetry (Butler-Kisber, 2002, 2010). What emerged in the data required representation that could show participants' research experiences vividly in a form that facilitated understanding (Butler-Kisber, 2002).

Creating the found poems was a recursive process (Butler-Kisber, 2002). It required multiple readings of transcripts as well as listening to recorded conversations to see if my representation of participants' experiences conveyed "the stamp" (Addonizio & Laux, 1997, p. 115) of their voices. From the transcripts I chose nuggets of words and phrases (Butler-Kisber, 2010) that depicted participants' understanding of their research engagement. Drafts of the poems were shared with participants to create an additional opportunity for their response and input. The following poems may be understood as "untreated" (Butler-Kisber, 2010) in that I made minimal changes to participants' words with only minor modifications to grammar and arrangement.

Situating the Benefits and Challenges of Teacher Research Engagement Within Experienced Temporal Constraints

Emerging from the data were participants' mixed views about the benefits and challenges associated with teacher research. In the midst of conducting research, participants generally described the challenges of research engagement as outnumbering its benefits and seemed to feel that more benefits would become evident once they had completed their research. In what follows, I discuss three main themes using found poems (Butler-Kisber, 2002, 2010) to show the relationship between the complexities of participants' busy schedules in relation to their understanding of the research process. The found poems are reflective of commonalities found across participants' accounts and provide insights into the temporal constraints informing their research. I begin with the theme "multiple obligations in the midst of teacher research engagement," as it was the most distinct pattern in participants' accounts and provides a lens through which to view their understanding of the benefits and challenges they associated with research engagement.

Theme One: Multiple Obligations in the Midst of Teacher Research Engagement

Pervading participants' descriptions of conducting research were multiple responsibilities reportedly influencing their actions and their perceptions of the amount of time they felt they could invest in the research process. Their understanding of who they were in relation to others was a constant tension underlying their experiences as teacher researchers.

Susan: There Is Always Something Going On
I wish somebody had talked to me about
    what [research] might look like in terms of time
    to really consider that it is not you being a student
    who has no responsibilities outside this particular project
    as a [full-time] educator
    there is always something going on
    plus I have a teenager and a toddler.

Many late nights in my office
    it is a space I can work without being interrupted
    my partner can watch the children
    at home I feel obligated to do something
    like housework or laundry, dishes, food preparation.

Balancing those desires
    the kids
    spending time with my husband
    walking my dog
    kind of taxing
    during the process of doing a thesis
    they get lost.

My plan was to start doing data analysis and writing,
    did not happen
    we had two [tragic events] in the family
    I had to evaluate where I was spending time in my life
    not just the kids
    but extended family
    [and] nuclear family
    the one I created and the one I come from
    both needed my attention
    I wanted a balance between family and work
    the thesis went on the back burner.

For me, I'm trying to rush through it now
    I didn't want to do the course based [program]
    I would have cheated myself by doing the course based
    I want it done
    but I also don't want to compromise.

Carly: My Mind Wonders Away
The thesis does ask you to work hard
    to be dedicated
    to delve quite deeply
    to explore something
    to discover things you might not have known.

I do find it very hard to work at home, at my parent's house
    if my mom is awake
    she is talking, wanting to interact which is good
    but it just has to be focused on her
    I cannot separate myself from that.

We're almost done
    the church, the reception hall, DJ
    we got our invitations
    [the engagement] was very exciting
    just a couple weeks after that my mom got sick
    [the doctors] ended up saying that the best thing to do…
    [was to] let her go naturally.

I haven't had time
    to just focus
    my mind wonders away
    [on] teaching
    thinking about my mom
    everything except Merleau-Ponty.

Teagan: My Responsibilities Are Split
This semester has been busy
    Some of my many hats
    it's just the regular mum stuff
    taking the kids where they need go
    Taekwondo classes, Mondays and Wednesdays
    massive chaos after work
    get supper ready
    then we have to dedicate family time on the weekends.

When the kids go to bed I put my headphones on
    sit at the table
    and start writing until about 10.30
    that's my time
    I get to talk to [my husband] at the end of the week
    we don't get to do a lot of stuff together
    my responsibilities are split.

Being able to work independently
    that's something that I struggle with
    [My husband] can stay at home
    and work all that day
    There is no way in God's creation I can do it
    There is too much stuff going on
    the laundry
    get[ting] supper ready
    I have to do this
    I have to do that
    just too much other stuff.

Unpacking theme one. Over the course of the time period in which participants were engaged in research, a recurring topic in participants' accounts were descriptions of ongoing responsibilities as complicating their research efforts. Participants described their research efforts as intersecting with other personal and professional obligations in the form of important others (e.g., family members and students) and professional responsibilities (e.g., lesson planning and marking assignments). Having to juggle multiple relational responsibilities (e.g., children, partners, and ill family members)

alongside teaching commitments, created for participants a sense that their research was part of an ongoing cycle with no end in sight. Implied in their accounts, particularly for Susan and Teagan, were expectations of how they felt they needed to spend their time regarding childcare and housework. In order to create time and space for research in their schedules, participants, particularly Susan and Teagan, described their research efforts as happening around the schedules of their children, most often late at night after the children had gone to bed. Both described the tension of working at home with the distraction of housework providing an ongoing tension in the list of things that they felt had to be done. Despite their reported efforts to immerse themselves in the research process, all of the participants described the challenge of maintaining ongoing connections to their research. Participants attributed this to not only the regular demands of family and teaching, but also to pivotal life events, as emphasized by Carly in her efforts to return to her thesis following her marriage engagement and the death of her mother.

Theme Two: Minimal Benefits of Teacher Research Engagement in Light of Other Responsibilities

For teachers, the decision to conduct teacher research often arises from acknowledging that something about one's practice could be improved (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Castle, 2006; Robinson & Lai, 2006). Of the research studies in which Susan, Carly, and Teagan were engaged, all three had questions about phenomenon related to their teaching practices and educational contexts. Attending to what they felt was worthy for further inquiry, seemed to inform their understanding of research although they tended to see the benefits of research engagement as something that would become more obvious upon completion of their degrees.

Susan: The Positive May Come
I really went in knowing that I was going to do a thesis
[the course-based route is] a path of least resistance
not necessarily a good path for me.
[in the past] decisions were made for me about my teaching
left me feeling the teaching lacked a piece of how I felt
what I thought was happening
how that should be applied
just wanted to own something.

[Preparing the proposal was] much more a conversation
between [the instructor] and me.

Right now it's frustrating [writing the thesis]
the positive may come.

It forced me to do more reading in the area
didn't know [the literature] with this researcher lens.

Just frustrating for me…
I still see it as I knew it
we'll see in the end
the positive may come.

Carly: I Have High Expectations
I came into the program really open minded
the group that I started with was
a very research oriented group.

Doing a fair amount of reading in [my subject] area
benefits definitely.

Working with grade 8 students [was] an interesting process
they were all quite active
being able to reflect on that
how I made it work
how the students responded
is a good thing.

I learnt how to make changes as I was going along
being able to get multiple perspectives
being able to bring everything together
the ability to read in an area that [is of] use to me
benefits definitely.

I have high expectations
for the feeling of accomplishment when it's done
I hope that with [my] new knowledge I could share.

Teagan: This Will Be Beneficial
Always had in my head I was going to be a teacher
I was going to teach and then I was going to retire.

[An instructor] mentioned [the thesis] and
the [possibility] of doing a PhD
sort of put that seed in my head
working [here] it makes complete sense
that was kind of my rationale for it.

It couldn't be timed better
  even just some of the stuff in the literature
  just kind of reinforcement
  we know what we are doing
  we know that we are on the right track
  it's really kind of neat.

I could be done in December if I [had gone] the course route
  part of me is like "oh God that would be nice"
  at the same time this will be beneficial for me
  it is a big time commitment
  I'm doing it
  but it's hard.

Unpacking theme two. Each of the participants had very different reasons for deciding to follow the thesis-based route as part of their Master of Education studies, citing personal and professional influences as informing their decisions. In the midst of research engagement, all three were in strong agreement about their efforts to develop a literature review as having the biggest impact upon their learning. Carly reportedly understood the research literature as useful for her teaching practices and Teagan felt undertaking a literature review was timely in that it supported her efforts during a time of program renewal within her particular institution. Although Susan had seemingly mixed feelings about what she was learning from her study, she did describe a "researcher lens" as enabling her to see the literature in new ways. Participants also described delving into the literature as empowering in how it allowed them to further develop knowledge about a specific area of professional practice. Of the three participants, Carly was the most affirmative about the benefits of research engagement in the midst of the research process. In addition to gaining knowledge and feeling empowered in response to reviewing the literature, Carly also identified the importance of working with participants and learning to adapt as positive gains from her research engagement.

At the same time, it is important to note that all of the participants, particularly Susan and Teagan, seemed to think that more benefits would emerge upon completion of the research, a finding which suggests that in the midst of the process participants found it challenging to sustain their research efforts in light of other responsibilities. Because of participants' emphasis on the benefits yet to materialize as part of their research engagement, I was also mindful in my questioning and analysis of their experiences, their perceptions of recurring challenges informing their research engagement.

Theme Three: Complex Temporal Constraints Informing the Challenges of Teacher Research Engagement

Outnumbering the benefits of engaging in research were participants' views of the challenges associated with the process. A regular thread throughout participants' descriptions of their research efforts was the time-intensive nature of research conflicting with the little time they felt they had.

Susan: Why Did I Think This Was a Good Idea?
No idea just how much time it was going to take
To interview
    the further [participants] are from that experience
    the less they remember specifics.

To transcribe
    ten minutes of conversation
    takes at least an hour.

To analyze
    it's time consuming
    requires a lot of thought
    the [more] time between an interview and the transcript
    harder for me to remember the details.

There's also the writing
    working on one task
    there are five more to do
    frustrating—wrapping my head around
    something I know.

I asked [my thesis advisor]
    "could you pose some deadlines?"
    [Advisor said] "No, no. I will never come after you for anything."
    Suppose that's a good thing
    what would have I done [after tragic events] in the family
    the flipside of that coin is
    how much longer can I keep pushing this ahead
    when I don't have a schedule?

I am in the cycle right now, asking,
    "Why did I think this was a good idea?"
    partially because I don't think I have learned anything
    ground breaking
    wish I had deadlines set for myself.

Carly: A Tough Balance
It's been a tough balance [research and teaching]
    getting back into teaching
    the new job
    finding lessons
    I really do feel like I am getting back into everything
    this [degree] is two more years
    and I am not young
    neither are my parents
    the health of my parents
    that just makes it more challenging

Time is definitely a challenge
    I've been reading a lot of philosophy
    took me up awhile to figure out how to read it
    I had to go back and redo some things.

I have been trying to write
    I'm not a flowery writer
    challenging to be able to bring out that creative aspect
    definitely challenging when it is not your main focus
    making it into a story
    maintaining the integrity of the student.

The other thing
    The student interviews were a lot shorter
    than the teacher interview
    they were lot less forthcoming with the information
    it was harder to pull out the information.

[Plus] getting the feedback from three different people
    different people with different ideas, different opinions
    questioning, urging me to look through other things
    combining it and having it all kind of make sense to me.

Making the time to do it [the thesis]
    choosing to make the time to do it
    daily time, the length of time
    so that's definitely been a very big challenge.

Teagan: It's the Stopping and Starting
Putting aside the time that I need
    I definitely see that as a challenge for me
    I am a very strong writer
    as long as I have the focus and [the] feedback

I am not intimidated by the writing of the research
   it's the time that [is] the biggest challenge for me.

Because it is new
   I don't quite know how much information to put in
   on the other hand…I have a bit of a time constraint
   feel like I can [only] go into so much detail
   within the time that I have
   because I don't want it to hang over my head
   my own sort of self-inflicted goal of getting it done.

What took me longer
   than I anticipated
   were the revisions of chapter one
   [then] I was looking at the lit review
   don't know if I'm on the right timeline
   to graduate next May.

Each time [I pass in a draft] it is hard to get the wheels turning again
   It's the stopping and starting piece that that I find tricky
   if you tell me that I have a particular class
   at a particular time I can rearrange my schedule.
   But when I am the one that I have to be accountable to?
   it's hard—very hard.
   I want to get as much as out of it as I can
   but I want to be done.

Unpacking theme three. Participants had vivid observations about the amount of time research engagement entailed and described particular tasks such as preparing literature reviews, transcribing interviews, analyzing data, and writing drafts of findings as needing large amounts of time. Time for research was described by participants as two-fold in that there was the time needed for practically completing a task (e.g., interviewing participants or transcribing interviews) and there was the time needed for conceptualizing and producing products of the research process (e.g., preparing a literature review or analyzing qualitative data for recurring themes). For all of the participants, the practicalities of completing research tasks competed with the cognitive undertaking of conceptualizing their research. Complicating their efforts was the challenge each of them experienced to maintain consistent connections with their research and found that breaks in their research engagement in the form of teaching and professional obligations, as well as family responsibilities, impacted their ability to pick up where they left off and negatively influenced their motivation to carry on. Susan referred to the research process as comprising multiple tasks that required

careful thought. She also described the importance of having deadlines, although she acknowledged that in light of a negative family event imposed deadlines may not have been realistic. Due to the length of time in which Susan was engaged in the process, Susan did have concerns about how she would able to maintain the current pace of her research efforts, something that seemed to undermine her appreciation of what she had learned in her study in that she had not learned anything "ground breaking." Like Susan, Carly described reading research and writing drafts of findings as time intensive. Carly also provided insights into the complexity of interviewing participants, particularly when interviewing adolescents as well as the challenge of responding to feedback from a three-person thesis committee. Unlike Susan and Carly, Teagan was at the beginning of the research process and during this stage of the study was in the midst of finalizing her proposal for her thesis. Teagan did emphasize the amount of time that writing revisions took and was concerned about how this might impact her goal of graduating at a particular date. All three participants had concerns about being able to schedule the time that was needed for the thesis in relation to balancing research engagement with childcare and professional obligations, as noted by Susan and Teagan, as well as in juggling a new teaching position and spending time with her aging parents, as emphasized by Carly.

Supporting Teacher Research Engagement in an Era of Increasing Workload at Home and in School

This study describes some of the ways three teacher researchers in the midst of the thesis process understood their learning in response to research engagement. Unlike many studies populating this field, which focus on teachers looking back upon completed research (Fecho, Graham, & Hudson-Ross, 2005; Castle, 2006; Babkie & Provost, 2004; Capobianco & Joyal, 2008), my intent in this study was to bring forward participants' experiences in the midst of the research process. Looking closely at participants' experiences in this way revealed findings that contrast with the known benefits of teacher research engagement, particularly in how engaging in research enables teachers to develop deeper understandings about their own professional knowledge (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Ellis & Castle, 2010; Power & Hubbard, 1999) while also fostering capacity and confidence to conduct research (Castle, 2006). Although all of the participants did attribute meaningful learning in response to conducting a literature review, it is important to note that the benefits identified by participants were outnumbered by the challenges they reportedly experienced. Susan, for example, reportedly felt an ongoing sense of disappointment in that her

study had not revealed findings she did not already "know." Rather than seeing this as positive affirmation of her teacher knowledge through research (Craig, 2009), Susan tended to describe the study as disappointing and "frustrating" and seemed to think that perhaps "the positive" of the study might come once it was completed. Similar to Susan, Teagan also suggested that despite the positive possibilities of her study being situated within a timely event at her institution, she noted the time commitment that research in combination with the procedural requirements of the thesis entailed. Of the three participants, Carly was most upbeat about the benefits of her research engagement, although she did note she had "high expectations" for her research and was hopeful about the "feeling of accomplishment" that would come upon its completion. As a single woman without children, Carly did not have the same family responsibilities as Susan and Teagan, and arguably experienced less time pressure associated with gender-related multitasking (Offer & Schneider, 2011).[4]

Overall, participants seemed to think that more benefits would emerge upon conclusion of their theses. This is a highly probable possibility; but in light of the challenges they experienced during the process, it is also important to consider the viability of Susan, Carly, and Teagan's future research practices, that is, if they will continue to engage in research as part of professional learning about their teaching/ professional practices once they have completed their studies.

Time as a constraint is a well-established finding in the teacher research literature (Borg, 2010); this body of work; however, tends to attribute teacher researchers' lack of time to teaching and the contextual needs of classrooms (Ellis & Armstrong, 2014; Leeman & Wardekker, 2013; Magos, 2012; Massey et al., 2009). While it is important to recognize the increasing workloads of teachers (Bruno, Ashby, & Manzo, 2012; Hargreaves, 2003; Galton, MacBeath, Steward, Page, & Edwards, 2004; Lindqvist & Nordänger, 2006; Philipp & Kunter, 2013; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010, 2011) as offering probable reasons for the time pressure that Susan, Teagan, and Carly experienced, it is also important to acknowledge the complexities of their lives outside of teaching responsibilities, and how these constrained their research efforts.

