**Editorial**

**Articles**

**Book Review**

# Editorial

Patrick Lewis

*University of Regina*

Welcome to the Spring 2017 issue of *in education*. I think some folk might say that it would be an understatement to suggest the world has recently been living through interesting times. However, I am not so naïve as to realize that human existence is "always already" interesting. Perhaps at such times in our thoughts it may prove helpful to stop a moment and contemplate the immediate, of just being, so that insight may come into view. Many of the works held within this issue of the journal seem to do just that, not so much in a Robert Frost way to ponder the snow and the woods one evening, but rather to look carefully into not the way things are, but the way things might be.

In 1983, my spouse and I were travelling through North Africa living in an old VW bus. We had met some other travelers and traded books from our scant collection. We acquired Henry Miller's (1961), *Tropic of Cancer* amongst the four books we traded. Reading it in the northern Sahara of Algeria, I was struck by a passage that has stayed with me since:

> I believe that today more than ever a book should be sought after even if it has only one great page in it. We must search for fragments, splinters, toenails, anything that has ore in it, anything that is capable of resuscitating the body and the soul. (p. 257)

*in education* has always welcomed researchers/authors to think of the journal as a place to explore the notion of education in a broad and inclusive way that allows for a discussion that augments the latitude and significance of what *education* could mean. This has always included encouraging works that travel across disciplines, research methods—both qualitative and quantitative—and thoughtful and innovative works that help expand the conversation about and in education. This current issue continues that work providing nine articles that demonstrate the depth and breadth of research that moves through the field of education.

I encourage readers to peruse the abstracts within, finding those that resonate with your imagination and delve into the full articles. You should not be disappointed; from working with Christian Social Studies teachers who take up social justice issues in their teaching practice; to studying the impact of SNAP® For Schools (Stop Now And Plan) an empirically supported cognitive behavioural program for children; to the borderlands of possibility as preservice teachers live in the *ecotone*, the space in between being a student and becoming a teacher; and the many other pieces in this issue will no doubt inform and inspire.

Reference

Miller, H. (1961). *Tropic of cancer*. New York, NY: Grove Press.
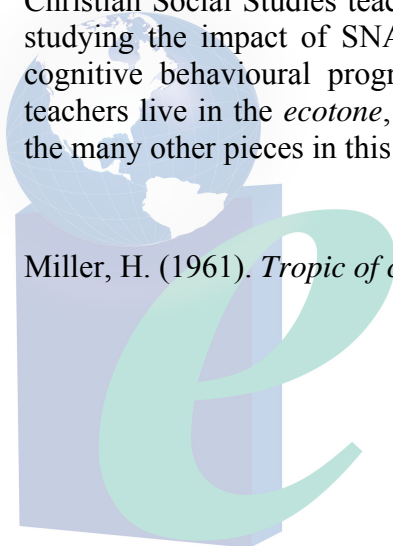
# Borderlands of Possibility: Exploring the Construction of Professional Identity with Intern Teachers

Sharon L. Allan

*University of Alberta*

Author Note

## Abstract

Students enrolled in Bachelor of Education degree programs engage in academic study and field experiences that both validate and challenge their existing understandings of who they are and who they are becoming: their professional identity. This interpretive case study explored the ways in which four intern teachers constructed professional understandings during the 15 weeks of their culminating field experience: a borderland space. Ecologically defined as an *ecotone*, this time in between—of being a student and becoming a teacher—is a zone of transition, a crossroads of being and becoming. Using a series of conversational interviews where the researcher and the participants explored the experience of living on the borderland, this study revealed the challenges of constructing a professional identity as well as the ways in which these intern teachers gradually assumed the subject position: teacher. Four essential aspects of this experience were distilled from the findings of this inquiry and arranged into a conceptual framework to assist teacher educators as they craft curriculum capable of engaging student teachers in the consideration of who they are becoming as teachers. By contributing to our growing understanding of the ways in which preservice teachers view themselves as emerging professionals, this inquiry suggests deeper investigation of the mentor-mentee relationship is needed in order to better support student teachers on the borderlands of their final field experience.

*Keywords*: professional identity; borderland space; intern teachers; field experience; interpretive case study

**Borderlands of Possibility: Exploring the Construction of Professional Identity With Intern Teachers**

**Glimpsing Borderlands**

> Borderlands are ambiguous and often-unstable realms where boundaries are also crossroads, peripheries are also central places, homelands are also passing-through places, and the end points of empire are also forks in the road. Borderlands are places where stories take unpredictable turns and rarely end as expected.[1] (Hamalainen & Truett, 2011, p. 338)

For some time now, I have been intrigued by the notion of borderlands, of in-between spaces that invite uncertainty and promise possibility. My attention was drawn to the existence of these spaces geographically early in my doctoral studies as I made a weekly journey from the southeastern corner of Alberta toward Edmonton over roads thinly travelled. Oftentimes, I found myself the solitary vehicle on these southern narrow-shouldered highways and there seemed little upon which to remark—except perhaps the wind and the loneliness of the setting—although occasionally herds of pronghorn antelope could be glimpsed, well camouflaged against their prairie backdrop. Yet, as I paid more attention to the environment around me, I began to notice subtle variations, shifting the landscape slightly as I drove northward.

I was not entirely unacquainted with the geography of my province: For many years I taught Grade 4 and the activity that began our exploration of Alberta was the identification of the environmental regions and their location on our maps. Together we divided up the territory, carefully delineating the regions with thick black lines and colored each—beginning with the grasslands, our home—always bright yellow. Five distinct regions make up our province and when looking at our maps it was as if, in a blink of an eye, the grasslands are replaced by the parkland with its aspen trees and marshy areas, which in turn, becomes the boreal forest stretching all the way to the Northwest Territories. However, this was not what I observed as I made my way toward the top of the province every week.