My review of the literature on teacher researchers suggests that research has centrally focused upon the benefits and challenges (Borg, 2010) that emerge from the process of teachers engaging in research and, somewhat, upon the kinds of time-related obstacles that potentially impede the impact of research upon teacher learning. While I admire the persistence of the participants to engage in research, and I am hopeful about their continuance with research as part of future professional learning associated with their classrooms and professional roles, I do have lingering questions. For instance, will Susan,

Teagan, and Carly engage in research outside the supports and structures of a graduate degree? Secondly, how does a teacher educator, in the role of thesis advisor, build bridges that might foster for individuals like Susan, Teagan, and Carly an autonomous professional learning mindset (Castle, 2006; Cornelissen & van den Berg, 2014; Schwarz, 2001; Shosh & Rappe Zales, 2007)? As I consider the ongoing multitasking (Mitton-Kukner, 2014, under review) in which participants engaged as multiple obligations intersected, and sometimes conflicted with their efforts, I am aware that in engaging in research was, at times, for Susan, Teagan, and Carly, tension-filled. Although tensions associated with learning may be educative (Dewey, 1938), and I am aware that frequent and consistent interactions between a thesis advisor and graduate student as well as ongoing descriptive feedback can positively support the learning of graduate students as they engage in teacher research, I am left with questions about how I might alleviate tensions, which are beyond the scope of my reach as a thesis advisor. It also brings sharply into focus the role of the thesis advisor as supportive mentor (Daniel, 2009; Maton et al., 2011; Paglis, Green, & Bauer, 2006) for teachers, particularly in the midst of the research process for, arguably, it is in the messiness of the process that a teacher researcher's mindset is cultivated.

In light of increasing workloads in and out of school, it is important to ask what kind of teacher research might be relevant and sustainable for teachers, as the open-endedness of the research process seemed to chafe against the structure of participants' lives.[5] In part, some of the competing demands placed upon participants may be attributed to the rigorous nature of the thesis process and the university structures and procedures associated with it (Reis-Jorge, 2007). Advocates for teacher research as a powerful form of professional learning suggest that sustainable teacher research happens through professional development, collaborative and community-based initiatives (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 2003) and through graduate teacher education programs (Shosh & Zales, 2007). Both suggestions place an emphasis upon teachers inquiring into classroom-based problems and interests (Fichtman Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2009; Fichtman Dana, 2013). While I am in agreement with this group of scholars, I am also mindful of how the participants in this study had to navigate different systems (personal, professional, academic); each with their own inherent sense of time and expectations. Viewing teacher researchers' experiences through a lens of time pressure demonstrates how and why the identity of teacher researcher is not easily taken up.

Conclusion

Globally, the teaching profession is depicted as gender imbalanced with female teachers comprising most schools in most nations (Drudy, 2008; OECD, 2014). Better understanding the conditions that support female teachers' professional learning is of utmost significance. Identifying the temporal constraints of teacher researchers' experiences offers new ways to consider the factors shaping and, perhaps, restricting, teachers' efforts to professionally develop and learn, and brings sharply into focus the importance of supportive networks in schools and higher education settings working closely with provincial departments of education and school boards.

Notes

1. All participants' names are pseudonyms.

2. Participants' research topics are not explicitly identified due to ethical considerations of anonymity and privacy.

3. At the end of July 2014, Susan and Carly had entered latter stages of the thesis process (analyzing data and writing drafts of their findings) whereas Teagan was at the beginning of her journey, working on completing a thesis proposal.

4.   It is challenging for me to claim that familial obligations were placed more heavily on the women in this study than on their partners or if they were in highly gendered relationships. I did not spend time in participants' homes, and I relied on participants' accounts of their experiences, particularly what they felt they had to spend time upon. I acknowledge that it is probable that male teacher researchers also feel time pressure.

5. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer who made this observation.

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Opening Up to Student Voice: Supporting Teacher Learning Through Collaborative Action Research

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ABSTRACT

Student voice is promoted increasingly as a vehicle to enhance student learning and improve schools. Whilst the need for amplifying neglected student perspectives in learning and improvement processes is well established, supporting teachers to learn from students has received less attention. The author argues that collaborative action research supports teachers to engage with their students as decision-making partners in the classroom and to learn from them about effective pedagogy at the same time. The approach provides reflective spaces for teachers to notice and challenge taken-for-granted roles and practices, and to address expectations on their work sometimes contradictory to their student voice goals.

Introduction and Background to the Research

I am committed to student voice as socially just action. I believe students bring a unique, valuable, and often missing perspective to the educational equation and should be supported by educators to form and share these perspectives. However, a pervasive view of children and young people as immature and unable to articulate and advocate for their own interests perpetuated their traditional exclusion from educational debate, design, and decision-making until recent challenges to this view gained purchase.

Increasingly, the need to include students is advocated, even at official levels, but the implications for teachers and the role they need to play in according students

more influence receives less attention. In this paper I explore how a collaborative action research, approach supported three teachers to learn with, and from, their students as partners in order to co-construct effective pedagogy. The three teachers who participated in this research were also motivated by this challenge. Initially, we posed the question, "How do young adolescent students perceive effective teaching in relation to their needs and aspirations as learners?" If we had stopped there the research would have elicited the views of students, but left them largely passive, excluded from the decisions and actions that followed their consultation. However, with our shared commitment to engaging students as partners, the research challenge expanded. Through collaborative action research we explored how the teachers might utilize their students' perceptions of effective teaching and engagement in order to co-construct effective pedagogy with them. It is this question, and the challenges and insights it generated for teacher research, that focus this paper.

Student Voice Practices and Agendas

"Student voice" is a term used to describe the project of increasing the status of students and addressing their traditional exclusion from educational debate, design and decision-making (Fielding, 2004). With the advent of the new sociology of childhood (James & Prout, 1990), children and young people are increasingly viewed as active meaning makers, capable of acting in their own interests and contributing unique and valuable perspectives on their experiences as young people, and by extension, students.

Student voice is enacted through research and pedagogical practice in schools. From its democratic and progressive beginnings contemporary student voice practice now serves agendas related to school improvement, enhancing learning, student engagement, consumer rights, and social justice. A proliferation of different practices has emerged with this expansion of the student voice agenda, but not all of these practices improve students' status and influence. To avoid reductive practices that leave students consulted yet passively positioned, active student participation has emerged as an important criterion of student voice (Rudduck, 2007). In an action-orientation, student voice is conceptualized as ongoing dialogue and interaction between students and teachers on decisions and issues important to both—a joint enterprise (Lodge, 2005; Mitra, 2008). Lundy (2007) argues that student voice research that promotes influential student participation must include four essential and interrelated elements: (1) space, for the expression of students' views; (2) voice, including adult support to assist young people to actively construct and express a viewpoint; (3) an audience for students' views; and the most difficult to achieve (4) influence, explicit evidence that students' views do influence teachers' thinking and the action that follows student consultation.

Elevating students' status involves changing existing power relations, primarily the power differential between students and teachers. As the "gatekeepers of change" (Rudduck, 2007) in schools and in classrooms, in order for student voice to flourish in classrooms teachers must authorize listening to students as legitimate and valuable to the learning process and to their work (Cook-Sather, 2002). Locating student voice research in the classroom can maximize the influence of students on teachers' thinking (Flutter, 2007; Lincoln, 1995; Smyth, 2006) as classrooms represent the key site of professional energy for teachers (Cox & Robinson-Pant, 2008). However, despite increased classroom-based student voice projects, student involvement in pedagogical decisions remains rare (Thomson, 2011). Elevating students in the student/teacher relationship necessitates attending to teachers' voice, teachers as learners, and the realities that impact on teachers' work in classrooms (Fielding, 2001). In short, whatever form student voice takes, it will involve students and teachers engaging in new roles and practices with each other and involve significant learning for teachers (Mitra, 2006; Smyth, 2007).

Supporting Teachers as Learners to Enact Student Voice

Learning from students can be a reflexive process for teachers "with the learning of students … functioning as a kind of reflecting pool or mirror" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 19) that can transform pedagogy (Kane & Maw, 2005), but only when teachers are supported to hear and take account of the messages students communicate (Bragg, 2001). Learning can involve "unlearning some long-held ideas, beliefs, and practices, which are often difficult to uproot" (Cochran-Smith, 2003, p. 9). Learning opportunities are needed that link teachers' inquiries to their work and to valued student outcomes (Putnam & Borko, 2000). These opportunities must also foster authentic relationships with researchers and colleagues to support risk-taking (Little, 2004). Teachers' work and learning are also nested within their larger school cultures and policy contexts. These contexts influence the possibilities teachers have available to elevate students' status and influence in practice. In promoting student voice, the limited autonomy teachers possess to act autonomously within the education systems in which they operate must be acknowledged (Taylor & Robinson, 2009).

Research Design

I identified collaborative action research (CAR) as a potential approach to support teacher learning and promote student influence because of its central focus on improving and challenging practice "through dialogue and collaboration" (Locke, Alcorn, & O'Neill, 2013, p. 112). CAR promotes the involvements of all significant actors relevant to an issue or area of focus, including students. Together CAR participants

work in authentic ways to re-examine and propose new practice whilst taking account of factors within the broader social context that impact on action possibilities (Collins, 2004; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1989). In this research CAR provided the vehicle for students and teachers to work together as partners to co-construct effective pedagogy. It also offered reflective processes to support and challenge teachers' learning in light of their new student voice goals and the broader demands on their practice.

The setting and participants. Three experienced teachers, Betty, Chicken, and Lincoln (pseudonyms) participated with their students in the research across three terms of a four-term school year. The teachers were members of the same learning team within one New Zealand Intermediate School (catering for students aged 11-13). Their 90 students participated in the classroom research activities primarily as their class curriculum but each was able to opt out of having their class work, perspectives, and images included as data in the research. A voluntary student research group (SRG) consisting of 12 students (four students from each of the three classes) participated as a focus group across the research.

The action cycles. The collaborative action research was conducted across three cycles. Action Cycle One (AC1) utilized visual methods to establish teacher and Student Research Group perspectives on effective pedagogy and conditions for engagement as the starting point for reflection, learning, and negotiated classroom action. The SRG completed a photo and drawing assignment in response to prompts around their perceptions of effective teaching, themselves as learners, conditions for engagement in learning at school, and their experiences of learning beyond school. SRG members led an exploration of their images with me in individual photo-elicitation interviews (Capello, 2005) that were audio-recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were returned to SRG members for member-checking (Mitchell, 1983) and analyzed by the three teachers. Emergent themes from this initial student voice data were explored by the teachers and their classes in Action Cycle Two (AC2) through discussion and visual mapping activities. In this way all 90 students collaboratively explored their perceptions of effective teaching and conditions for engagement with their teachers.

In Action Cycle Three (AC3) the students and teachers in each class co-constructed a class action research project. These projects aimed to better align one area of their class program with the student voice findings from AC1 and AC2. The teachers and their students adapted teaching strategies as data generation tools to plan, implement, and reflect on action as their class action research progressed. These strategies included questions, class discussions, minutes, class journals, individual student journals, video diaries, and charts. The teachers created video snapshots of classroom sessions

periodically across AC3 to inform their reflection, planning, and collegial collaboration (Curry, 2012). Students who opted out of the research sat out of frame during these video snapshot recordings.

Regular collaborative teacher meetings held across the three action cycles provided opportunities for the teachers to analyze data, plan ongoing action, and reflect on their learning together. Individual teacher planning and reflection meetings, scheduled around the collaborative meetings, enabled each teacher to reflect on and plan their particular classroom action research projects with my input. Together we discussed ideas, planned for classroom action, and reflected on video snapshots of classroom practice. Regular focus group meetings with the SRG students enabled these students' reflections on aspects of the class action research projects to also inform their teachers' thinking, planning, and reflection. Their discussions with me were audio-recorded and the transcripts forwarded to their teachers (once their names were removed).

My role in the research. I participated in an insider/outsider researcher role in the research (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Luke & Gore, 1992). As an outside academic researcher I initiated the project and visited the school on scheduled occasions to conduct research activities with the teachers and SRG members. I also participated as a student voice "mentor" (Cowie et al., 2010), contributing my ongoing learning about student voice as a resource for teachers as well as my prior experience as a teacher and professional development facilitator. I reflected with the teachers on data, findings and significant challenges in the research, and made suggestions on how they might generate data with their students as partners. In this way I was fully implicated in the research and the findings that emerged.

Collaborative action research—an opportunity for teachers' professional growth. The research offered Betty, Chicken, and Lincoln an opportunity for professional growth relevant to their interest in student voice. The project also offered the teachers a way to understand their students more deeply and to respond to broader professional development messages around the necessity of student voice.

You hear all this, you know you go to [professional development] courses and stuff and it's all about student voice and you just think I'm sure I don't do enough of it and what does everyone else do and you know you sort of wonder if you do enough … When you were sharing [the project] with the staff and you were talking about what kids think is good teaching, I started thinking that would actually be really interesting to know. And although as a teacher I think 'yep I could just ask kids' quite often you don't sort of get down into the nitty gritty of it. (Betty)

From the teachers' perspective, working with students as partners positioned students to teach them how they could best be supported as learners.

I saw this as a chance for professional development for myself, to actually know what the kids wanted me to teach them. Like how I can be a more effective teacher? What my role is to help them become an effective learner? (Chicken)

The student voice focus also offered an opportunity for the teachers to "tap into" students' capacity to teach each other.

It's trying to try and have the students collaborating and working on things as well and identifying the strengths of a lot of students too … so it's tapping into them and having the philosophy of students as teachers as well. (Lincoln)

Unlike traditional professional development where teachers learn from other educators, in this research the students provided the professional development, teaching their teachers, and each other, about effective teaching and conditions for engagement.

Opening up to students as partners—teachers sharing their learning as a starting point. The teachers shared their learning from Action Cycles One and Two with their classes as a starting point for the AC3 class action research projects. This dialogic move communicated to the students that their teachers had listened to their views on effective teaching and engagement, and were using this learning as a starting point for co-constructing more effective practice with them as partners. Each project also involved a personal learning challenge for each of the teachers, reflected in their research questions.

Betty's learning challenge was to make room for students to participate as pedagogical decision-makers to improve reflection practice in their class: "How can I include kids in designing self-assessment and reflection that is motivating and relevant to them?" At the outset of the project, the students wrote individual responses to prompts at the end of each week to reflect on their learning. Enthusiasm for this approach had waned with students and Betty viewing the practice as increasingly irrelevant. To re-vitalize flagging reflection practice in their classroom, Betty and the students collaborated to identify, implement, and evaluate the efficacy of a range of reflection strategies. They applied the "reflection trial" to their inquiry work and their class speech unit.

Chicken's learning challenge was to let go the reins of overt teacher control to increasingly involve her students in pedagogical decisions.

> I do want the student voice, I want them to have more power and I have got to make it work for me. I want them to be more child-initiated and directed projects, so they are involved in the decision making. (Chicken)

Together they explored the question, "What does effective home learning look like?" The students and Chicken had identified shortcomings with the current home learning—or homework—program. They decided the school-wide compulsory program did not provide sufficient opportunities for students' creative expression and imagination, nor were these tasks sufficiently relevant to students' own learning and their class curriculum. The students also perceived that home learning tasks were fragmented and they preferred tasks organized around a coherent theme.

Lincoln's ongoing professional learning challenge focused on how to build student leadership capacity and ownership of the class program: "How to [get] the students to take a little bit more ownership of what they were doing and how they could feed into what is happening in class so that it wasn't just teacher directed." He explored how to increase student ownership of the class inquiry by making a student-directed class movie. A student Production Team took decision-making control with Lincoln acting as a consultant to the Team when invited.

The three classes implemented their action research projects during class time and within their class program. This involved teachers and students negotiating, planning, and evaluating action together. Individual and collaborative teacher action research meetings in the teachers' non-contact time provided them space to reflect on and discuss their learning, as well as address implications in relation to the broader school and policy demands on their practice.

Opening up to students as partners—noticing, interrupting, and re-framing pedagogy. Opening up to students as partners required teachers' ongoing noticing, interrupting and re-framing their role in the student/teacher relationship and existing pedagogy in light of their student voice goals.

For Betty, opening up to students as partners meant opening up to students' potential to teach her about themselves as learners. This challenged the place of school assessment procedures that already provided enough data for Betty to set learning directions, but in ways that did not improve student status and influence.

I have a sheet, 'tell me about you type thing and what you're good at and what you think you need to work on', things like that. But I mean I have to say that probably, I don't do enough of that. I'm more these are the test results, right you need work on this, this and this. (Betty)

Betty also opened up to students' potential to contribute viable reflection strategies to the trial despite her initial reservations.

It's all going to come down to what I come up with isn't it? ... they will say, 'don't make it writing', 'do this', 'don't do that'. I don't think they will be able to come up with actual ideas about what we could do, they will say what they don't want in it but then it is, yeah so that I mean student voice too, that point, but then to come up with the actual things, I don't think they will go that far. I don't know, I might be surprised. (Betty)

Betty was surprised by the reflection strategies the students contributed. Their valuable input further bolstered her commitment to working with students as partners. The class met regularly to reflect on each reflection strategy as they trialled these, before voting as a class on each strategy's efficacy to support their learning. This project space opened up pedagogical decisions to students, increased opportunities for students to talk with each other about their learning, and deepened Betty's understanding of what counted as useful, enjoyable, and time-effective reflection practice for students.

In contrast, Chicken, was comfortable from the outset with learning from her students, but noticing ongoing opportunities to do this proved more challenging. In the early stages of the home learning project the students wrote individual responses to the question, "What is effective home learning?" Chicken initially planned to analyze the students' responses herself so that she could differentiate the home learning program to address the students' preferences. Through reflective discussion in an individual planning and reflection meeting, Chicken and I noticed an opportunity for the students to analyze the responses themselves that would move the students into a more influential and active role: "You've looked through them [students' answers to home learning questions] and you've got a sense from the class discussion, is it possible for them to look through them and write some things?" (Emily). The taken-for-granted practice of teachers taking responsibility for analyzing student work was interrupted and re-framed through reflection.

The decision to offer the students the opportunity to analyze the responses was pivotal to how the home learning project evolved. The students' individual perspectives

were re-conceptualized as data and Chicken engaged the students as partners to code the data and generate indicators of effective home learning. The students then used these indicators to redesign the class home learning program. By "letting go the reins of control"—in this case over data analysis—Chicken opened up room to learn from, and with, her students and inducted the students into deciding what counted as important pedagogy.

Opening up to student voice through familiar pedagogical strategies. The teachers adapted familiar pedagogical strategies for their class action research and coupled these with their intention to engage with students as partners. One positive effect of this was that the teachers came to view student voice as something that was within their sphere of influence.

> I remember when we had our first interview and I said to you that I didn't think I did much student voice, but now that I have got on with this, I actually do, but I just don't, I never considered it that, if you know what I mean, I just thought that is what you did but then after working with you and realising that is considered student voice … that I actually did more of it than I thought. (Betty)

Perhaps more importantly, the "students as partners" intention shifted their work with students into a new governance realm. The students helped decide what counted as important for their collective good in collaboration with the teacher. Chicken illustrated this in reflecting on student agency in the redesign of the class home learning program: "It's just more than creating activities; they're owning all of the criteria" (Chicken).

Controlling the criteria for what counted as success was a traditional teacher "job" that had been shared with students through joint inquiry.

> You both initiate the inquiry, so pupil and teacher jointly initiate inquiry; pupils play an active role in decision making and plan of action in light of the data and then review the impact of their intervention. So the kids have intervened in the home work, and we've both initiated it together. (Chicken)

Lincoln utilized the school inquiry process as a vehicle for student ownership of the class program. He re-conceptualized the classroom as a film studio and the students engaged as filmmakers to inquire into filmmaking and use what they learnt to make their movie. Lincoln also vested decision-making power with the student Production Team so that they held more authority than he did as a "consultant" to the film studio.

The Production Team accepted their decision-making authority at face value, taking on responsibility also for discipline within their team.

> I had said to a couple of them 'you are in charge of organising the production crew and who is in it' and they took that to mean that they could hire and fire people they wanted. They are all giving each other warnings because of their behaviour and it is quite funny … they are thinking that it is their power and responsibility and that they are ready and willing to abuse it. (Lincoln)

However, later in the project, gaps in the Production Team's capacity to manage the social dynamics within their group and lead the class also emerged, causing Lincoln to re-think the merits of full student ownership without stronger teacher scaffolding.

Opening up to students as partners—opening up to student feedback. Opening up to students as partners involved the teachers opening up to student feedback on their practice also: "It's good because we're often giving feedback to the kids … and sometimes it's good for them to give you a bit of feedback" (Chicken).

> However, opening up to student feedback generated discomfort for the teachers at times: "It is a little scary handing the kids the camera and saying 'tell us what you really think' … 'don't hold back'" (Lincoln).

> Even though the teachers were engaging directly with their students as partners in the classroom, the SRG reflections, gathered as feedback on the class projects, were perceived by teachers as personal feedback on their practice. At one point, Betty expressed discomfort with the directness of SRG perspectives on the perceived value of the class research activities.

> [This research] is moving towards more like a personal study on me as a teacher and I feel judged, I am starting to feel a bit judged. Before I felt that it was, in general, good teachers do this and I can reflect on it and I know personally what I do and don't do, but now I feel like I am getting hammered with what I don't do well. (Betty)

The teachers linked this discomfort with the broader school context of their work.

> We have just had a [staff development] morning—quite full on, 'this is what you are doing next term for inquiry', and you are sort of being pulled every which way. Then you are trying to do really cool stuff with the kids and I am scared it is just all going to turn to s**t and then I am not going to do what I, you know, what I set out to do, what I want to do. (Chicken)

Engaging in collaborative action research with students created formal opportunities for the teachers to devote time to student perspectives as valuable professional material and to the projects as their passion. However, becoming vulnerable to student feedback on their practice, even co-constructed practice, challenged the teachers, especially within a broader professional context that they perceived as critical rather than affirming.

Opening up to student voice—complexities for teachers. Opening up to students as partners involved the teachers negotiating school expectations and policy demands contradictory to their student voice goals. They wrestled with the co-constructive expectations of engaging with students as partners and the broader accountability demands on their practice around student achievement targets.

Betty: Like we are told to do all this co-constructing thing but then we are told, we need these results and these targets met and they don't really match.

Chicken: It is really hard to get them to connect.

Betty: You don't know what's more important.

Lincoln: It is hard and you are working harder than the kids, when you are having to do that, you are having to bring them from there, to try and match that back up to now.

Chicken: And you sort of and you end up 'wooooo' [gestures overwhelm].

Betty: So you are told to do everything but they are two different ends of the spectrum.

Dominating accountability demands meant that the three teachers located their action research projects in their inquiry program, a "low-stakes" curriculum area relatively free from pedagogical prescription. They avoided high-priority curriculum areas such as literacy. Although they all agreed that student voice and literacy were compatible, prescribed pedagogies designed around student achievement targets meant that teachers were less willing to open up their literacy program to student co-construction.

We have got kids that we have to target in literacy and they have to meet those targets if not … you panic. If I give the kids too much freedom are they going to meet the criteria? And then it comes back to you. Why aren't they, in interviews, then parents are saying, why aren't they [achieving]? What is happening? (Chicken)

The teachers perceived that engaging with their students as partners increased their professional vulnerability to parents, colleagues, and outside agencies. For instance, with the shift in reflection on learning in Betty's class to a collaborative, oral practice, Betty worried about not having enough "proof of learning" to meet accountability demands.

> I think that's why as teachers that is why we quite often revert to, okay get out your book and write this, because then it is there and you know it can be ticked off that it is done and anyone that comes in can see that is it is done, whereas anyone can say, oh well we did this paint chart and fruit machine [reflection strategy] and they have done all that and I found out this, but I could be making that up too. (Betty)

On the one hand, Betty and the students increased immediate and responsive talk and reflection about learning, themselves as learners and the impact of pedagogical strategies and messages on learning through their reflection trial. However, on the other hand, responding to student preferences created potential vulnerability with school-wide expectations around accountability for Betty. Examples such as this foreground the limited professional autonomy the teachers perceived they had to make changes in their practice that responded to student voice around effective teaching.

> There [are] times where it feels like 80% of the time, you feel like you are being told what to do and how to do it and you take 20% of the time to actually implement it … you are being told so many different things and you just drown under it sometimes. (Lincoln)

The teachers enacted their class action research largely within the boundaries of the school-wide curriculum; they worked "in the cracks" that low-stakes curriculum areas such as inquiry learning offered them to co-construct pedagogy with their students. This may not seem unreasonable, but it did appear to limit the influence the action research projects could exert on the existing school culture.

Concluding Reflections

One of the key challenges involved in supporting teachers to learn from, and with, their students as partners was noticing when existing teaching practices no longer served the teachers' student voice goals. The ingrained and taken-for-granted nature of teacher/student roles meant that opportunities for new possibilities that would elevate student status and influence were difficult to spot in action. The need for vigilance was

ongoing. The CAR planning and reflection meetings provided an important space in which to notice and interrupt existing assumptions as a starting point for re-framing co-constructive ways for teachers to engage with students as partners.

Limits on the teachers' autonomy to act and their potential vulnerability to established accountability demands emerged as a key consideration in the research. This has also been identified as a key tension for contemporary student voice work beyond this research (Czerniawski, 2012; Fielding, 2004). Even within a school espousing commitment to student voice, the fact that there were accountability demands on student achievement targets and requirements to demonstrate learning, meant that teachers' student voice work rendered them vulnerable to critique. School expectations on practice took precedence over the needs and preferences of individual classes, meaning that the teachers largely operated within, rather than challenging, existing boundaries on their practice to avoid potential professional censure.

One tension that continues to challenge my thinking is the need to construct spaces for teacher reflection and learning and the need to expand opportunities for students to participate as decision-making partners with teachers. The spaces for teacher reflection in this research excluded students, and this, in effect, shifted some decisions about pedagogy beyond the reach of the students. On the one hand, there were points in the research project where the perspectives of the students challenged the teachers to the point where perhaps, had they not had these student-free reflective spaces, they may have withdrawn from the research. However, it is valuable to notice where students are encouraged to participate and where the particular research design perpetuates their exclusion, especially in a project focused on opening up pedagogy to student co-construction.

Enacting student voice in classrooms is not a one-size-fits-all challenge. The teachers brought differing capacities and preconceptions about student voice, student/teacher roles, and possibilities for student influence to their student voice work, as did their students. Collaborative action research, with inbuilt spaces for teacher reflection and multiple feedback loops between participants, in the main, seemed to support teachers to open up to their students as partners in new ways that accorded students significant influence in pedagogical decisions. Sustaining these dialogic partnerships represented the enduring challenge of the research and one that provided many opportunities to reflect on how to enact ongoing student influence in a broader system where teachers' influence is at best limited. If teachers opening up to students as partners is to persist in order to elevate students' status and influence, then elevating teachers' status, influence and learning must also form an integral part of the student voice research agenda.

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Twitter in a Bachelor of Education Course: Student Experiences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to describe student experiences when incorporating Twitter into a Bachelor of Education (BEd) course. Data for this participatory action research were gathered from eight first-year BEd students who provided written answers to 16 open-ended questions and participated in two focus group interviews. Findings indicated that, after participants completed a Twitter assignment, their views of Twitter and its applicability in educational realms changed. Analyzed through the emerging concept of new pedagogy, the Twitter experience enhanced collaboration and communication between student and the instructor. An implication is that if BEd students are to effectively incorporate technology into future kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms, they need to experience digital literacy during undergraduate courses.

*A*round the world, digital literacy is being threaded into educational curricula and learning outcomes (e.g., Hague & Payton, 2010; International Society for Technology in Education, 2007). Even though teachers face intense pressure to promote student digital literacy, many kindergarten to postsecondary teachers lack formal training or background experience with regard to technology. Otherwise said, without the proper training, many teachers are expected to infuse e-learning, e-pedagogy, and technological tools into their lessons. Leonard and Leonard (2006) stated, "Technology integration remains problematic in that many teachers seem unwilling or unable to incorporate technology into the teaching and learning process" (p. 212). Furthermore, when teachers do incorporate technology into classroom

environments, often the e-activities or technological practices are quite basic. For example, Creighton (2003) and Preston et al. (in press) found that most educators who incorporate technology into their teaching use basic tools like YouTube, multimedia presentations (e.g., PowerPoint), and class websites. Despite the need for teachers to integrate innovative technologies into kindergarten to postsecondary education, growth in this area is slow, challenging, and somewhat superficial (Abbitt, 2011; Bauer & Kenton, 2005).

This study is founded on the belief that teachers need to be provided with ongoing professional development related to digital literacy and technological tools. With this assumption stated, the purpose of this article is to describe undergraduate student experiences when incorporating Twitter into a BEd course. Participants involved in this study were eight first-year Bachelor of Education students who helped analyze the data and are co-authors of this paper. Data were collected via one round of written responses to 16 open-ended questions and two focus group interviews. Findings showed that, after completing a Twitter assignment, participant views of Twitter and its applicability in educational realms changed. To analyze the findings, we unpack the concept of a "new pedagogy" (Fullan, 2013, p. 24).

Literature Review: Twitter and a New Pedagogy

The International Society for Technology in Education (2008) stated, "[Teachers should] model collaborative knowledge construction by engaging in learning with students, colleagues, and others in face-to-face and virtual environments" (para. 2). In response to this point, many authors contend that social media, such as Twitter, is a powerful environment to promote collaborative knowledge construction and socially enriched pedagogies (DeCosta, Clifton, & Roen, 2010; Denton, 2012; Seo, 2013). Even though there is potential to foster high-level learning, Greenhow (2009) believed that one reason why Twitter and other social networking platforms are not widely integrated in kindergarten to postsecondary settings is the lack of social media experience of educators. That is, the teachers' readiness and willingness to learn about technology and social media directly affected their use, or lack thereof, of technology within the classroom (Inan & Lowther, 2012; Rinaldo, Tapp, & Laverie, 2011). O'Hanlon (2007) investigated the challenges of educators who were digital immigrants and not comfortable with social media platforms. O'Hanlon found that teacher anxiety around using social media in classroom settings dissipated once they actually used it.

Specifically within the realm of higher education, Twitter has been slow to gain popularity (Kassens-Noor, 2010; Welch & Bonnan-White, 2012). However, available research about Twitter in higher education shows favourable results, for the most part. Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) found that Twitter engaged university students with course content, improved grades, provided students with prompt feedback, and increased student-to-student interaction. Other studies showed that Twitter was an ideal medium for enhancing a sense of class community and student engagement with course content (Dunlap & Lowenthal, 2009; Evans, 2013; Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2012). An additional benefit of Twitter in higher education is that it increased communication between students and the instructor, because Twitter enabled students to post questions and comments during and after class (Junco et al., 2011; Tyma, 2011). Young (2009) found that Twitter dissipated power dynamics between instructor and students, enabling the student to be in more control of learning. Through Twitter, students are able to express their ideas through their personal tweets and are empowered to consider and respond to other students' tweeted thoughts. Miners (2009) indicated that some college professors display Twitter feeds on a dedicated classroom screen as a way to embellish interaction with students in large or lecture-style classrooms. In turn, these studies documented that the use of Twitter in higher education increased student motivation to learn, increased one-task engagement among students, and improved the relationships between students and with the instructor.

With these benefits articulated, a few studies contradict the above findings. Welch and Bonnan-White (2012) concluded that Twitter did not have a statistically significant effect on student engagement in a higher education setting. Other studies point out that some postsecondary students do not like using Twitter, because they prefer to keep their personal social media activities separate from academic realms of communication (Dahlstrom, Walker, & Dziuban, 2013; Haytko & Parker, 2012). It appears that the advantage of using Twitter in higher education may depend on the course content, the assignment task, and the instructor and students' expectations for Twitter.

With or without Twitter, for most students, their world is a digital one. Through use of an array of digital devices, students are accustomed to instant and consistent interaction with family and friends. For some students, the thought of being socially disconnected from family and peer groups is almost unthinkable (Gillett, 2015). When instructing this Net Generation (i.e., a person who grew up witnessing the genesis and/or proliferation of the Internet), teachers have a new responsibility to incorporate digital learning and technological devices into their courses. When reflecting upon this new role, the most important change is not related to technology, per se. Rather, the change is conceptual

in nature (Prensky, 2012). In the past, within most classroom settings, teachers were the dominant leaders, while students were to be passive learners, obedient followers, and recipients of content. Within a technologically vibrant classroom, teachers are no longer caretakers of stagnant knowledge. As well, Fullan (2013, 2014) and Hattie (2012) believed that teachers need to be more than facilitators. They need to be activators or generators of constructive learning experiences for students. The re-examination of the teacher's role represents new relationships that need to emerge between, and among, teacher and students. These new relationships foster a type of learning that is decentralized, non-hierarchical, social, hyper-linked, collaborative, and symbiotic. These relationships spotlight a new role for students, as well, one that endorses the student as tutor, coach, and teacher of other students (and even the teacher). Moreover, this new pedagogy happens in an environment where technology is ubiquitous (Fullan, 2013). In sum, the concept of new pedagogy refers to the teacher as learning activator. It also means students dynamically assuming the responsibility of knowledge activator, producer, and disseminator (Fullan, 2013, 2014; Prensky, 2012; November, 2010, 2012).