Instead, I saw landscapes not ecologically defined where foliage of all kinds exists alongside each other. At no one point do the grasslands definitively give themselves over to the parkland; in fact, it is a struggle. The regions of Alberta survive in tension in these spaces, existing side by side, or perhaps one on top of the other. I became captivated by the notion of these borderlands: rich, shifting spaces of tension that invite ambiguity and struggle. The more I considered the nature of their existence, the more convinced I became that within these spaces lay a thriving quality of being.

From an ecological point of view, these liminal spaces are called *ecotones*.[2] Defined as a transitional zone between two different ecosystems, an ecotone is "the border area where two patches meet that have different ecological composition [and that] contain elements of both bordering communities as well as organisms which are characteristic and restricted to the ecotone" (Graves, 2011). In addition, because they are not characterized by sharply delineated borders, Banks-Leite and Ewers (2009) maintain the job of locating and describing these boundaries is a complex one given ever-changing environmental factors affecting the width and composition of these dynamic transitional areas. Two characteristics from the ecological notion of ecotones informed and supported my thinking as I considered the construction of teacher identity.

First, these zones of transition emerge from within a particular set of circumstances. They can begin abruptly or unfold gradually; they can also vary greatly in width. Boundaries take on different forms depending on how they are created. The two main causes for the existence of ecotones are naturally occurring environmental change and anthropogenic modification to natural habitats: "As habitats are converted from natural to human land uses, anthropogenic boundaries have been created in almost all natural ecosystems. Common examples of anthropogenic boundaries are those between natural grasslands and croplands, croplands and forests" (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009, p. 2). While these in-between spaces may develop naturally over time, what I glimpsed and named borderland spaces were primarily the result of intentional human interaction with the environment.

The second characteristic of ecological borderlands informing this inquiry relates to how neighboring ecosystems experience the flow of organisms, materials, and energy across the shared boundary allowing, typically, one ecosystem to make a significant contribution to the development and maintenance of the other. Ecotones often have a greater number of species as well as larger population densities than the communities on either side due to the interaction of one neighboring area on the other. This tendency for biodiversity within the ecotone is defined as the "edge effect" (Graves, 2011, p. 5). Occasionally, the flow of resources goes both ways, thereby presenting environmental conditions able to support "edge species" (Banks-Leite & Ewers, 2009, p. 6). Unable to thrive in either of the two bordering communities, these edge species are uniquely suited for this in-between habitat. Not only does this zone of transition support the existence of abundant plant and animal life from the bordering ecosystems, it also nurtures unique forms of life within its borderland space. The ecotone is, then, a crossroads: a borderland rich with possibility, thriving with being.

From a metaphorical point of view, now named and examined more closely, these ecological in-between spaces glimpsed along my journeys northward offered support for this inquiry exploring the construction of teacher identity with intern teachers. First, these in-between spaces are not uniform: some begin abruptly, others unfold gradually, and the width and depth of each ecotone depends upon the ecological context in which it develops. So it is with preservice teachers during their internship: each brings his or her own past experiences of being a student, of being a student teacher in previous practica, to a classroom environment that is singular. It is a zone of transition shaped by experience and current context.

Second, as with an ecotone, what lives in the borderlands is in a state of *becoming*. As organisms, materials, and energy flow reciprocally from one ecosystem to another this rich, shifting space of tension invites ambiguity and struggle, new life and unique prospects. So it is with preservice teachers during their internship: they are neither fully a student nor yet a teacher. They are at a crossroads, within a borderland. They are becoming. Taken together, these understandings, provoked by my early observations of the landscape slipping by on my weekly journeys northward and informed later by the ecological concept of an ecotone, offered a metaphorical framework for this inquiry into the construction of teacher identity during the weeks of internship that invite uncertainty and promise possibility.

### Emerging From My Borderland Experience

To survive the Borderlands
you must live *sin fronteras*[3]

be a crossroads. (Anzaldua, 1987, p. 195)

Once I began to think metaphorically about the notion of borderlands as the transition from one way of being to another, I recognized numerous experiences over the past three decades of my professional life characterized by tension and ambiguity. Rarely, however, had I viewed them as places of possibility; mostly I saw them as times of struggle; occasionally I had been overwhelmed and made still by their circumstances. Anzaldua (1987) suggests these in-between spaces, *los intersticios*, are a constant state of transition (p. 3) and in order to thrive in the borderlands an individual must *be* a crossroads willing to develop a tolerance for contradiction and ambiguity (p. 79). This notion challenged my well-worn view and prompted me to think in other ways as I struggled to make sense of the experiences that constitute my life.

Carr (1986) argues we are composing and constantly revising the story of our lives. From the vantage point of this moment, we look both to the past and to the future as we engage in the constant task of constructing and re-constructing a life that hangs together, that makes sense. From within this struggle to bring unity and coherence emerge categories of meaning that are central for understanding the course of a life because they encompass and order the things we value and the purposes we pursue (p. 77). For me, the notion of borderland spaces assisted my struggle to bring unity and coherence to the story of my life and, in particular, to making sense of the significance, value, and meaning of my own student teaching experience three decades ago.

So powerful was this experience that as I think back on the circumstances of those final months of my teacher education program I am overcome by emotions of all kinds: excitement, regret, sadness, and embarrassment. As a capable student entering her final field experience, I knew a great deal about the nature of children, pedagogy, and curriculum; my knowing, however, was not sufficient to support the successful completion of this practicum and at the centre of the turmoil lay thoughts that insidiously undermined who I understood myself to be. While clinging to the notion of knowing *about* teaching, I questioned deeply whether I would *be* a teacher. These remnants of experience linger in me.