Research Design: Participatory Action Research

In many qualitative research designs (e.g., case studies, phenomenology, etc.), the researcher is often the authority figure, responsible for collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the findings. Meanwhile, the participants of the study merely represent the voice of people or the case being investigated. In contrast, participatory action research, the chosen qualitative research approach used for this study, validates and honors the experiences of participants, making them the co-authority, co-researchers, and collaborators during the planning of the study, gathering of data, analysis of data, and write-up of the final results (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). Kemmis and McTaggart (2005) described participatory action research as a social process where co-learning, experienced by a group of people, is meant to improve professional practice and/or societal issues. The process engages the researchers (who are also the participants) in examining their knowledge, understanding, abilities, and beliefs about the pertinent topic. By its very name, participatory action research is *participatory*.

There are many reasons why participatory action research was conducive in the planning, conducting, and analysis of this study. To begin, the first author of this paper was the instructor of the undergraduate course referred to in this research, and the co-authors of this paper were both students in her course and participants/ co-researchers for this research. Some scholars may view addressing research in such a

fashion as highly subjective. Not only do we agree with this statement, but we also see great value in such subjectivity. We believe that the findings articulated herein have as much merit (maybe even more) than more traditional ways of conducting qualitative results. For example, all researchers for this study used their personal knowledge, senses, emotions, and intuition to understand the nuances and meaning embedded in the shared data. In turn, all raw data and its representation (e.g., transcripts, analysis, and write-up) have been thoroughly member checked (Stake, 2010) by participants/ co-researchers. Not only did participants review their transcripts, but participants also assisted in the analysis and write-up of the data. By having the authors create and own the findings, a credible representation of results emerges.

Research Background

At the time of the study, all participants possessed an undergraduate degree, predominantly a Bachelor of Arts with various specializations. With this degree, participants enrolled into the University of Prince Edward Island, Bachelor of Education program. As a part of the BEd program, all students, including the eight BEd participants of this study, were mandated to take a course entitled, *Communications*. The content for the Communications course involved the introduction of basic educational topics, such as gaining familiarity with provincial curricula, lesson plans, unit plans, student assessment techniques, classroom management strategies, and teacher-parent collaboration in school. The same course was offered during two timeframes (or two sections); each section had enrollments of 25 and 26 students. For this pass-fail course, the instructor asked the students to complete five assignments, one of which was based on Twitter, an assignment where every student was asked to tweet at least three times per week throughout the nine-week course. The content of the tweets was to reflect the students' learning, ideas, and/or questions relating to each week's course content. (See the Appendix for the Twitter assignment that was given to the students.)

After the course was completed, the instructor invited all 51 students to articulate their views and co-write an article based on their Twitter experiences. Eight students volunteered to participate. Data reflected written answers to a set of 16 open-ended questions, an activity that students completed six weeks after completing the course. Data also included two focus group interviews (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Puchta & Potter, 2004) conducted two months and one year after completing the course. The focus group interviews were transcribed by a few of the students. All students were provided with a written copy of focus group interview transcripts and were asked to member check

the transcripts. In analyzing data, we reviewed the written answers and the focus group transcripts to create a preliminary list of key ideas, commonalities, and differences, which converged into larger thematic patterns in response to the study's purpose (Creswell, 2012).

Data Findings

When first introduced to the assignment, most participants were hesitant. However, not only did their attitude toward the assignment change, but they also articulated many of the benefits they experienced due to Twitter. These benefits included feeling engaged with course content, developing a digital identity, and increasing their digital literacy. Participants also articulated several challenges pertaining to the Twitter assignment and the applicability of this social media tool in a kindergarten to grade 12 setting. These challenges include the 140-character limit and questions pertaining to age-appropriate use of Twitter. Descriptions of these thematic findings are explicated below.

Initial Attitude: Doubtful and Hesitant

Upon being introduced to the course syllabus and the Twitter assignment, the majority of participants were either hesitant or skeptical about the merits of the Twitter, specifically in a BEd program. For example, Robyn explained, "I thought the [Twitter] assignment was a complete waste of time." Other comments included "My initial reaction to the Twitter assignment was curiosity, and, I will admit, a bit of skepticism" (Brittany). "As I read the criteria for the assignment, I felt more and more nervous about having to tweet, having to set up tweet deck, and having to tweet 3 to 4 times a week. I was dreading it." (Angela). "I was sceptical about its potential for pedagogical use" (Joseph). "Although I felt quite confident in my abilities due to my prior experience with Twitter, I was unsure of how any assignment could be adequately completed in 140 character limits" (Rachel). "I was concerned that I would have problems setting up my account and to begin the process of tweeting. I was also concerned about things such as privacy while using a Twitter account" (Shannon). Robyn also explained that most of her classmates were at least somewhat resistant to the idea of the Twitter assignment. She said, "Almost everyone I talked to did not think that such an assignment fit into what they believed we should be learning in the Education program." Although the majority of comments mirrored a theme of reluctance or hesitancy about Twitter, Julie and Kaitlyn provided some contrasting points. "I felt somewhat excited, because

I would be able to use my [pre-established] Twitter account for something educational" (Julie). "I saw it as an easy way to boost our grades" (Kaitlyn). In sum, upon hearing that one of their BEd assignments was to regularly tweet about their learning, most participants were doubtful of its educational value.

Benefits: Engagement, Rapport, Communication, Assessment, and Digital Comfort

After completing the Twitter assignment, the views of most participants changed. Their comments represented several thematic benefits, one of which was student engagement. Kaitlyn explained, "Often times I would not really feel like doing the assigned readings for the week, but some of the interesting tweets about the content would spark my curiosity and make me more inclined to actually do the readings." Robyn said:

> The [Twitter] assignment helped to keep me engaged with the course material … Reading other people's tweets also helped me to pick out the key points from the week or helped draw my attention to something in the book that I hadn't paid much attention to.

Robyn also pointed out, "The assignment became so engaging and interesting that some of the tweets even became topics of discussion between classmates outside of class." Rachel explained how tweeting made her more engaged with course content when she said:

> When I would think of a topic to tweet about, whether it was concerning an assigned reading or an activity, which we had completed in the classroom, I had to think very deeply about what it is that I had taken away from that experience.

Brittany's comments summed up student engagement when she said, "Using Twitter . . . provides students with the opportunity to be active in their learning, as they are creating and expressing the content [of their learning.]"

Another thematic benefit that surfaced was an increased feeling of classroom community. In particular, this enriched sense of rapport was because Twitter increased the communication and sharing of ideas among students. Julie explained that tweeting was an easy and convenient way to collaborate with other students, without having physically to meet outside of class time. Kaitlyn believed that the content of her classmates' tweets revealed the personalities of individual students and the class,

as a whole. In turn, she indicated, "It was a useful way to get to know our classmates." Robyn's comment relayed a similar meaning: "It's a great way to know someone's personality, interests, and values." Rachel, Angela, and Brittany explained how student voice and ideas were communicated via Twitter. "It is such a simple and effective way to share ideas with others" (Rachel). "I absolutely loved how Twitter allowed me to view my peers' thoughts, ideas, and opinions" (Angela) "[Twitter enabled] students to work collaboratively with their classmates, building a community that supports a great learning environment" (Brittany). Angela and Rachel also highlighted that, in particular, Twitter was an effective outlet for students who were naturally shy or introverted during class time. These students could articulate their thoughts and ideas to peers in a comfortable fashion. Robyn's comments summed up the theme of community when she said:

> The interactive nature of Twitter has great potential for improving feelings of inclusiveness and community in the classroom … It also helped improve classroom rapport as there was a constant discussion occurring between all students in the class.

According to the participants, another benefit of the Twitter experience was that it improved communication between the instructor and students. Shannon found that tweeting was "a simple process that I could use to communicate quickly and efficiently with my peers and instructors." Shannon said, "It allows the professor to see what each student is learning and thinking about the class … it's also a very advantageous form of communication between professor and student." Julie believed that Twitter was a way "our professor could tell if we were doing our weekly readings or not." On the topic of assessment, Robyn articulated her belief that "It is a great form of formative assessment for the teacher, as they are able to see what the students are having difficulties with, what they understand, and what they like or dislike about the subject material, or lessons."

Another thematic benefit of the Twitter assignment was that the experiential learning of tweeting was a catalyst for improving the digital confidence of participants. Prior to the course, Shannon had no contact with Twitter, and, for her, the main advantage of the Twitter assignment was the actual experience of tweeting and experiencing Twitter. In turn, she said, "I think that's one really important aspect of this Twitter assignment—to alleviate the anxiety of working with new technology … I gained a lot more confidence in my ability to use these tools and programs." Rachel believed that tweeting in an undergraduate course "expressed ways of thinking about Twitter in an educational context." Kaitlyn had never used Twitter before, and she was thankful that she now had comprehensive experience of what Twitter encompassed.

Brittany confessed that, before the assignment, she had heard about hashtags, but was not clear on their meaning. She continued by explaining, "Prior to the assignment, I had no idea of how to really use or talk about Twitter." Likewise, Robyn said, "I feel the same. I had never used it before the class, and I had no clue what it meant to follow someone, choose to follow someone, or what hashtags could do. No clue." Angela provided a short narrative about how the Twitter experience helped her during her teaching practicum. She said:

> I had a kid in Grade 1 in my practicum who asked me if he was allowed to go on his Twitter account. He's 6 years old, and he is asking me about that. I could have a conversation with him about Twitter, because I now understand what Twitter is about.

For many participants, the hands-on experience of tweeting was like an epiphany, because, through the hands-on experience of Twitter, students began understand the need to become more technologically literate and the related benefits.

Challenges: Characters and Age Appropriateness

There were several challenges attached to completing the Twitter assignment. One frustration that some participants experienced pertained to Twitter's 140-character limit. Kaitlyn and Joseph found that the most difficult aspect of the assignment was compressing their thoughts into 140 characters. Shannon also found that the limit in characters prevented her from providing details or being descriptive about a special topic. On the other hand, Angela and Rachel found the 140-character limit to be advantageous, because it forced them to be succinct and to the point. Robyn found the 140-character limit to be inspirational, because "I started trying to think creatively about what I could tweet in 140 characters or less, and, all of the sudden, the assignment became quite enjoyable."

Issues of privacy and the potential content of tweets were two additional concerns expressed by participants. Participants envisioned these concerns as especially pertinent for younger students who might not fully understand how Twitter works. Rachel explained, "My major concern with introducing Twitter to a classroom would be the age range of the students involved. Younger students may not have the emotional maturity required to responsibly run a social media platform." Brittany agreed that it would be difficult to monitor the online behavior of all students. Robyn worried about

the teacher not having the ability to delete or regulate the students' tweets, and she questioned, "What if they tweet inappropriate things? What would happen to the feelings of the students in the rest of the class?" Julie viewed Twitter, in a university setting to be beneficial for learning, but within a public school setting, Julie believed that before using Twitter, issues around privacy must be taught to the students. Additional participants had concerns about privacy. Shannon confessed that she did not fully understand Twitter's privacy issues, herself. Rachel discussed the dilemma of teaching curriculum content and digital literacy with limited class time available. On this topic she said, "How do you weigh the importance of giving students technological tools versus 'I only have so much time to teach them actual course content?'" An interesting aspect of this finding was that the participants' Twitter exchanges provided them with hands-on social media experience, which was fundamental to being fully engaged in discussions about Twitter and its benefits and challenges.

Discussion: New Pedagogy

Postsecondary instructors are teaching the most techno-social generation of students in history. It is understandable that teachers may feel overwhelmed in attempting to incorporate technology into their classroom settings. Having stated such, it was interesting that some of the students in this study became anxious about the Twitter assignment and that most of the students had never used Twitter or had limited experience with it. This finding showed that, although instructors might potentially feel intimidated by the technological experience they assume their students have, this assumption may be false. When applying this point to BEd programs, it cannot be assumed that BEd students know how to incorporate technology into their pedagogy. Pre-service teachers need to gain technological experience, confidence, and skills during their undergraduate courses so they can effectively incorporate technology into future kindergarten to grade 12 classrooms.

Another finding was that the Twitter experience embellished the students' digital identity. At the start of the course, participants were skeptical about the merits of the Twitter assignment, but after experiencing this digital platform, they possessed increased confidence and comfort with the tool. Possessing this digital comfort enabled students to envision the benefits and challenges of using technology with their future students. Hosted through new pedagogy, it was the constructive learning experience that was effective in transforming the students' digital identity and views about Twitter.

Through Twitter, students used their own—and each other's tweets—to positively influence student engagement, classroom rapport, and student-student and student-instructor communication. This type of social learning welcomed all learner personalities to share their thoughts. For example, through Twitter's online communicative platform, students who were, by nature, extroverts or introverts, became equal. Prensky (2012) believed that a core purpose of new pedagogy is to use technology to enhance all types of relationships, whether they are face to face or online.

Incorporating Twitter into the postsecondary course was a break from the traditional learning activities. New pedagogy is altering traditional patterns of how and where information is acquired, stored, interpreted, and disseminated. New pedagogy is about transforming how educators and students are influenced by each other's ideas. For example, the collection of tweets reflected the group's co-created knowledge and where hierarchical levels of knowledge creation were alleviated. In such a manner, via new pedagogy, teachers and students move between being leaders and followers, a term sometimes referred to as reciprocal mentors (Gabriel & Kaufield, 2008).

Somewhat attached to the above point, new pedagogy is also related to the idea of reverse mentorship (November, 2012). Because most educators currently represent digital immigrants (i.e., people who did not grow up with technology), it is imperative that these educators call upon the leadership and knowledge of the Net Generation. Levinson (2010) explained that adults tend to view technology as a source of information, while students view technology as a way of life, as entertainment or a socializing tool. For the most part, students are open to technology. Teachers need to be open to the technological demeanor of their students (November, 2010). The idea of reverse mentorship is aligned with concepts of new pedagogy, where learning is non-hierarchical and a shared process and product. Within this research, although many students were somewhat anxious, at first, to complete the Twitter assignment, once they started, their anxiety quickly dissipated. It is during this stage of anticipation that reverse mentorship can thrive.

Another final aspect of new pedagogy is exemplified in the research design chosen for this study. Fullan (2013) depicted new pedagogy as teacher and students being learning partners. Participatory action research is about full partnerships during the creation, organization, and dissemination of research. New pedagogy is about students being proactive in learning. Within this study, participants were volunteers and co-creators of the research. Every participant contributed to the literature review, several students completed the interview transcripts, and every student contributed to this article. Moreover, almost every step of the research involved the use of Google Drive,

cloud-based software and storage systems that offered an online learning environment for synchronous and asynchronous interaction between all writers. In these ways, participatory action research exemplifies characteristics of new pedagogy.

Conclusion

Kelly, McCain, and Jukes (2012) indicated that many teachers are still presenting curricular content as it was taught during the Industrial Age. A daunting question facing many educators today is how to best serve the masses of postsecondary students who want training that is applicable to their life aspirations and that provides the skills needed to thrive in a digital world (Gillett, 2015). If higher education is to successfully prepare students for the future, then student-centered, hands-on, digital learning is part of the answer. Postsecondary instructors need to embody a type of pedagogy that focuses on real-life problem solving and knowledge creation with the assistance of technology. Becoming comfortable with using technology within postsecondary courses has great potential to grow a digital career-related identity, as opposed to a digital identity for social purposes. When teacher-to-student and student-to-student groups share their technical knowledge, there is great potential to promote the students' digital career-related identity. Postsecondary classrooms are readily equipped, via student knowledge, with a digital culture that is organic and current. However, this digital culture remains dormant until instructors, through employing new pedagogy, become the change agent tapping into and extending the digital abilities of students.

Interestingly, when conducting a literature review on Twitter (one of the most popular forms of social media), few studies surfaced. An implication evolving from this study is that additional research needs to be undertaken to explore the benefits and challenges of Twitter and how it can be linked to enriched student learning. Also, new pedagogy is a new concept, which needs be further investigated and refined. What supports to educators need to embody a new pedagogy? Through addressing such questions, the coevolution of technology and learning will be better understood, therein supporting teachers as they embrace the power of the digital age.

Note

1. The authors would like to thank Robyn Christensen, Shannon Kemp, Joseph N. Lillo, Kaitlyn MacKenzie, and Angela DesRoches for their invaluable contributions to the participatory action research.

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Appendix:
ED473 Communications Twitter Assignment

A. **Due Date:** Throughout the course. You *must* tweet at least 3 to 4 times every week of class. (One tweet a day would be great!) Final tweets are due by ***Friday, November 16, 2012 by 11:59 pm*** (for Sec G & J)

B. **Twitter Background:** Launched in 2006, Twitter is an online application that is a quasi-blog, quasi-social networking tool, and quasi-texting tool. It is designed to let other tweeters know what you are doing and thinking. Users have up to 140 characters (which includes spaces and hash tag addresses) to articulate their thoughts or "tweets." Through Twitter, users can follow the thoughts and activities of people they know and people they don't know.

C. **Why Tweet In ED473?** Tweets are meant to enhance the active learning, collective learning, and self-reflective practices of ED473 students.

D. **Twitter Expectation:** Students are expected to:

1. Tweet 3 to 4 times for every week of the course (that's once every day or two). The last day you can tweet is ***Friday, November 16, 2012 (by 11:59 pm).*** Because the course runs 9 weeks, you must have tweeted ***at least 36 times*** by the end of the course. You cannot tweet 36 times on the night of November 16th. Can you create multiple tweets in one sitting? Yes, but then tweet 2 or 3 again that week during different *sittings*.

2. Use professional/respectful tweets to communicate your learning, questions, and any other comments pertaining to course content, classroom activities, information from the textbook, articles for the course, handouts for the course, homework activities, etc.

3. Use tweets as a self-reflective, metacognitive activity to enhance personal and collective student learning. (Metacognition is the practice of thinking/reflecting about one's own learning in an effort to improve comprehension and retention of information.)

4. Use tweets to analyze course content. More specifically, tweet about your learnings, questions, and any other comments you might have regarding ED473 content and experiences.

5. Improve communication skills by clearly and succinctly articulating ideas through a 140-character tweet. (Being brief and to the point is an important part of communication.)

6. Tweet ideas using course section hash tag. That is, ED473G students are responsible for tweeting using **#ed473g**, and ED473J students are responsible for tweeting using **#ed473**j. **I will only assess tweets students have created within their own sections**. By all means, tweet across sections, but I will not assess cross-section tweets.

E. Set Up a Twitter Account (if you don't have one)

1. If you haven't already, set up a Twitter account (twitter.com)
2. If desired, personalize your profile page and decide on settings
3. Click . Write your tweet.

F. Setting Up TweetDeck Account for #ed473g & #ed473j Set up a TweetDeck account, so that your section's tweets are in one place or column. To create TweetDeck account:

1. Type www.tweetdeck.com in a search browser
2. Click "create account"
3. Enter e-mail and password, click "sign up"
4. Click "add Twitter account"
5. Enter Twitter username and password; click "Authorize app" and close window

Go back to TweetDeck. Set up one column in your TweetDeck just for your ED473 class/section. To do so:

1. Click "add column" (top left corner)
2. Click "search"
3. Enter hashtag (e.g., #ed473g); hit "enter"
4. Highlight search and click "add column"
5. Repeat the above steps to create a column for #ed473j
6. Go back to Twitter account and start tweeting

G. Remember …

- As a teacher, you are a professional. Everything you tweet represents both you and the teaching profession.
- All tweets are public and permanent. Any and all future employers will be able to potentially find and read your tweets.
- Each tweet identifies the tweeter (that's you), your screen name, & links to your profile and all previous tweets.
- Be considerate and respectful in all tweets.
- Tweets can include spelling abbreviations (e.g., "4U" [for you]).

H. Instructor Assessment for Twitter Assignment

	Needs Improvem't/Fail	Great/Pass
# of tweets	0 to 2 tweets per week (or a total of 0 to 35 tweets during the course)	3 or more tweets per week (that's 36 or more tweets during the course
	The 0 to 2 tweets per week were done in one sitting.	3 or more tweets per week were done in different sittings.
Quality of tweets	Tweets did not reference or relate to a variety of information from the course textbook, articles, handouts, homework activities, and/or activities related to ED473	Tweets referred or related to various information from the course textbook, articles, handouts, homework activities, and/or activities related to ED473
	Tweets displayed little to no self-reflection of course content and/or activities related to ED473	Tweets displayed self-reflection of course content and/or activities related to ED473
	Tweets displayed little to no analysis of content and/or activities related to ED473	Tweets displayed analysis of content and/or activities related to ED473
Professionalism	Most tweets were professional and respectful in nature	All tweets were professional and respectful in nature

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Teacher Research and Evaluation: A Story From Two Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

We have been fortunate to work with teachers at a 6-12 charter school who have taken the time to challenge themselves, to take a hard look at what is going on in their classrooms in terms of teaching and learning, reflect on what is working, what could be better, question how effective they are, and then share their reflections, their successes, and their doubts with each other. This project started out as voluntary and was changed to being mandatory *and* a part of the yearly teacher evaluation. We share our individual perspectives on this situation, and how it is unfolding.

*T*eacher research should be shared, celebrated, heard, and critiqued. The story that follows is about combining teacher research and evaluation at a 6-12 charter school in the southwestern part of the United States. This narrative begins with the opening remarks offered during the Second Annual Teacher Research Festival at the 6-12 charter school that is the focus of this article:

Being a teacher today is an act of courage; an act of courage because teachers today are facing many new challenges. Some of the challenges that we face as teachers we cannot control. Many factors are beyond our control, but we don't focus on what we can't do, but rather on what we can do. We can create classroom cultures where our students can feel safe enough to share their thinking, ask questions, make mistakes, and even fail (temporarily). We can meet the challenges of teaching individual students by getting to know them and show them we care and understand them as individuals with unique gifts and needs.

The teachers at this school do all of these things without anyone asking—it is the norm to go above and beyond. In addition to all of this, they also take the time to challenge themselves, to take a hard look at what is going on in their classrooms in terms of teaching and learning, reflect on what is working, what could be better, question how effective they are, and then share their reflections, their successes and their doubts with each other.

The teachers sharing today are willing to put it out there—expose their weaknesses, challenges and doubts with their colleagues—and often a wonderful thing happens. They learn from each other. A calculus teacher takes an idea from a history teacher and tweaks it into something that helps his students. A PE teacher and a math teacher talk and both leave the conversation with new ideas about helping students learn. Ideas and challenges are shared. Discoveries are made and tested. Some are successful, some are not. But even when success is not immediate, learning about teaching has occurred. And that learning can only happen when teachers are willing to inquire into their own practices, and be critical of their craft, and make themselves vulnerable.

And that learning is what pushes teachers to continue to hone their craft, and become better teachers, and more effective teachers. When teachers take seriously the responsibility of learning to be better teachers the winners are the students. Because the learning that takes place in a classroom where teachers take an inquiry stance, and look deeply at their practice and their students learning, just gets better and better.

All teachers can be reflective practitioners, practitioner researchers, and study their classrooms. However not all teachers have the opportunity to do it with all of their colleagues, and without being told what and how they need to research or reflect upon. The principal at this school has made that possible with the environment she has created. She trusts the teachers to choose a question of interest to them and to pursue it, provides time for them to come together and collaborate, does not chastise those who tried something that may not have worked the first time, and then celebrates their research with them—and that's why we are here today!" (Wood, 2013)

How did this celebration of teacher research come to be? In this article, we tell the story from two perspectives, from a university faculty member (Deborah) who facilitates the teacher research process and from the school's principal (Kathy).

Facilitator's Perspective

Telling this story requires a little background. I would not have even ventured down this path, if it had not been for my previous experiences that immersed me in learning

to do teacher research, and having teacher research become an innate part of who I am as a teacher. Below, I provide a brief description of the journey, and then share my perspective and the perspective of the principal of the charter school where teacher research has become part of the culture.

Beginning the journey. As a pre-service teacher, I was invited to participate in a teacher research group that included other novice teachers. We focused our research on science learning and teaching in our respective classrooms. The university faculty member who began and facilitated the group encouraged us to think deeply about our classroom practice and our students' learning. With support from the Spencer Foundation's Practitioner Research program, she was able to take us to teacher research conferences where we shared our findings and learned from other teachers doing similar studies in their own classrooms.

We did not realize that we were actually engaged in a process that was recommended by John Dewey (1928/1956) in *Progressive Education and the Science of Education*. Dewey recognized the potential of increasing knowledge about learning and teaching through reports authored by teachers reflecting on their own practices:

> The method of the teacher…becomes a matter of finding the conditions which call out self-educative activity, or learning, and of cooperating with the activities of the pupils so that they have learning as their consequence …A series of constantly multiplying careful reports on conditions which experience has shown in actual cases to be favorable or unfavorable to learning would revolutionize the whole subject of method. (pp. 125–126)

Dewey recognized that teachers who systematically reflect on their own teaching and on the learning of their students could deepen the base of knowledge and understanding for others. This would apply to university instructors as well as to classroom teachers. Reflecting on the practice of teaching, and of the students' learning through this approach, can inform others who wish to do the same.

In advocating for the experiential knowledge of teachers, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993, 2009) argue that academia is not the only place knowledge resides. In undertaking action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), teachers focus on collecting data relevant to a problem they have identified and taking action, based on these data, to address the problem. Samaras (2004) describes self-study as an ongoing process that "can include looking at one's teaching self, looking at issues of teaching and learning in one's classroom, and looking at self-knowing and professional identity from a developmental

perspective" (p. 23). Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) describe *self-study* as a new area of research in teacher education. They address issues of quality by stating, "its endurability as a movement is grounded in the trustworthiness and meaningfulness of the findings" (p. 20). In addition, they acknowledge two purposes, "informing practice to improve teacher education and also for moving the research conversation in teacher education forward" (p. 20).

This study provides an example of such research, which also is known as the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL) (Boyer, 1990; Shulman, 1999, 2004). According to Shulman (1999):

> A scholarship of teaching will entail a public account of some or all of the full act of teaching, vision, design, enactment, outcomes, and analysis in a manner susceptible to 'critical review' by the teacher's professional peers, and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community. (p. 6)

The scholarship of teaching and learning takes us beyond reflecting on our own practices to assume responsibility for our own professional development and for improving our own teaching. The scholarship of teaching and learning further moves us toward making that practice visible to others so that it can be critically reviewed by our peers, and possibly have meaning for others in their practices (Shulman, 1999).

Learning to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning at a very early point in my career deepened my understanding of practice. As a participant in the Carnegie Academy for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, I was fortunate to have become part of a national community of teacher researchers. This experience, and others, not only affirmed for me the benefit and importance of this kind of research, but also became a sustaining force in my staying in the teaching profession.

Continuing the journey. In the spring of 2011, I finished my doctorate and accepted a position at a southwestern university in teacher education. I had gone back and forth on the decision to join the academic world. I decided to go forward, but with a commitment to finding a place where I could facilitate a teacher research group. I was hoping to work with a few teachers who would be willing to ask questions about their practice and systematically collect data, and reflect on their experiences and the data. I was hoping to engage with these teachers in the scholarship of teaching and learning, which would include their sharing their findings with others. It offers a reflective and systematic approach to research and places the classroom setting and participants at the heart of the study. The focus is on a topic that teachers choose, something they

were curious about, something working well, or some issues they had to confront. I met a doctoral student who suggested her principal might let me propose the idea of developing a teacher research group to the faculty. And so off I went to visit the principal. Astonishingly, she agreed!

The first year of doing this was interesting to say the least. I was working with a faculty of about 20 experienced teachers, 6th to 12th grade teachers, in a local charter school. I was a little intimidated by the idea of working with secondary teachers—I have taught elementary and middle school, and had had some experiences with high school teachers, but did not feel it was my forté. The principal encouraged the entire faculty to participate and they did for our first few meetings. We met bi-weekly for about one and a half hours. After a few months, the group got smaller—there were only about 10 teachers in the group. At the spring break, we were down to six. One teacher dropped out to finish a professional portfolio, and another teacher took on an after-school coaching position. Down to four.

I was determined to continue to the end of the year. I have to admit, that although we were down to 20% at this time, I was always motivated and inspired by the work that took place at our meetings. The energy and excitement got me through the next two weeks of acclimating to university life.

True to my SoTL experiences, one of the things I had insisted on for this group was that the teachers had to share their research project with others. We invited other staff members at the school to come (several showed up), as well as the principal, and I was able to coerce one of my new colleagues to come with me. I had required the teachers to create a multi-media portfolio of their work through Merlot.org as their final presentation. This software was originally developed by Carnegie and then taken over by the California State University System.

One by one the teachers presented the studies they had been engaged in for most of the year. The principal, with whom I had had very little interaction throughout the year, was taking copious notes. I thought the teachers' studies were deep and rich representations of their initial question, but had no idea what the principal was thinking. After each one finished, there were a few questions for the presenter, and then it was quiet. After what seemed to be an eternity, the principal said:

I have one more question. How do we replicate this with the rest of the staff? This is real professional development. I can see from what you did you learned more about your practice than you would have if I brought in a bunch of *experts*.

And so replicate it we did the following year, except the principal told her staff it was *required*. Initially I was in a panic. This went against what I believed about teacher research and professional development, and working with teachers. However, this was not my school, I was a guest. Even though I now knew a few teachers well, and recognized many of the others, I was worried about how this mandate to do teacher research was going to affect the work, the process, and my relationships with the teachers.

The four teachers who had followed through with the project and I sat down with the principal a few days before the new school year started and discussed how things were going to go. The principal committed to not having any other kind of meeting at the time of the teacher research, which was on Friday afternoons, when students were dismissed early. No team or department meetings, no parent meetings—just, teacher research time. We were going to take attendance. She was counting teacher research projects as 10% of the teacher evaluation. Teachers who chose not to participate would not be able to earn that 10%.

One of the things that had impressed the principal the most from the original four was the fact that they all commented on how the exchange of ideas and questions, and learning about their peers' research, had informed their teaching and their research. The collaboration across content areas and grade levels seemed to be a highlight for them. She saw that the community they had built was strong, and that the teachers had gained a great deal of respect for each other through the listening and sharing that had taken place. She decided to start off by creating cross-disciplinary groups. Each of the original four members was put into one of the groups to help facilitate the work.

At our first meeting the principal laid out the expectations: This is 10% of your evaluation. Attendance will be taken. You will present your research at the end of the year to your colleagues and guests. Choose to research any topic or question you would like. I am not concerned whether you are successful or not; I want you to learn from what you do. I believe that if you really invest your time and energy into a project, and it does not work out the way you want it to—you will learn just as much as if it did. This is your time. I will not interfere. I will not be involved in meetings.

The first year went better than I expected. Most teachers seemed to be engaged. Some of the teachers clearly were not. In the middle of the year, I arrived for one of the meetings. The principal told me that the state department of education had rejected her use of teacher research as part of the evaluation plan for teachers. I gathered some research literature and shared it with her, and she wrote an argument for using the

teachers' research projects as part of an assessment tool. She appealed the original decision and was granted permission to use teacher research as part of the evaluation.

In early spring of that year I learned to use a data analysis protocol through a session at the Knowles Teaching Science Foundation. I adapted and used this protocol with the teachers at the school. They seemed to feel this was helpful as they prepared to summarize and share their research projects. As we approached the end of the year, the principal called me up and asked, "Do you have a rubric for evaluating the research?" I did not—but assured her I would come up with one. So I developed a list of criteria and shared it with her to be used with the teacher research projects. She formatted it and made it into a rubric she could use for the projects.

Most of the teachers were not very happy about having to use www.merlot.org, and having to showcase their work with a multi-media portfolio. I have used this software often in my courses as an opportunity for students to showcase their learning in very creative ways. The software is set up to allow the school to collect all of the teacher research projects in one "library," that they can then access at any time, or give permission for those portfolios to be made public so that others can also benefit from their work. The principal supported my decision to use this to present the final project, and although resistant and complaining, the teachers all finished their multi-media portfolios before our "Research Festival." The teachers expressed feeling exactly the same way as I remember feeling before my first presentation: "My work isn't very good. I didn't finish. No one will be interested in what I have to say. Other people will not understand this, or might think it is not professional enough." At this point they were not so sure of the importance and legitimacy of teacher research.

Their initial studies were intriguing. One teacher decided to try a flipped classroom. He spent a great deal of time recording his "lecture" for math instruction, and assigned watching the video as homework. The next day in class, students were assigned problems to solve and could work together in small groups. He found the students preferred this method, because he was available for support, if they had questions or were confused.

Another teacher was trying desperately to find ways for students to make more meaningful journal entries about social studies topics. She worked on changing the way she asked questions, but was not satisfied. So with the help of a colleague she had students do individual video reflections and found students were much more willing to share. Then she had them respond in writing, and found that the writing improved.

In both of these examples, teachers were trying to find what Dewey (1938) describes as "conditions that must be fulfilled in order that learning will naturally and necessarily take place, what conditions must be present so that pupils will make the responses which cannot help having learning as their consequence" (p. 266). It took a long time for teachers to come to define and refine the ideas and questions that they had, and much of this clarification came through the collaboration with others. The search for experiences that would not fall under Dewey's category of "miseducative" experiences (not wanting to stop or discourage learning), but rather to cultivate a "desire to go on learning" (p. 48) was the desired outcome to their research, and their students' learning.

This research festival was the first for the entire faculty. We held it offsite but in a nearby location. The teachers presented to an audience of their peers and invited guests. They each had only five minutes to briefly share their project portfolio. Interesting things happened as a result of this first research festival. First, the teachers who had been working together all year long had an opportunity to hear about their colleagues' final projects, and they were impressed by the work of their peers. Many claimed to have heard strategies and/or practices that they would like to implement the next year. Second, the guests were impressed and shared their appreciation and encouragement with the teachers. Lastly, one of the guests who was the superintendent of a small school district asked me if I would be willing to facilitate teacher research for K-8 teachers in that district.