The recollection of being so very alone and in such a fragile place shaped my own work as a mentor teacher during the years I welcomed student teachers to my classroom. More recently, as a teacher educator and program coordinator in a community college in southeastern Alberta, I had opportunity to come alongside student teachers in circumstances similar to my own. In those moments, their uncertainty and turmoil transcended the decades to remind me of what it is like to be in this tenuous place. It is always an emotional experience as we talk about the challenges and decisions ahead, in large part because these student teachers view their current struggles, much as I did three decades ago, as failure: the failure to *be* a teacher. With a renewed understanding of what it means to struggle in an uncertain space, to live on the borderlands of becoming, I recognize the significance of my experience in directing my professional life as a teacher educator and provoking my interest in the construction of professional identity with preservice teachers. This inquiry, emerging from deep within my own experience, explored these borderlands with four intern teachers completing their final field experience.

## Exploring the Borderlands

Consciously we teach what we know; unconsciously we teach who we are.(Hamachek, 1999, p. 209)

Students enrolled in Bachelor of Education programs engage in coursework and field experiences that both validate and challenge their existing understandings of who they are and who they are becoming. Often unaware of the essential role these self-understandings assume in shaping classroom learning, they are focused on first understanding the mandated programs of study and then creating engaging learning experiences to meet these expectations. Unquestionably, examining how children learn, being knowledgeable about curricula, and recognizing appropriate teaching strategies is necessary preparation for preservice teachers; yet Hamachek (1999) states that "teachers teach not only a curriculum of study, they also become part of it" (p. 208).

Aoki (2005b) provokes a deeper appreciation for the relationship between teachers and curriculum by suggesting we find ourselves "indwelling in a zone between two curriculum worlds: the worlds of curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience" (p. 159). This struggle between what a teacher ought to *do*, as defined by curriculum, tugs and pulls against who the teacher *is* as he or she lives within the classroom prompting us to "see and hear who we *are* as teachers" (Aoki, 2005a, p. 197). Ultimately, according to Aoki (2005b), "teaching is fundamentally a mode of being" (p. 160). Both Hamachek (1999) and Aoki (2005a, 2005b) maintain that the content of curriculum cannot be viewed apart from who a teacher *is* within the context of the classroom. Preservice teachers, occupied with lesson and unit planning to meet coursework expectations and then later with curricular organization and classroom management during field experiences, may not fully appreciate this understanding. As teacher educators, we are compelled to engage our students in consideration of who they are becoming as teachers: their mode of being (Aoki, 2005b).

## Inquiry Questions

The purpose of this research was to explore the ways in which preservice teachers construct understandings of who they are becoming on the borderlands of their final field experience. Two essential questions directed this inquiry:

- In what ways do preservice teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?

- What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of preservice teachers?

These questions shaped the prompts offered to participants in a Pre-Interview Activity (Ellis, 2006), informed the compilation of interview questions, and guided preparation for additional dialogue with David, Grace, Laura, and Mark,[4] four intern teachers completing Professional Semester III, at the University of Lethbridge, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada in an elementary classroom during the winter of 2014.

## Theoretical Framework

This inquiry emerges from a constructivist paradigm. Each person actively constructs meaning and understandings of their experience of the world from within a social and cultural context (Crotty, 1998). Packer and Goicoechea (2000) maintain that while the constructivist paradigm is often articulated exclusively in terms of its epistemological claims, a hidden non-dualist ontology is at work within the sociocultural perspective such that learning must be

thought of as ontological transformation: "What constructivists call learning is only part of a larger process of human change and transformation" (p. 239). This non-dualist ontology places me in the midst as I actively seek and construct meaning based on interaction with my surroundings and with others in community. And in this process I am transformed.

Embedded in these essential ideas related to epistemology and ontology, this inquiry was more specifically shaped by two sets of theoretical understandings that offered a comprehensive framework for exploring the borderland between being a student and becoming a teacher. I see these understandings as strands, drawn together and entwined. First, we make sense of our lives in and through the stories we tell. Who we are is constituted in these narratives told and retold of experience interpreted and reinterpreted (Bruner, 2004; Kerby, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988). As we talked about stories of teachers and teaching, I asked the four participants to consider the ways in which these narratives informed their current experience of being an intern teacher. Teacher preparation programs are unique in that they seek to educate individuals already possessing understandings and experiences of the school environment. It was important, then, to explore how experiences of being a student in the elementary and secondary grades, as well as during university coursework, influenced who they were as intern teachers. Once told, we examined the ways in which these stories shaped both their journey to be a teacher and their emerging understandings of professional identity.

Second, these stories—of who we are and who we are becoming—are nurtured within the socio-cultural historical context in which we live (Bruner, 2004; Stetsenko, 2004). Our social context plays an essential role in our transformation from someone separate and apart to someone who is an integral part of a community. Vygotsky (1978) outlines how the influence of a more-skilled peer supports the process of internalization and suggests every function of an individual's cultural development appears, initially, on the social level and then later within the individual. These ideas offered particular direction as we looked closely at the opportunity for interns to work alongside individuals considered more-skilled colleagues as well as the manner in which educational communities invite and support full membership, not as a student as in past practica, but now as a teacher: an integral member of the established community.

Packer and Greco-Brooks (1999) argue that school is a site for the production of persons; this understanding supports the notion that teacher education is the site for the production of teachers both epistemologically through the assembling of knowledge about teaching, and ontologically through the construction of a professional identity. School, Packer (2001) argues, "involves ontological change, change in the kind of person a child becomes" (p. 131) and this is no less true for preservice teachers as they craft their unfolding story within their particular social, cultural, and historical context on the borderlands of their final field experience.