Principal's Perspective

Our staff and faculty believe in the purpose and mission of the school and are deeply committed to that mission. To that end, all decisions, including those surrounding professional development, are in alignment with the mission of the school, and are determined by individual teachers' personal goals and data resulting from state-mandated testing. As the principal, it falls to me to make sure that alignment occurs. To this end, we have implemented a comprehensive system of evaluating the impact of teachers in the classroom.

Based on a five-tiered evaluation system ranging from high impact in the classroom, to little or no impact in the classroom, teachers are evaluated four times per year, twice by administrative staff, and twice by neutral specialists affiliated with the local university. This, together with their students' improvement in their scaled state-mandated assessment scores, has determined their evaluation. The evaluation is data-based, and feedback is given after each observation, along with suggestions

for improvement and a framework of support, so that classroom improvement can be implemented immediately.

In 2011, I was appointed by the governor of our state to the Effective Teaching Task Force. The Effective Teaching Task Force was formed with the purpose of delivering on the promise of recruiting, retaining and rewarding the state's most effective teachers. Over the course of three months, this 15-member Task Force met 10 times for over 60 hours to deliver recommendations to the governor.

To my dismay, I was placed on the "Professional Development Committee." To me, professional development was far too often inapplicable to the immediate classroom, if not downright painful. Our committee found, however, that the most effective professional development is also the most cost effective. Namely, professional development should be student centered and locally designed, its implementation the shared responsibility of the administrator and the teacher. All professional development should be informed by comprehensive data including, but not limited to, student achievement on standardized measures, results of informal assessments, observations, self-assessments, and surveys. Determination of success of the professional development must be partially determined by measurable increases in student achievement and professional reflection.

I have to admit, when I was first approached about starting a teacher research group, I did not leap in; it all sounded so "gooey" to me. As a data-driven school, committed to the school reform movement, there seemed to be too much subjectivity for my liking. However, it did appear to fit the qualifications of effective professional development. I was willing to have a small pilot group give it a try.

At the end of the year, the teachers presented their studies and I was hooked. Even though they came from different content areas and had different projects that were directly applicable to their students' classroom, the group came together in a spirit of common learning and problem solving. That is when I determined that next year the "Teacher Research Project" would be mandatory and a vital part of the total evaluation. As shown in Figure 1, each teacher's evaluation now consists of student improvement as determined by state-mandated assessment (50%), observation (25%), teacher research (15%), and student survey (10%).
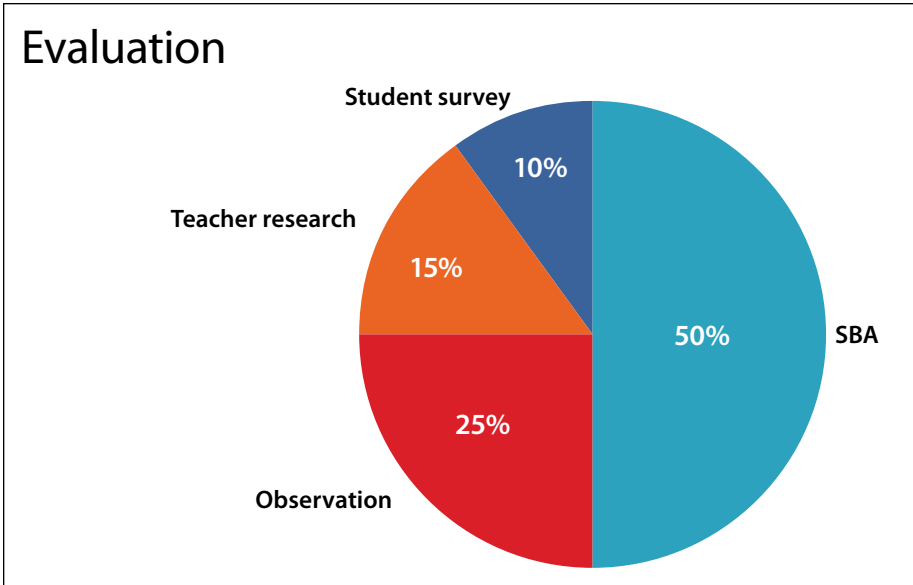
Fig. 1: Basis for teacher evaluation

Initially, the Public Education Department (PED) was not too impressed by Teacher Research either, and questioned my using it as a multiple measure. They felt the majority of the components (review of student work, planning, questioning, reflection, etc.) were already represented in the various domains of evaluation protocol. I would not have so ardently defended teacher research if I had not experienced it. It was not until I saw what it could do and the transformation that could happen, that led me to advocate for it as part of the evaluation. I did not mind fighting for it after this experience, and had to show that this was a reasonable thing to ask teachers for, that it was data based and not necessarily subjective on my part. Further explanation, however, helped the PED see things our way. We submitted the following:

Teacher Research can be summed up with the following:

What practitioners learn, however, can transcend immediate contexts. Those who bother to critically reflect on teaching and learning—to hold them up for collaborative questioning and systematic inquiry—can draw evocative lessons with the potential to resonate far afield. The lessons they learn and share won't provide justification for scripting teaching or creating recipes for "what works." The kind of knowledge that practitioner inquirers construct will be the kind of knowledge that can produce in others the shock of recognition, give them pause, inspire in them the will to try something similar, lead them to wiser and more informed and more intentional practices. (Wood, 2013)

Additionally, the observations of the third party evaluators pointed to this practice as instrumental in the improvement of individual teaching practice:

We have noticed that over the last three visits, some teachers who had scored low in a number of areas of the Teaching and Learning Framework have demonstrated marked improvement. These improvements appear to be the result of the professional development work the administration has been offering.

Upon receiving their state-mandated assessment data, disaggregated by student and instructor, teachers meet together and ask themselves essential questions concerning their classrooms and student success. From this introspection, teachers develop potential interventions and classroom strategies, which are then immediately applied in the classroom and the results reported back to the group every other Friday. Through this process, teachers have identified "bright spots" of their practice and can fine-tune their teaching to replicate these areas of success, while at the same time identifying techniques that do not work as well, and altering or eradicating them from their classroom craft as appropriate. They present the results of their work at the end of each school year during the "Teacher Research Festival." The presentations are open to the community and parents as well. This year for the first time, individual teacher projects will be published. At our school, it is not about teacher or administration ego. It is about the common wisdom of the team utilized for the greater success of the student.

The impact of this system cannot be underestimated. Almost immediately we saw our reading and math scores increase each year, from 37% and 40% proficiency, respectively, to the current proficiency rate of 96% for both reading and math. The greatest improvement has been in my "Level 1" teachers or teachers with 0 to 3 years of teaching experience. These teachers were able to improve their evaluation scores from, in some cases, "ineffective" to "highly effective."
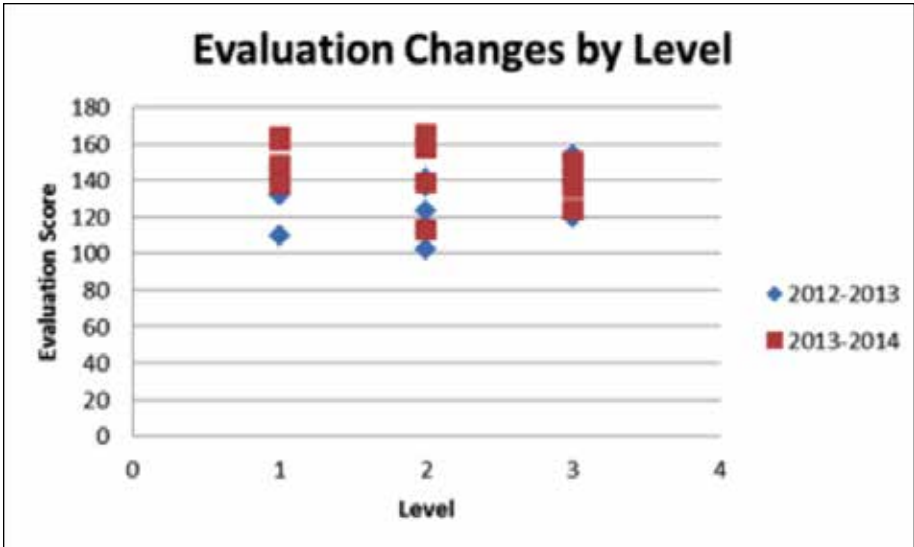
Fig. 2: Changes in teacher evaluation scores by level of experience

One teacher in particular comes to mind. This teacher was not only ineffective in the classroom, but was also miserable and considering leaving the profession altogether. In many cases, the students' scaled scores were getting worse while in her class. Figure 3 shows the data points of her students' scaled scores. Students above the "0" improved in performance, those below got worse.
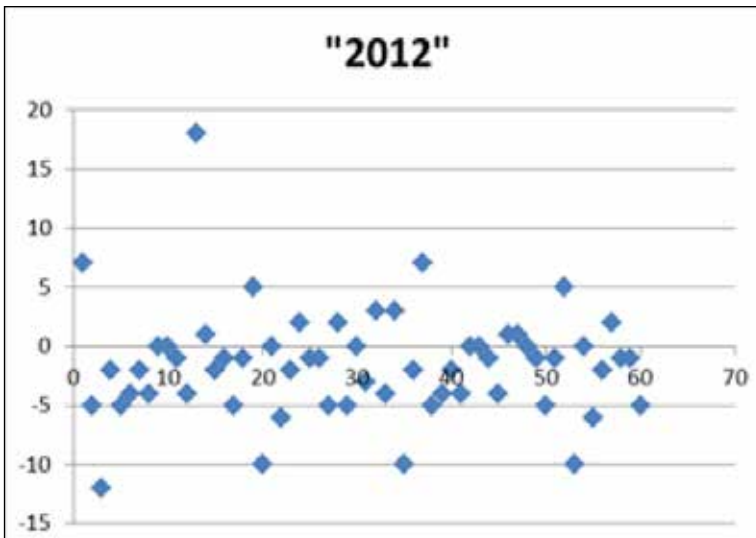

Fig. 3: Student scaled scores for a level 1 teacher

That year, this instructor decided to give the profession another chance. She decided to look at ways she could "lead from behind rather than in front" (she was known for having an autocratic style). Together with her colleagues, she developed strategies she could immediately implement in her classroom. The next year saw a different story in her students' performance. The vast majority of her students improved.
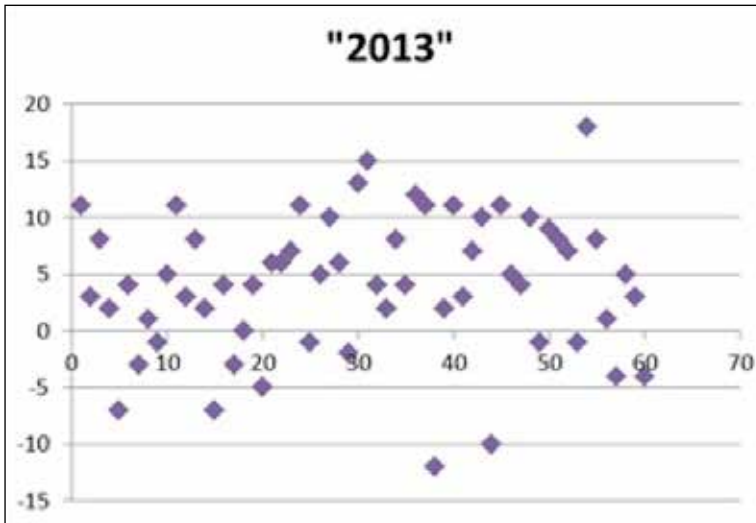

Fig. 4: Student scaled scores for this level 1 teacher the following year

Her student surveys were also impacted. Prior to her project, her survey responses were far below the school average. Comments like "I wish she liked us more" or "I wish she was kinder" were common. Her lowest score was in response to the comment "My teacher really tries to understand how students feel about things." The next year saw dramatic improvement in her students' responses.
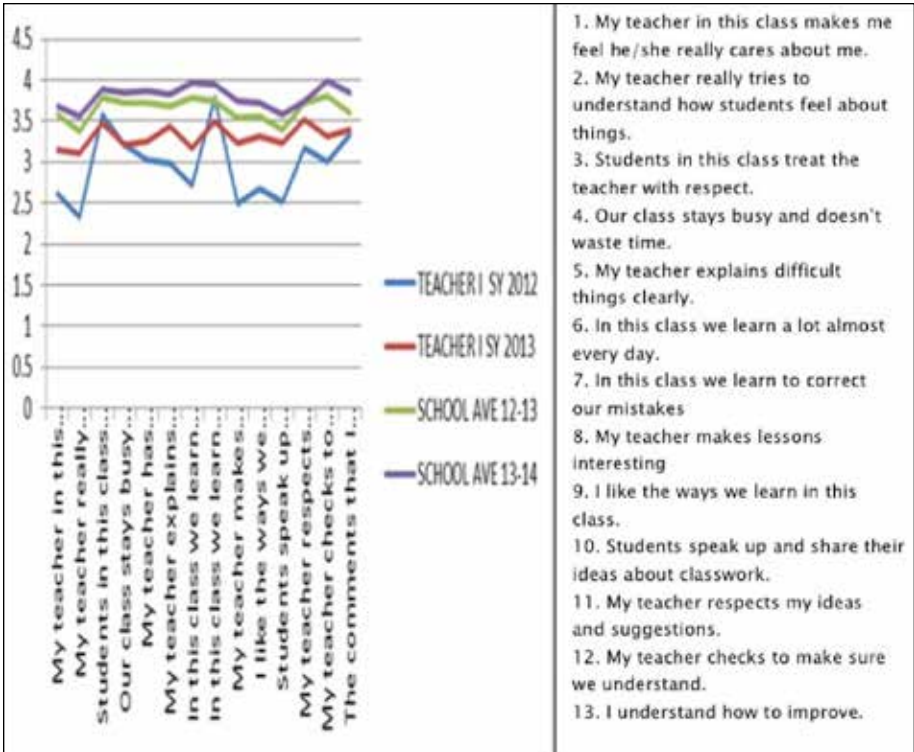
Fig. 5: Student survey results for level 1 teacher and school average

True, the teacher is still below the school average, but she is getting better. More importantly, she is still in the profession and she reports she is happier. Also of note is the school average continues to improve.

Today the school is still focused on continuous improvement. In 2013, our school became one of only 11 charter schools to be recognized as a Blue Ribbon School. In 2014, the school was ranked 48th in the nation of all public and private schools for rigor by the *Washington Post*. It was ranked 64th in the nation and first in the state of all public and private schools for college preparation by *US News and World Report*; among only national charter schools it was ranked 17th. *Newsweek* ranked the school in the top 25% of the best 2000 schools in the nation. Most rewarding, however, is the performance in the lowest performing 25% of our students. In the past three years the school grade for the lowest performing 25% of our students went from a letter grade of D in 2012 to a letter grade of B in 2014. I cannot lay the success and improvement solely

at the feet of the Teacher Research Project, but I am fairly confident a good portion of the credit goes to this initiative.

Reflection and Future Goals

As we reflect together on this experience, we are looking forward to its replication. The principal has been given funding to replicate this school in another location. She states, "For the future, as we replicate to different campuses, the teacher research will be replicated as well." *Replication* is by definition replication of the entire program, not just elements of it. This requires the same: leadership, board, teaching methods, discipline, traditions, mission statement, and teacher research. Teacher research is part of the school's way. Teachers have been immersed more deeply into the unique lives of their students and their students' thinking. They have modified practices because of their intentional look at what is happening in their classrooms. They have created through their multi-media portfolios, kept in one library online that all teachers can access, what Dewey (1928/1956) asks for: "A series of constantly multiplying careful reports on conditions which experience has shown in actual cases to be favorable or unfavorable to learning…" (pp. 125–126). By sharing these portfolios they are also attending to what Shulman (1999) emphasizes as a quintessential part of the scholarship of teaching and learning, sharing practice with others so that it can be critiqued by peers, and potentially influence their own practices. As Hashweh (2003) found, this process has given teachers the opportunity to:

> remain open to new pedagogical possibilities while recognizing their limitations; construct new knowledge and beliefs; develop their ideas and put them into practice; synthesize new with prior ideas that had been valuable; and collaborate with colleagues and possibly university educators in order to maintain a support system. (p. 428)

We also believe that we have affirmed what Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) described: The emic perspective of teachers as knowledgeable experts is privileged. The change that occurs is not from the top down, but organic, from the classroom, led by teachers. Teachers as professionals take an inquiry stance in their own context. Their practitioner knowledge is both valid and generative, and the research and practice boundaries have been blurred. Teachers claim to feel empowered and energized by the process. A strong community and shared respect has emerged.