**Mapping the Landscape of Teacher Identity Construction**

This time of transition—from student to teacher—was explored and reported by Britzman in her seminal text, *Practice Makes Practice: A Critical Study of Learning to Teach* (2003). Considered a "classic in teacher education" (Segall, 2006, p. 181), her volume chronicles the journey of two preservice teachers through their final practicum during the 1980s. Offering a glimpse into the tensions that shape the transition from formal teacher education coursework into the final field experience from the intensely personal point of view of the students themselves, Britzman (2003) observes: "Learning to teach—like teaching itself—is always the process of

becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become" (p. 31). Although completed over three decades ago, this study (1986; 2003) continues to provoke consideration of what we may take for granted—the pervasive and unexamined discourse that shrouds neglected understandings—as well as an invitation to engage student teachers in thinking about who they are and who they are becoming.

In the years following the publication of this volume, teacher professional identity became the focus of increasingly intensive scrutiny. Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004), directing their attention to relevant literature emerging from 1988-2000, explain that "it was in this period that teachers' professional identity emerged as a research area" (p. 108). Korthagen (2004) supports this assertion maintaining that while an enormous amount of research has been carried out over the past century in a variety of disciplines regarding the terms *identity* and *self*, only recently is attention being directed to a more comprehensive and substantial understanding of the term *teacher identity* (p. 82).

Building on the view articulated by Erickson (1968) and Mead (1934) locating identity not as something possessed but as developed over the course of a life, Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop (2004)'s review of existing literature prompted them to draw together the following four features as essential for understanding professional identity: first, professional identity is an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences; second, both person and context are involved in the construction of identity; third, a teacher's professional identity consists of sub-identities that more or less harmonize; and fourth, agency is an important element of professional identity and that teachers have to be active in this process (p. 122). These four understandings helped focus my thinking about identity, in general, and about teacher professional identity, specifically.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) further directed this study by identifying teacher education programs as opportunities for identity construction that had been mostly overlooked and thus, an area worthy of attention. They state, "Gaining a more complete understanding of identity generally and teacher identity in particular could enhance the ways in which teacher education programs are conceived" (p. 176). In numerous studies Beauchamp and Thomas (2009, 2010, 2011; Thomas & Beauchamp, 2007, 2011) demonstrate how teacher education programs are "the ideal starting point for instilling not only an awareness of the need to develop an identity, but also a strong sense of the ongoing shifts that will occur in that identity" (2009, p. 186).

Additional scholars have identified the need for teacher education programs to acknowledge this as a critical time for identity construction both in the coursework undertaken as part of degree completion and in the field experiences designed to invite consideration of becoming. McLean (1999) suggests the development of new teacher education pedagogy reflecting our emerging understandings of self is on-going and explores the use of stories in education programs arguing that "it is not our concrete experiences that shape our sense of identity, but the stories we tell ourselves about those experiences" (p. 78). Korthagen (2004) poses two questions related to teacher education: What are the essential qualities of a good teacher and how can we help people to become good teachers? Together these questions focus attention on preservice teacher identity and lead him to suggest a framework for reflection and development that could be incorporated in teacher education programs. Sachs (2005) observes that teacher education and teacher educators have a central role in the development of new kinds

of teacher professionalism and a professional identity she identifies as the "activist teacher" (p. 20). Thomas and Beauchamp (2007) argue that "developing a strong sense of professional identity as a teacher may be crucial to the well-being of new members of the profession" (p. 229) and report on research they conducted with 21 participants interviewed during an in-between time: after graduation but before beginning to teach. They observe that "while the participants were able to describe with accuracy the individual tasks and roles of a teacher, they appear to be unable to articulate a clear sense of what it is to be a teacher" (p. 240) and from this they draw a number of insights for teacher education programs.

Within this growing body of research four themes emerged specifically informing this inquiry: the construction of a professional identity takes place over time (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2011; Flores & Day, 2006; Trent, 2011), from within a social and discursive context (Coldron & Smith, 1999; Day, Kington, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006; Miller Marsh, 2002), is enhanced through professional reflection (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2010; Freese, 2006; Sutherland, Howard, & Markauskaite, 2010; Walkington, 2005; Urzua & Vasquez, 2008), and shaped by sharing stories of learning and teaching (Anspal, Eisenschmidt, & Lofstrom, 2012; Sfard & Prusak, 2005; Soreide, 2006; Watson, 2006). These four themes contributed to the conceptual framework directing my work with intern teachers.

This landscape of literature supports the value of exploring the construction of professional identity during teacher education programs, specifically during field experiences. Metaphorically conceived as borderland spaces, the construction of professional identity during these times of transition is influenced by the context in which we find ourselves, both personally and professionally, and the discourses that shape our lives. Through professional reflection and sharing narratives of experience, student teachers are supported as they work to understand who they are becoming as teachers.

**Methodology**

Three assumptions emerging from the constructivist paradigm guided this interpretive inquiry. First, researchers explore human experience in its natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Second, by attending to how parts of an experience come together to form a whole the researcher and the participant together construct meaning and make sense of experience in the world. As our understandings of, and for, our lives emerge from within the context of our communities, it follows that our constructed meanings are open to enduring change and refinement (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Finally, the researcher is the key instrument in qualitative inquiry, in not only data gathering, but also more essentially, in reflecting upon how personal background, culture, and experiences hold potential for shaping both the interpretations and the direction of the study (Cresswell, 2014). This collaborative, interpretive methodology was well suited for exploring the questions that shaped this study.

**Exploring the borderland as a case study.** Three characteristics of case study research made it an appropriate design for this inquiry. First, this study was "a bounded system" (Stake, 2000, p. 436). Structured with an exclusive focus on intern teachers in Professional Semester III, a 15-week culminating field experience, student teachers began in their classrooms in the first week of January and completed in the middle of April 2014. Second, the case study offers the opportunity to provide a detailed re-creation of contexts, meanings, and intentions. Described as "thick description" (Stake, 2000, p. 439), this re-creation of the case particularities makes it

possible for readers to vicariously experience specific circumstances and happenings. Finally, case studies are heuristic; they bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm what is known (Merriam, 1998). These characteristics of case study methodology informed this research.

**Participants and their contexts.** Students in their final year of teacher education at the University of Lethbridge were invited to participate in this inquiry with data gathering taking place during their culminating practicum in an elementary classroom from January to April 2014. This field experience, Professional Semester III (PS III), is considered unique in the province of Alberta and offers preservice teachers the opportunity to engage in a full-term internship that includes both teaching and professional study (University of Lethbridge, 2009). Designed to build upon the academic and practicum components completed during previous years of study this final field experience includes half-time teaching as well as the completion of a professional development project.

In addition to acting as the bridge between the more formal aspects of their academic study and the official beginning of their teaching careers, the PS III internship is a borderland space that situated these interns as being both students and teachers. Beauchamp and Thomas (2011) argue this time of initial practice presents a unique context:

> Although student teachers may have a developing notion of who they are as teachers as they move through teacher education programs, the shift from the protected environment of such programs into initial practice in schools can be destabilizing and is a period of identity change worthy of investigation. (p. 6)

As the culmination of their teacher education program, this specific context is more than simply a transition from one way of being to another, from being a student to being a teacher; rather, it is a rich time in-between, a liminal space, that invited consideration of diverse ways of being and, as such, was particularly well-suited for this interpretive case study.

**Data gathering.** Conversational interviews were the primary means of gathering data for analysis and interpretation. Carson (1986) observes the process of interviewing is "inherently conversational" (p. 76) and that words have a *maieutic* quality: They become like midwives helping to bring forth thoughts and ideas the speaker has yet to overtly articulate. Weber (1986) suggests that a "shared abode" (p. 86) is created during moments of conversation. This notion encouraged me to focus on building relationships of trust with the four participants and to think about how the collaborative experience of sense-making has the generative power to open up a resting place, an abode, for the new understandings constructed together.

Initially, conversation was shaped by a selection of prompts provided to each participant prior to our first meeting. Ellis (2006) maintains that using these types of pre-interview activities cultivates appreciation for the wholeness and complexity of a participant's life as well as the more immediate context of the experience being explored. The following are two of the seven suggestions I offered to begin our conversations together:

- Create a timeline identifying important events and reflections that have shaped who you are as a teacher. This timeline could include words and/or pictures.

- Use 3 colours to create an abstract diagram about how it feels, or what it is like, to be a teacher.

Typically, pre-interview activities are related to the research topic with the intention of encouraging reflection, directing initial conversation, and invoking an atmosphere of respect (Ellis, Janjic-Watrich, Macris, & Marynowski, 2011). All four participants responded to this opportunity using at least one of the suggestions: Grace reflected on her journey to become a teacher with a timeline tracing significant events since childhood; Mark created an abstract three-colour diagram composed of swirling red and blue hurricane-like waves and green organic shapes embedded within representing the tiny moments of calm serenity that happen in the midst of his teaching experience:

Figure 1: Mark's Pre-Interview Activity Response
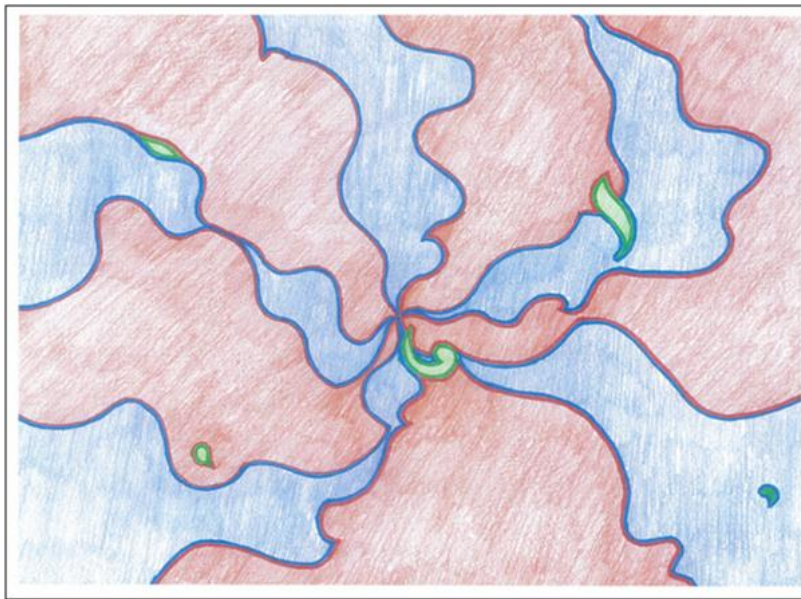


Laura identified 18 words and phrases shaping her developing understanding of being a teacher, explaining each and its relationship to her experience; David responded to all seven using written notes to guide his reflections and observations. In addition to inviting and supporting our initial conversation, pre-interview activities offer participants the opportunity to make visible—through words or drawings—their current thinking about the experience being explored. This was particularly so with Mark whose artistic rendering of what it is like to be a teacher (Figure 1) became a touchstone for his reflections over our time together.

Kvale (1986) suggests crafting possible interview questions and prompts in response to the specific research questions they are intended to explore (p. 131). Prior to the beginning of the inquiry, I generated a list of open-ended questions and provocations to explore the two essential questions framing the study. The following is a sampling of those prompts:

Inquiry Question 1: In what ways do preservice teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?

*Tell me about a time when you felt most like a teacher . . .*

*What does the phrase 'being a teacher' mean to you?*

*Tell me about someone who has influenced you as a teacher?*

Inquiry Question 2: What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of preservice teachers?