We do agree that the first-year voluntary "pilot" of this project was beneficial, and most probably necessary. In our initial conversation, the principal repeatedly asked

what were the criteria the teachers would be held accountable for? How would she know if they had done the work? She felt the idea was fuzzy or nebulous, not well defined. This is true, especially in teacher research when each individual teacher's question is personal and unique to their classroom setting. We had no idea how this would turn out, but the university facilitator felt strongly about the value of teacher research from many years of experience. The university facilitator gave the principal a copy of "Teacher Research: Stories of Learning and Growing" (Roberts, Bove, & van Zee, 2007) as examples of others' teacher research projects. The principal reluctantly acquiesced, her agreement led to other obstacles as she tied this to teacher evaluation in the second year. Because of what the principal had observed during the pilot, she was willing to advocate for teacher research to be accepted by the state as part of teacher evaluation.

From this experience we believe that it is important to try this first with a group of teachers who are willing, because their energy and enthusiasm is evident and contagious. With a few teachers who "get it," it is more likely that others will be willing to participate and see the value. This is especially true when collaborating with principals who have not yet seen the transformative power of teacher research. This is a "replication" of our first (and continued) experiences in teacher research. We have come full circle!

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"Roots and Routes": Professional Educators' Transformative Insights Into the Linguistic and Experiential Worlds of Generation 1.5 Language Minority Students

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ABSTRACT

This article explores findings of a project that addressed the academic literacy development of children who are born and/or begin their formal schooling in Canada, but who are raised in homes where the societally dominant language is not the primary idiom. It focuses on collaborating educators' professional learning through engagement in community-referenced action research that provided opportunities for eighth graders to explore themes related to their developing personal and socially situated identities. One key insight pertained to students' access to information regarding their family histories and trajectories; a second, to linguistic dynamics internal to generation 1.5 linguistic minority youths' households.

*T*his article takes up findings of an action research project that focused on the academic literacy development of children who are born and/or begin their formal schooling in Canada, but who are raised in homes where the societally dominant language is not the primary idiom. While we elucidate key elements of a researcher-practitioner-community collaboration that had as its central goal to foster the school success of this student cohort, our main focus is on the lessons that we, as the students' teachers and mentors, learned—indeed, *needed* to learn—in the

course of collaborative inquiry. These lessons were essential for us in comprehending and engaging with the issues that these youth confronted in negotiating academic expectations related to school-based learning, while navigating their personal and social worlds (Comber, 2013; Timperley & Lee, 2008).

Schooling Generation 1.5 Linguistic Minority Students

We use the term *generation 1.5* (G1.5) to refer to a demographic that comprises Canadian-born linguistic minority students as well as children born outside the country who start formal schooling, that is, kindergarten, in Canada. We have selected this term because the youth with whom our professional lives are intertwined share characteristics of both first-generation immigrants and second-generation children of immigrants (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). As such, these students do not fit into the traditional categories of non-native speakers since they are both orally proficient in English and reasonably familiar with Canadian culture and schooling (Roberge, 2002).

What do we know about the characteristics of generation 1.5 English language learners? Following Vasquez (2007), G1.5 students typically are initially identified by teachers as "highly engaged and motivated," and by the time it is evident that their classroom performance outcomes are insufficient to ensure academic success, it is often too late to intervene within the particular school year. From research at the tertiary (e.g., Roberge, 2002), secondary (e.g., Forrest, 2006), and primary (e.g., Schecter, 2012) levels, it is evident that these students have characteristics and needs distinct from both mainstream and immigrant language minority students (cf. Garnett, 2012).

We know that students who are born in North America or who arrive prior to beginning formal schooling may develop oral fluency in their heritage language, but typically have not had, and will not have, an opportunity to develop reading and writing skills in the home variety (e.g., Cummins, 1991; Schecter, 2012;[1] Wong Fillmore, 1991). These characteristics are significant in light of research evidence accumulated over the past 25 years that linguistic, cognitive, and affective advantages accrue to students who develop literacy skills in two or more languages and continue biliterate development at least through elementary school (see Corson, 1993, and Cummins & Danesi, 1990, for reviews). Indeed, one of the most consistent findings in the literature on bilingualism is that literacy skills in the first (L1) and second (L2) language are strongly related. In other words, L1 and L2 literacy are interdependent, or manifestations of a common underlying proficiency. This *interdependence principle*

is fundamental to understanding why literacy development in a minority language is not just promoting proficiency in that language; it is also promoting overall conceptual development and other forms of academic language that are transferable across languages (Cummins, 1996). By contrast, research has not produced sufficient evidence to support a hypothesis based on an "oral-written continuum." For example, Schecter and Bayley (2002) conducted an extensive study of language maintenance and cultural identification among Mexican-descent families in California and Texas, analyzing the oral and written narrative production of 40 focal children in Grades 4, 5, and 6—20 at each site—and found no correlation between the oral and written production of the focal children. On the contrary, they found that the children's language uses within these different modes represented distinct dimensions of language proficiency that are separable and situated in localized practices linked to the roles that English and Spanish played in the children's lives.

The preceding should not be taken as suggestive of a stance regarding "deficits" associated with particular child socialization practices or groups. Out-of-school literacies are not to be taken for granted with reference to any demographic grouping, including monolingual mainstream learners (cf. Lankshear, 1997). However, from sociolinguistic research (e.g., Bayley & Schecter, 2003; Guerra, 1998) and from critiques emanating from the New Literacy Studies (e.g., Gregory, Williams, Baker, & Street, 2004; Hull & Schultz, 2002; Street, 2005), we understand well that learners' school literacy practices are culturally constructed, located both in power structure and in prior knowledge. We also know that prior knowledge is complex, and to build upon it productively we need to acknowledge that home background affects deep levels of identity and epistemology, including the stances that learners take toward calls to reading and writing in formal educational settings (Gough & Bock, 2001; Lee, 2007; Street, 1997).

Method: What We Did and How We Did It

Overview

This project sought to: a) extend students' literacy repertoires through direct exposure to fields of experience; b) develop students' academic problem-solving skills; and c) provide pre-adolescent youths with opportunities to explore and develop their personal and socially situated identities. It revolved around a yearlong initiative comprising an interventionist curricular program that met once a week for two and a half hours during the regular school day.

The study sought to ascertain: the types, and combinations, of approaches and activities that students, teachers, and other stakeholders considered helpful in fostering G1.5 language minority students' academic proficiency, and the role of activities that engaged youths in self-representational processes related to identity projection in promoting students' critical literacy and problem-solving abilities. The study's method involved a cyclical and recursive process (Boeije, 2010; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998) of gathering and analyzing data related to students' academic problem solving and self representational processes, developing instructional formats and delivering instructional activities, identifying themes and categories, and sharing findings with students, educators, parents, and other engaged stakeholder groups. The study combined qualitative methodology that included intensive participant observation and ethnographic note taking, with some quantitative measures designed to process information on a large scale.

Participants

Participants included: 25 Grade 8 students, the majority aligning to the demographic under study (i.e., youths who were either born or began formal schooling in Canada, but who speak a language other than English in the home); the students' parents or caregivers; and the collaborating team, comprising university researcher Sandra Schecter, Grade 8 homeroom teacher Alice Wong, ESL Lead Resource Teacher Barbara Arthurs, and Randall Public School principal, Sherri Sengupta. While parents/caregivers did not attend the instructional sessions, we consider them active participants since they interacted with members of the collaborating team and were present for school events at which team members elaborated project goals (in relation to the extant research on G1.5 language minority students) and presented study findings. As well, as will become apparent, parents played a catalytic role with regard to the identity work in which students engaged.

Data Collection

The lead author (at times also referred to as "Sandra" in this article) and the two participating teachers were responsible for designing the plans to facilitate each instructional session. To inform our analytic strands, we collected a variety of data types:

Field notes recorded by a member of the collaborating team as the session activities were ongoing tracked both the trajectory of the pedagogic framework that emerged from the project's action research agenda, as well as students' cognitive and social interactions with the curricular texts. In these close monitorings, we paid special

attention to key moments and events associated with the learning and teaching processes that the activities generated.

Project activities were negotiated through *postings on Google Docs*. Generally, Sandra provided a draft session outline based on previous online or face-to-face discussion among the instructional team. Once a rudimentary plan was in place, we three then provided input to work out the details of the upcoming session. The process of making our thinking visible through these postings not only was helpful as we were getting to know one another and the students we were working with, but also allowed us to problem-solve around issues of logistics and sequence that arose from the plan. These exchanges were also helpful in making transparent the inconsistencies and gaps in our own assumptions regarding students' experiential repertoires and linguistic resources.

Notes on collaborative team meetings taken by the first author provided opportunities for increased understandings of the issues confronting G1.5 linguistic minority youth and for triangulating findings contained in the observational data related to instructional interventions.

Survey protocols and informal conversations with participating students before and after sessions elicited information on: family demographics, including ages of siblings and other household residents, parental levels of education and vocations, length of residence in Ontario for all family members; parents' orientations toward linguistic and/or cultural maintenance; students' language use patterns, including patterns of communication (i.e., who speaks what language to whom); students' orientations to previous and current educational experiences and more broadly related contextual issues.

Where project activities called on students to prepare oral presentations, submit written texts, or produce visual representations (e.g., maps), these artifacts were uploaded onto Google Drive. These texts were subsequently assembled into both *student and activity portfolios*. They constitute much of the pedagogical documentation on which observations leading to the professional learning outlined in the Findings section of this article are based.

Informal exchanges with parents/caregivers over activities initiated by the project, and other relevant aspects of family members' lives, provided valuable insights as well.

Data Analysis

Two major strands of analysis were undertaken. One involved a process of: generating instructional protocols that showed promise in fostering G1.5 linguistic minority students' academic literacy development and problem-solving skills; documenting focal students' responses to these heuristics; and analyzing the understandings or impediments revealed in the debriefings that followed related activities. For this strand, rubrics were devised to elicit individual students' strategies in approaching different kinds of problem-solving tasks and to evaluate their receptivity to different meditational approaches; and comparisons were made across focal students. A second strand involved: in response to project developments, developing a series of heuristics that facilitated students' critical explorations of their evolving hybrid identities, and documenting students' orientations to, and engagements in, this identity work.

We are aware that the data sources for these two foci are not entirely separable; nor would we wish to impose artificial distinctions where such differentiations are not useful. Both foci involved youths in critical literacy activities designed to facilitate their engagements with tasks, protocols, and texts that they were likely to encounter as they negotiated the various demands of formal schooling. And, with both foci the information we were able to obtain regarding students' previous schooling, as well as their extra-school experiences, informed how we shaped and modified curricular interventions. The key contrast signaled in the differentiation of strands relates to analytic breadth, with the first focus attending more narrowly to strategy sequence and logical reasoning in relation to circumscribed problem-solving exercises, and the second focus, to the socially situated process involved in students reflecting on their experiences, beliefs, and other aspects of personal development, and projecting these understandings on their own identity representations (Gee, 2003; Zoss, Smagorinsky, & O'Donnell-Allen, 2007). In this article, we privilege the insights we derived from the latter focus, that is, students' processes of identity representation and projection.

Transcriptions, written texts produced by students, observational notes, summaries, and other data were organized into tentative categories that recorded regularities and patterns (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). By iteratively examining, through a process of analytic induction, we were able to bring into focus the extent to which different instructional approaches were helpful in fostering the academic literacy development of these students and the various complex forces that informed the identity work of G1.5 linguistic minority youths.

"Roots and Routes"[2]: Collaborative Inquiry at Randall Public School

In the remainder of this article we elucidate the community context of our initiative at Randall Public School, share examples of activities that brought together our cognitive and thematic agendas, and discuss the professional learning that resulted from our engagement in this collaborative undertaking. We begin by contextualizing our research through the following brief description of the Randall school community.

The Randall Public School Community[3]

Randall is a K–8 school located at the northern boundary of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). In the fall of 2013, the school population was 702, with 560, or 80%, qualifying as English language learners (ELLs). Of these 560 ELL students, 493, or 88%, were Canadian-born. In addition to English, the main languages spoken in the homes of Randall students, as identified by parents, were Urdu, Tamil, Punjabi, Cantonese, Mandarin, Gujarati, and Hindi. A majority of Randall students present to their teachers as native English speakers. Indeed, all but 4 of the 25 students in Ms. Wong's Grade 8 class did not have a marked dialect and were able to converse fluently in English.

Most Randall students do not engage in activities outside of school that involve "team" experiences (e.g., sports such as soccer, hockey, basketball), although many are enrolled in solitary enrichment activities (e.g., learning to play a musical instrument, tutoring classes). Randall teachers report the following pattern with regard to English language development among the ELL student cohort: "After making some progress in JK/K, they begin to stagnate, or plateau, and remain at a Stage 3 or 4 through Grades 2, 3, 4."[4] By Grade 4 or 5, many of the Canadian-born ELL students are referred to an In School Team (IST) meeting for help with difficulties around speaking and writing with depth and elaboration.

Randall parents report that they speak their first language at home with their children, but their children respond in either English or a mixture of English and the parents' first language. Parents place a heavy emphasis on their child achieving high grades. However, most attest to difficulties in supporting their child academically, attributing this problem to their lack of familiarity with the Ontario school system, Ministry curricular expectations, and the ways in which subjects are taught and tasks are presented in Western schooling milieus (e.g., mathematical language or comprehensive approaches to literacy acquisition involving reading strategies and writing with supporting evidence). Moreover, they do not feel at ease with the role they are asked

to play in supporting their child's learning (e.g., checking the student's homework or reading with their child a minimum of 20 minutes a day); and many default to traditional tutoring lessons often dispensed by teachers trained in their home country.

Embarking on an Action Research Collaboration

Strategic orientations. Cumulative evidence from the preliminary study suggested an interventionist project focused on developing G1.5 students' linguistic skills in tandem with their conceptual thinking, and combining three strategic orientations: A first orientation, which we call *strategizing learning*, focused on how learners think through a planning and/or problem-solving process. This component is represented by short exercises designed to build higher-order cognitive skills by making academic problem-solving strategies explicit (Feuerstein, Falik, & Feuerstein, 2015; Feuerstein, 1990; Passow, 1980; Rohrer & Pashler, 2010). A second orientation revolved around an *experiential learning* component, based on insights derived from "everyday concepts" acquired through exposure to experiences through activities supported by the project (Hedegaard, 1998; van Oers, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978). Examples of such activities included class trips to a waste management and recycling centre (see Figure 1), a farm, an art museum, a large urban produce market, and historical sites, as well as exposure through video to documentary footage about others' lives and circumstances.

Fig. 1: A visit to York Region's Waste Management Centre

For example, a field trip to the Art Gallery of Ontario fit well with the project's "blended identities" theme: in Figure 2 our students are seen discussing a painting titled, *The Immigrants*, by the Canadian artist Fred Varley. Following a guided tour of Euro-Canadian and First Nations art, our students, working in their cooperative groups, had the opportunity to create a cityscape sculpture in a workshop led by an in-residence artist. We found experiential learning to be a crucial component of our pedagogic agenda because, as van der Veer (1998) points out, academic learning presupposes everyday concepts as its foundation.

Fig. 2: Our students discussing the painting *The Immigrants* with AGO guide

A third, *learning enrichment* orientation was aimed at facilitating students' learning of academic subject matter concepts through bridging activities that involve applying concepts gleaned through experiential activities and related talk about language (Gibbons, 2003; Gutierrez, 1995; Toohey, 2000). Shortly after the inception of the project at Randall in fall 2014, the team elected to add a fourth strategic orientation to our action research agenda: each session would incorporate principles of *cooperative learning*, in that to accomplish the activity's objectives, students would work together collaboratively, drawing on one another's experiences and knowledge.

Content and organization. In face-to-face and email discussions the preceding spring and summer, collaborators honed in on the content, or subject matter, of the pedagogical project—a series of cognitively challenging enrichment activities (cf. Gibbons, 2009), loosely following the Grade 8 Ontario curriculum, that allowed students to explore themes related to their developing personal and socially situated identities. We titled the project, "Roots and routes: Our blended identities," to signal the importance that Randall educators place on creating vehicles for students to both maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage and thrive in their New World environment (cf. Patel, 2006; Plaza, 2006). At the start of the academic year 2013–14, letters went home to caregivers of students enrolled in Ms. Wong's Grade 8 homeroom class explaining the goals of the "Roots and Routes" project and soliciting their permission for their child to participate. All caregivers responded positively to the informed consent exercise.

Focused on the theme of identity—or, more precisely, the complex identity work that students have to do to both maintain their linguistic and cultural heritage and negotiate a bicultural identity that would allow them to adapt to Canadian society— project sessions were organized around themes relating to identity reconciliation that moved outward from the individual, to the family, to the school, and finally to the community. Sessions ranged from two hours to half a day in length. They were scheduled once a week throughout the school year, with gaps during holiday times or intensive work periods for students and teachers.