*When do you feel strong as a teacher? Why then?*

*When do you feel weak as a teacher? Why then?*

*Who will you be as a mentor teacher? Why?*

I used this outline extensively throughout the 15 weeks of this study to direct my thinking and to ensure I was, as much as possible, inviting consideration of both questions structuring this inquiry. Of course, as the conversations developed and my relationship with each participant deepened, additional areas were revealed for more specific examination. As a starting point, this generated list offered a framework to support on-going conversations while the unfolding data directed additional, more specific prompts and questions.

**Data analysis and interpretation.** Stake (2010) suggests the process of data analysis and interpretation is both the taking apart of data and then, the drawing together of emerging understandings in different ways: synthesis. Beginning immediately after our first conversation together, I listened to the audio recordings, reviewed transcripts in light of the questions guiding this inquiry, and drafted prompts to provoke deeper reflection in subsequent conversations. In this way, I was responsive to the particular context of each intern while at the same time remaining tethered to my essential questions.

As I became acquainted with the data and its emerging categories, I began the process of "putting together" by creating a concept map for each inquiry question (Glesne, 2006). Ultimately, the process of connecting data drew my attention across the maps; in order to facilitate synthesis I arranged the data clusters on large paper, identifying places of overlap, connecting ideas, and clarifying relationships. This conceptual synthesis led naturally to the stories, portraits, and reflections I crafted to illustrate and communicate what it means to journey on the borderlands between being a student and becoming a teacher.

## Glimpsing Borderlands of Possibility

> "I know," Dolores said, "you have been hearing some story from Mr. Watts, and a story in particular, but I want to tell you this. Stories have a job to do. They can't just lie around like lazybone dogs. They have to teach you something." (Jones, 2007, p. 86)

Becoming a teacher is a struggle; it takes courage to recognize the cultural expectations of who we should *be* as teachers and to dwell in a state of becoming. This inquiry offered several opportunities to glimpse what lies on the borderlands of possibility. Summoning responsibility, these glimpses have to teach us something: They cannot simply "lie around like lazybone dogs" (Jones, 2007, p. 96). The findings of this inquiry provoked me as a teacher educator to think about the ways in which our curriculum and our pedagogy could encourage and support the construction of professional identity during this time of transition.

**Intentional Consideration of Becoming: A Conceptual Framework for Engagement**

All four interns spoke about how being involved in this study prompted consideration of who they were becoming as teachers. Near the end of the internship, Grace observed: "I've been noticing things I might not have noticed . . . if I wasn't looking for them." And in our culminating conversation together David related:

> I'm still thinking about what is a teacher, because we asked that question: What is being a teacher? If no one was asking that question, I don't think I would have thought about it. . . . My thoughts have changed over the months about what it means to be a teacher. At the beginning I said, students come first. But now . . . it's like . . students come first!

Without this prompting, as Grace and David indicated, each doubted they would have paid such close attention to the kinds of changes taking place within them as they worked to construct understandings of the self that teaches (Palmer, 1998). And though the development of a professional identity begins more formally during preservice teacher education, it is a dynamic, ongoing construction and reconstruction of who we are becoming as teachers: We never fully arrive. Laura recognized this when she said, "You're never really done becoming a teacher until you're retired, and even then, you could probably still become a teacher if you kept teaching." This inquiry highlights the value of intentionally and purposefully inviting reflection and conversation in order to explore the construction of professional identity.

Four essential aspects of experience were distilled from the findings of this inquiry to assist teacher educators when crafting curriculum to engage preservice teachers in the consideration of who they are becoming. Represented visually as intertwined circles, existing within, and being made possible by, the tension and ambiguity described metaphorically as an ecotone, this model (Figure 2) identifies the importance of all four elements of experience, linked together, on the borderlands of possibility: Over time, in relationship with others, student teachers on the borderlands of their final field experience will share emerging understandings of their professional self during conversations together, in written reflections, and through the telling of stories of their lives with the hope of making visible the teacher they are becoming.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework for Engagement
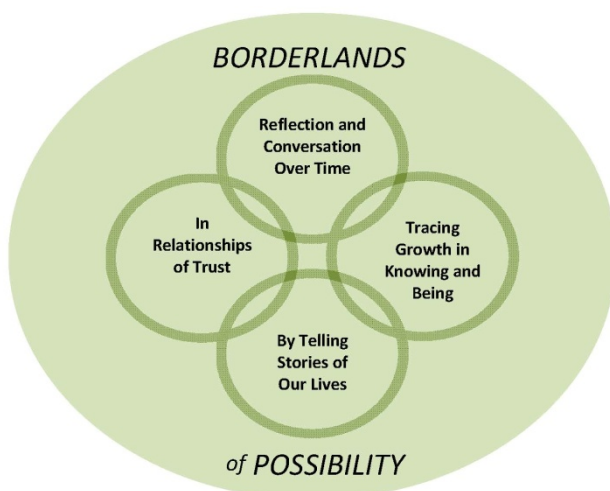
**Four aspects of engagement.** The four circles of engagement emerged as themes from data gathered through conversations with all four participants in this study. While labeled individually, the conceptual model (Figure 2) attempts to represent these aspects as overlapping and without clear boundaries between one and the other. For the sake of clarity each is identified with its own label; however, the strength of this model is two-fold: First, it represents the intertwined nature of these aspects of engagement and second, all four circles are integrally connected within the larger whole situated on the borderlands.

*Reflection and conversation over time.* Reflection and conversation must take place over time. Just as our discussions during this inquiry spanned the 15 weeks of their internship, teacher education curriculum designed for the intentional consideration of becoming must invite interaction throughout the final field experience. Both Mark and David identified the value of being able to review transcripts of earlier conversations. David explained:

> I would go back and read the transcripts: oh, did I say that? That's funny because this week I did something totally different. It's interesting to see that . . . even to remember what I said the first couple of weeks. I'd take a look just to see what I did say and I would read it. It made me think of the stuff I thought of.