For example, a session constructed around the theme of "community" might begin with a short (10-minute) problem-solving exercise, or "Brain Teaser," where students are shown a grouping of cut trees lying on the ground and asked to determine the order in which the trees were cut down. This independent work would be followed by a teacher-led class discussion of the solution, in turn followed by a debriefing session in which students would volunteer the strategies they followed in attempting to solve the problem. Transitioning to an experiential component related to the same theme, students would then view the documentary film, Wasteland, where Vic Munoz, a successful artist, returns to Rio de Janeiro in his homeland of Brazil and works closely and collaboratively with some people he meets at the world's largest landfill. These are the workers, both men and women, who wade into the garbage heaps each day picking recyclable materials, labour for which they receive scant recompense. At the end of the session, students might assemble in their cooperative groups to engage in discussion about the film. This discussion represents a mediated learning activity in that it provides opportunities for students to become comfortable with representing the knowledge and insights that they have gleaned through watching the film (experiential learning)

in the form of literate talk that is recognized as academic subject matter in the Ontario curriculum.

Our Observations and What They Taught Us

In keeping with the project's thematic emphasis on "blended" identities, in the fall of 2014 we asked students to trace the routes that their families had followed to arrive in Markham, and, more importantly, to record and construct a narrative around these life-altering journeys. The activities and sequencing of activities that we integrated into the unit, which ran over a period of approximately one month, reflected collaborating educators' familiarity with the research on the benefits of multimodal approaches to curriculum (Rowsell, 2012)— recitation, visual arts, written language—where students become acculturated to operating within new learning spaces (Kress, 2002).

Working in small groups, students were first asked to brainstorm interview questions that they might ask to elicit needed information from their primary caregivers, generally their parents. Through large-group discussion, these questions were then distilled into a single, comprehensive "survey" protocol that all students would use to interview family members. In the course of this guided discussion, students discussed the importance of integrating different kinds of questions—closed- and open-ended, factual and opinion—and reviewed the merits of different suggestions for incorporating strategies that could make an interview run more smoothly, for example, asking follow-up, or probe, questions if they needed more details related to a given response.

Using computers, iPhones, and iPads (some donated by the project, some by the collaborating board, and some by participating families), students audio recorded and subsequently transcribed their family members' stories, then created a map (or several maps) to show their parents' migration routes (Figure 3).

Fig. 3: Migration maps for June's family

We were careful to ensure that all students were familiar with, and had genuine access to, the technology they would need to complete key aspects of the activities. As the assignment was time-consuming, we gave the cohort ample time (two weeks) to complete their research. When the cohort regrouped, they shared the migration narratives they had elicited from their caregivers, first in partners, then in working groups, and finally with the whole cohort (with the last performance designated optional). In a subsequent session, we mapped each family's migration trajectory, not using pre-established maps, but rather gigantic butcher paper that students could physically jump onto to draw the different locales using different coloured markers (Figure 4).

Fig. 4: Grade 8 students construct world map in the corridors of Randall Public School

On paper covering a good portion of the second floor of the school, students drew first the locations where they were born, and then the countries and regions where their parents were born. (Relative locations were problem-solved through discussion.) Students then went on to draw the different locations whence their parents had emigrated. Finally, they identified and located a country that they wished to visit in the future.

"I Gave My Parents Some Space to Recollect Their Thoughts": Past Lives as New Knowledge

During the two weeks when students were working on their own (with individualized assistance from one of us when needed), about a half dozen of the cohort's parents approached one of the authors to inquire about the goals of the project and, in particular, the purpose of the interview activity for which their cooperation was being enlisted. There appeared to be two sets of concerns. First, caregivers were apprehensive about issues of confidentiality, and needed to be reassured (even though the informed consent protocol that they had signed contained such an assurance) that the information they provided to their child would travel no further than the project and its dissemination agenda. Second, parents expressed confusion about the benefits that would accrue to their child by having access to information about their family history.

In each instance, the answer we provided appeared to be satisfactory, given that caregivers' consent for their child's participation in the project was not withdrawn and parents' enthusiasm for the project grew over time. However, we noted with some interest that our initial explanations—focusing on the bridging of experiential and school-based learning that the unit's activities afforded and that research had shown was beneficial for the youths' academic literacy development—did not always prove sufficient. Caregivers seemed more compelled by a rationale about why access to their family's historical reenactments might represent an important exercise in self-discovery for youths who were not in a position to have shared first-hand in their elders' experiences of loss and recovery.

In the debriefings following the sessions that included oral sharings among cooperative group members and the larger group of the interview narratives and mapping activities, students overwhelmingly reported discovering aspects about their elders' pasts that they hadn't known before. This information concerned a variety of topics—details of courtships ("I was kind of surprised that my dad impress my grandma with some flower and turkey leg and ask for my mom in marriage"), past avocations ("I never knew that my dad owned an ice cream store…in India"), and notable achievements ("Another thing that was really interesting is that my dad was a sport champion back home in soccer and cricket!"). Note the sheer quantity of new knowledge about family members' past lives Hiten is attempting to assimilate in this posting:

> I learned new things about my family's background. I learned that my dad was raised on a farm, and that he was a salesman. I also learned that he has 8 siblings. From my mom's side I also learned that her parents were divorced, and that her mother had to sell door to door to provide for her family…I think the most shocking information was that my mother's parents were divorced, and that her family was running on fumes so to speak.

Most of our students had no idea where family members had lived before arriving at their current place of residence, as noted in the following written observation:

> I did not know that my grandparents were from this certain part of China because no one has actually informed me before about it. I always assumed it was just somewhere in the middle of China so I never asked. Also I did not know that when my dad landed in Canada that he did not live in Toronto, but Edmonton because I would have never expected him to live there.

Not unexpectedly, students also discovered information about circumstances and events of a more sensitive nature. In the following extended excerpt, Mithika comes to terms with the recognition that her parents' formative years were very different from her own, as well as with the lingering effects of these early traumas:

Before I took the interview I always thought that my parents had a similar childhood to mine where they would go to school, hang out with friends and have a carefree childhood like every other child should have. However, my predictions were off when I learned that my parents lived most of their childhood in fear in not knowing when bombs would strike. They saw things that no child should see but in video games and experienced the fear of being in the middle of a flaming war. They never got a proper childhood in which they regret to never have experienced. They are upset that their childhood was too short and that they grew up too quickly to enjoy the life of a carefree child. Even today, they long to turn back time and have a proper childhood with no nightmares and no war.

A piece of information that I was surprised [by] the most was when my parents told me their age upon arrival to Canada. My mother was twenty-one and my father was only seventeen when he left Sri Lanka. When I hear these ages I can't bear to think how lonely and homesick they were to come to brand new country where you know no one and you are in a vast land with no guidance from your parents…I learned that it has been over twenty-two years since my mom saw her parents face to face. This breaks my heart to not being able to see my parents for so long.

Perhaps as thought provoking for our students as revelations of harrowing events were cryptic references to biographical episodes, the full significance of which would likely never be revealed. Vincent, whose parents emigrated from China shortly before he was born, observed in his initial posting: "What surprised me the most was my grandfather's job. My mother told me that [her] father, my grandfather, was an interrogator for the government." During the cooperative group discussions, as Sandra left the classroom to prepare for the corridor-mapping activity, Vincent followed her out and, helping her tape butcher paper to the floor, asked what she thought the work of an interrogator was. "Probably to get information that the government or the authorities want to know," she responded, to which Vincent, dropping his characteristic bravado, rejoined, "Do they hurt people?" Sandra answered that she did not know and asked Vincent whether he would be all right with not knowing. "I don't need to know everything. I know stuff happened."

Linguistic Continuities and Discontinuities in G1.5 Students' Households

A second, provocative insight that we acquired from our involvement in the "Roots and Routes" project revolved around the linguistic dynamics that were internal to generation 1.5 linguistic minority youths' households as family members negotiated the various dimensions of their cohabitation. At a basic level, we learned about the different languages that our students had exposure to in their homes. The following is a typical example: In Xiang's household, the grandparents speak one dialect, Taishan; the parents speak Cantonese; and Xiang speaks mostly English. Needless to mention, the student experienced challenges in carrying out the interview with her parents— in transmitting the referential meanings of the survey questions, in transcribing her parents' responses, and in accurately translating those responses back into English. In the debriefings, many students echoed Xiang's descriptions of the linguistic challenges involved in completing different dimensions of the activities associated with the interviews:

"They needed help from me in the middle of the interview [which these parents attempted to do in English] to how to say a certain word or sentence."

"I used a lot of time for the transcription process because I was unable to understand some things that my parents said. This is because my Mandarin is not very good."

"It was hard to translate the questions since I'm bad at Chinese and I don't know how to translate some of the words, so it was hard for them to understand me… and sometime misunderstood what I meant."

To overcome difficulties associated with the interview and mapping activities, students used a variety of problem-solving strategies to negotiate comprehensible input with their interlocutors:

"I went on Google Translate and typed out the question. As I showed it to them, I also tried to explain with gestures and pictures."

"I used an electronic dictionary to communicate with my mom…I also used examples so she could understand better."[In translating parents' responses from Guajarati into English]: "I try to cut sentences a bit shorter but still have the gist of it."

"I dealt with the problem by translating the questions into Tamil since it's his mother tongue and then onwards while transcripting the interview, I translated the Tamil

into English. If the sentences didn't make sense I would have just fixed up a bit with my own words yet keeping the main and important ideas that were mentioned by my dad."

"When I had difficulty understanding … my parents, I would let Ms. Wong listen to the recording. My teacher would then tell me what my parents said."

While collaborating educators did not find any of these problem-solving strategies surprising (the project placed considerable emphasis on resourcefulness), it did strike us in the course of the debriefings and subsequent data analysis that the different oral and textual negotiations associated with achieving accuracy in conveying and interpreting meaning for the purposes of the interview and mapping activities were not part of normal intrafamily routines for the majority of students. Zaiba's remark captured this phenomenon for the cohort, "I don't usually have to translate [in my home]. They [parents and grandparents] speak in Arabic, I speak in English."

While it is not the main goal of this article to analyze the linguistic dynamics that characterize G1.5 linguistic minority students' home environments, given our findings we would briefly reference recent discussions within applied linguistics circles on the intrinsic nature of the language abilities that individuals display as they function within communication contexts and settings characterized by features associated with superdiversity (Blommaert, 2013; Vertovec 2007, 2010) and plurilingualism (Little, Leung, & Van Avermaet, 2013). Within these contexts, individuals have been found to call upon multiple linguistic repertoires as they "cross borders either physically or virtually" (Garcia, 2009, p. 54).

Clearly, from information volunteered by our students, only a minority of youths involved in our project engaged in *code-switching* practices, where speakers who are fluent in more than one variety alternate between (generally) two codes or languages within a single conversation, alternately displaying the phonology and syntax consistent with each (e.g., Poplack, 1980; Zentella, 1998). Rather, the information we obtained makes a stronger case for a sociolinguistic phenomenon referred to as *translanguaging* (Garcia, 2009), where speakers' language activities cut across different semiotic systems previously considered separate, resulting in the generation of new meanings (e.g., Garcia & Wei, 2013). However, for such translanguaging practices to represent viable systems for communication, we would need to see evidence of flexible, simultaneous uses of different linguistic forms and modalities in ways that maximize communicative potential among family interactants. We are in no way convinced that the data we have elicited point to that condition in relation to these generation 1.5 language minority students,[5] although our student collaborators are clearly more dexterous with hybrid

language practices than their caregivers (Garcia, 2009). To be sure, the integration of home languages into the class curriculum—a strategy that all four authors support ideologically—proved a more daunting challenge for our collaborating team than we initially anticipated. Indeed, for many G1.5 students linguistic maintenance would at this point entail the teaching and learning of the minority language as a second, not a native, variety. This said, we are grateful that we found a route to a strategy that created an interest among language minority students for pursuing practices of linguistic and cultural maintenance in future; and we even would be so bold as to suggest this, that is, starting with historical/biographical reconstruction in the service of identity representation, as a pedagogical approach going forward.

Reflections on What We Learned That We Did Not Wholly Appreciate Before

In summary, the aim of our project was to identify and pursue pedagogical approaches that showed promise in fostering the academic success and identity reconciliation of this particular student demographic. Grounded in the research of community-referenced pedagogy (e.g., Schecter & Ippolito, 2008; Schecter & Sherri, 2009), it looked toward those techniques and those strategies that could be harnessed to individuals' prior knowledge and experiences as approaches that would hold the maximum potential for stimulating students' literate engagement (cf. Cummins & Schecter, 2003). Given these philosophical tenets, the co-authors were enthusiastic about the potential of contemporary reenactments of students' family histories and trajectories to offer learning opportunities for linguistic and ethnic minority youth. We were also motivated to pursue this strategy by the knowledge that, as teachers, we would learn a great deal about our students—their family histories and the experiences that shaped their elders' perspectives.

However, the truly transformative dimension of our professional learning had to do with uprooting the core assumptions that we held about our students' access to key elements of their hybrid identities. We believed—on the basis of our previous experience, including research with immigrant, ESL learners (cf. Schecter & Cummins, 2003)—that our students were already cognizant of information and events related to their family members' biographical histories. In that light, our role, in addition to academically mediating these archived experiences, was to facilitate access to resources and artifacts associated with their New World environment—a trip to the

Art Gallery of Ontario to view the Group of Seven paintings and First Nations art, a visit to the St. Lawrence food market. We did not anticipate the elusive status of this biographical material and the cursory nature of students' prior encounters with family members' pasts.

Of course, such trajectories are recoverable; and certainly by the spring of 2014 participating caregivers were most appreciative that the project provided a venue for youths to explore the different historical forces, family circumstances, and serendipities that constituted their complex personal histories. However, in contrast to immigrant ESL students who by and large share in their parents' migration narratives, generation 1.5 language minority students' awareness of such critical events and circumstances cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, as facilitators we needed to appreciate that there are integral aspects related to these students' backgrounds that were not immediately (or even easily) accessible to them. For this work to proceed, and for our students to develop integrated hybrid identities, their elders needed to remember—the stereotypic courtships, the uprootings and regroundings, the livelihoods abandoned and reconstituted, and yes, the traumatic and disruptive events that, in Mithika's words, break your heart. For surely it is through these recollections that we come to understand ourselves, our relationships with others, and the kind of world we wish to live in.

Finally, given our insights regarding the sociolinguistic landscapes that generation 1.5 language minority students inhabit, we would be remiss if we did not observe that the multifarious ruptures referenced in caregivers' narratives have resulted in discontinuities with regard to language transmission that inevitably complicate social arrangements among these youths and their family members. In general, negotiating a common linguistic code in which to conduct family business proved more challenging than we initially anticipated, or than the research literature on socialization within linguistic minority homes (to which the lead author has contributed extensively; cf. Schecter & Bayley, 2002) might suggest. In the end, given—not insurmountable, but compounding—circumstances relating to communication in families where members do not share access to a common linguistic code, the recollections of elders, stored in conscious and semiconscious crevices of narrative and visual memory, may well constitute the most powerful ties that connect our students to, and allow them to build academically on, the troves of knowledge associated with individuals and worlds left behind.

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Authors' Note

Notes

1. In preparing for an interventionist project of a collaborative nature, the first author conducted a preliminary study in a different school that investigated how 10- to 12-year-old G1.5 linguistic minority students' formative experiences with languages predisposed their approaches to the processing of academic content and the performance of school literacy activities. She researched how junior-middle-school students used language in the home and community, including their patterns of language dominance, while simultaneously examining the students' reading and writing practices in response to school-based curriculum. See Schecter, 2012, for extensive discussion of the preliminary study's findings that significantly informed the design of our project at Randall.

2. We were introduced to the phrase *roots and routes* by our colleague Dan Yon at York University who suggested the following attribution: Gilroy, P. (1995). Roots and routes: Black identity as an outernational project. In H. W. Harris, H. C. Blue, & E. H. Griffith (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity: Psychological development and creative expression* (pp. 15–30). London, England: Routledge.

3. Material for the section on the Randall community is based on information collected by Principal Sherri Sengupta in Fall 2013.

4. The stage descriptors used by Randall teachers in this quote reference the Ontario Ministry of Education's Second Language Acquisition and Literacy Development rubric. Students at Stage 3 demonstrate that they are able to use English independently in most contexts, while those at Stage 4 use English with a proficiency approaching that of a first-language speaker. The Ontario Ministry of Education is in the process of transitioning to a *Steps to English Proficiency* (STEP) framework

for assessing and monitoring English Language Learners' language acquisition and literacy development across the Ontario curriculum. However, at the time of writing, the Stage framework is still in use in the York Region District School Board.

5. Indeed, in reviewing a draft of this article, Ms. Wong commented that the linguistic analysis helped to explain the frequent "miscommunications and misunderstandings between students and their parents/grandparents and other immediate family members" that she noted in facilitating the shunting of information back and forth from school to households.

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