Mark offered similar observations in our final meeting together:

> I read the transcript, reflected on it, and go, yeah, that's where I was at that point. Well I'm not there anymore, I'm way past that now or . . . I'm still dealing with that and think some more.

Made visible through their responses to the pre-interview prompts as well as through the transcripts of our conversations, both David and Mark highlight the essential role of engaging in focused and intentional reflection over time.

Thus, it will not be sufficient to engage conversations at the end of the practicum and expect rich reflections; interaction throughout the weeks of the field experience is needed for pondering the significance of events and for tracing the development of thinking and being. If possible, it would be ideal to begin prior to the start of the practicum, extend through the weeks, and offer opportunity for final reflections after the field experience is completed.

*Tracing growth in knowing and being.* These tangible, chronological reflections on experiences and thinking offer support and direction for student teachers as they construct understandings of who they are becoming as teachers. This was powerfully demonstrated by David who arrived at our final conversation fully prepared to talk about the ways in which his thinking and his instructional practice changed over the weeks of the internship. He used examples from the transcripts of previous conversations as evidence to support his growth and explained the process he used:

> And I would compare what I said in the first conversation with what I said in the second and then, what I'm saying now. It's that feeling of success that drives me to want to grow. It's the reflective aspect: it is important to take a look at where you were and then have I got there in the end? Have I grown and changed?

David's systematic use of his pre-interview reflections and the transcripts to identify areas of success, trace his growth over the weeks of his internship experience, and make sense of his

emerging professional identity illustrates the value of such practice, particularly during the final field experience.

While not realistic to audio tape and transcribe conversations in this way over the course of the final term with multiple students, reflective writing prompts could be crafted to act as a means of anchoring emergent understandings in time. In similar fashion, teacher educators could construct a reflective framework to engage students in considering these essential questions beginning in the first year of their teacher education program. Much like the transcripts on which David relied, these reflections could be used intentionally, later, to trace growth in knowing and being.

In addition, practicum supervisors have two important responsibilities during these conversations together. First, they must intentionally invite consideration of the essential question: Who is the self that teaches? (Palmer, 1998). It cannot be assumed that this question will emerge naturally during discussion; in fact, given the experience of the four interns in this study, without clear provocation to think about their emerging professional self, they would have been unlikely to do so. It will be the responsibility of practicum supervisors to maintain this question as the focal point of interaction. Second, those involved with student teachers—either as practicum supervisors or as instructors—must share their own journeys to become teachers. The construction of a professional identity is a dynamic, on-going challenge: We are never fully a teacher. By reflecting on their own developing understandings in response to this essential question, practicum supervisors will encourage conversations that draw all into the shared journey of becoming a teacher.

***In relationships of trust.*** Those involved in making decisions about teacher education curriculum must recognize the need to offer opportunities for those involved to cultivate relationships of trust. This requires more than decisions about how and when to schedule times to meet together and topics to be introduced to prompt rich conversation. While both of these are important structural considerations, establishing relationships of trust between student teachers as well as between student teachers and their mentors poses inherent challenges.

First, it must be acknowledged that the final field experience is a time of stress and expectation for preservice teachers and this emotional context may hinder the nurturing of relationships between students. They are keenly aware of the competition that exists to secure a teaching position once the final practicum is complete and, as a teacher educator, I have observed this reality undermine relationships established over the previous years of academic coursework. In contrast, I have also watched students, especially in the final days of the practicum when some have already been offered teaching positions, act in sensitive and caring ways toward their colleagues. Teacher educators need to recognize this particular context, talk openly with student teachers about this reality, offer opportunities to develop job-seeking and interview skills, and work intentionally to support their students during this time of uncertainty when, more than ever, relationships of trust are needed.

The second challenge is related explicitly to the mentor-mentee relationship. Each of the four participants in this study established very different relationships with the individuals they looked to as mentors. Reflecting on her mentor teacher, Grace shared: "We got along super well. She told me on the first day: 'This is going to work, we have so much chemistry!'" And while she offered an example of a challenging conversation about classroom management, which

Grace admits she took personally, the relationship between the mentor and the mentee was strong and flexible: "So we talked for quite a while, kind of hashed it out, got on the same page, and then it was fine."

In contrast, Laura's first internship placement, lasting almost seven weeks, prompted her to question decisions she was making in the classroom and, ultimately, to wonder whether she was capable of becoming a teacher. A number of circumstances contributed to the difficulty Laura experienced: a school context two hours from the university, the illness of her faculty supervisor, and an apparent lack of understanding of the internship expectation for half-time teaching all made the placement challenging. However, her lack of a nurturing relationship with her mentor was the most troubling:

> Being around her just made me feel so unsure and just really uneasy and just not comfortable. I came home upset almost every single night. I went to sleep, could not sleep, woke up feeling . . . just dreading it, just dreading going. I would go and not want to be there because everything I was doing wasn't right, and I just didn't feel confident at all. I kept thinking I have to guard myself; I can't open up. And then I realized, I'm not here. This is not me.

In the midst of these struggles, she realized, "I'm actually here on an island without any support or anything." By the middle of the practicum, after Laura contacted the field experience office, arrangements were made for her to complete the 15 weeks in a different classroom. We met between the two placements and I asked about her final days. She reflected:

> Friday was my last day. I thought I would be sad to leave these kids. It's honestly hard for me to say, because I feel guilty feeling this way. I'm not really attached to any of these kids and I think that's completely on my end. I wasn't myself; I couldn't be attached to them because I wasn't . . . I don't know . . . I think after a while I became closed off to the whole situation, the whole experience. I couldn't really be sad to leave if I didn't emotionally have space for those relationships. I did care about them but not with my whole heart in it.

Fortunately, Laura's second placement was entirely different: both her mentor teacher and her faculty supervisor established relationships of trust, identified her strengths, and supported her growth throughout. For Laura and for Grace, the role of the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86) was essential in their journey to be a teacher; however, establishing these essential relationships can be challenging.

Traditionally, mentoring has been viewed as a hierarchical relationship where the mentor possesses the experience and as well as the knowledge and skills required by the protégé or mentee to become a successful practitioner (Ambrosetti, 2014). Ehrich and Millwater (2011) suggest this perspective is consistent with a clinical supervision model and its "notions of hierarchy and demarcation between expert and novice" (p. 469); Awaya et al. (2003) argue this traditional understanding creates an environment for possible power struggles between the mentor and mentee. In addition, they suggest the very phrase "the role of the mentor" embodies a presumption of rank and of a hierarchical relationship in which the mentor "assumes the dominant role and the student teacher is relegated to the dependent position" (p. 48). Added to these relational challenges emerging from within the political context of schooling (Ehrich & Millwater, 2011) is the fact the mentor teacher, occasionally in collaboration with the faculty

supervisor, drafts the final evaluation of preservice teacher performance used by school administrators when considering applications for teaching positions. There is little question that establishing relationships of trust within this context is fraught with challenges.

In contrast to the typical mentor-mentee, teacher-student teacher relationship described above, my status as an outsider, a researcher uninvolved in their immediate experiential context, facilitated conversations with each participant and allowed a relationship of trust to develop over the months of their internship. Not only could they share observations and reflections about their classroom experience, they were free to relate their shortcomings and frustrations knowing I was not, in any way, part of their final evaluation. Is it possible, even in a small way, to establish this level of trust between mentor teachers and their student teachers given the political nature of schooling, the structure of teacher education programs, and the expectation for evaluation? And if so, how might this be accomplished?

Recognizing both the inherent challenges and the significant benefits of working to establish these relationships of trust, numerous researchers have responded to these questions and offer suggestions for teacher education programming (see Ambrosetti & Dekkers, 2010; Ambrosetti, 2014; Ambrosetti, Knight, & Dekkers, 2014; Awaya et al., 2003; Bradbury & Koballa, 2008). Of particular interest is the work of Awaya et al. (2003), which addresses the imbalance of power between a mentor and her mentee by offering three programmatic suggestions: First, create a culture of mentoring that "encourages teachers and students to view each other as collaborators and fellow decision makers rather than figures holding unequal positions in a hierarchical structure" (p. 52). Second, prior to working together in the context of a classroom practicum provide an opportunity for members of both groups to become acquainted and to build relationships with each other. Third, these established relationships allow for more informed pairings, which were most often created by the mentor teachers and student teachers themselves who grew to recognize their suitability for each other. Rather than an arrangement made by a field experience officer, oftentimes based on teacher availability as well as grade and subject specialization, this model supports the understanding that mentoring should be both a personal relationship and a collaborative partnership.

There are neither simple nor foolproof ways to cultivate relationships between student teachers as well as between mentors and their mentees. They are, after all, human relationships subject to the context of schooling and to the backgrounds and experiences of the individuals involved; however, it is our responsibility as teacher educators to be aware of the attendant challenges and to support both mentor teachers and their mentees as they share understandings, reflect on their growth, and work together to meet the learning needs of children. As we reflect on the nature of the final field experience and the inherent challenge for classroom teachers to be both a mentor and an evaluator, it may be that the structure of the final report becomes more collaborative with all three individuals assuming significant responsibility for its creation: student teachers reflecting on their professional growth over the field experience, mentor teachers commenting on instructional and relational capabilities as observed during the field experience, and faculty supervisors offering broader, more programmatic perspectives of student teacher development. Ehrich and Millwater (2011) write: "Mentoring is a reciprocal and dynamic power based relationship between a mentor and a mentee that requires careful negotiation" (p. 478). I suggest as teacher educators we are uniquely situated to assist in this careful negotiation by working to ameliorate the contextual challenges while at the same time facilitating spaces for fruitful conversation and dialogue.

***By telling stories of our lives.*** Finally, student teachers must be encouraged to tell their stories. Although interns in this study seemed reluctant to share stories of challenge and difficulty, they were willing to recall episodes of success and anecdotes demonstrating their growing capability as teachers. Perhaps, when in the midst of difficulty, these narratives have the power to undermine our confidence and sense of self. Laura described how her experience with her first mentor teacher was so unsettling she began to wonder if she was responsible for her struggles:

> So I started thinking maybe I am completely just doing the wrong things and completely just not meant for this job and not meant for this lifestyle? I mean why is she saying these things to me that, I don't know, almost make me feel ashamed of what I tried, or ashamed of what I had done?

Yet, I am convinced there is value in sharing these narratives, and, in particular, telling the stories of our teaching and learning lives. David's story of his experience as a Grade 11 student was a milestone in his eventual desire to be a teacher:

> Well . . . if I think back and try to trace how I got into teaching . . . it would have started back when I was in Grade 6 . . . in 1996. I had a teacher that year who actually said to us, to the whole class: "Boys are not as smart as girls." I was already kind of shutting down by then and her comment didn't help. After that point, I really didn't try in school, or anything.
>
> This went on through junior high and into high school. I just didn't feel like school was for me but I couldn't drop out because I didn't feel like I could, because my parents wouldn't have supported that. I just didn't want to be there. I didn't really try hard: I did absolutely the minimum to pass. That's how it was with me.
>
> But then that changed in Grade 11 with these two teachers; they opened my eyes to how school is important. The first was a history and law teacher; I had him for those two classes. I had seen him before when he was a substitute so I kind of knew what he was like. He asked lots of questions: "Why do you think that?" Not just yes or no answers. And he liked to joke around and use humour in the class. He would make these little sarcastic comments or we'd banter back and forth. He'd make a comment and I'd give it back to him and he'd give it back to me. It was just a fun relationship or fun atmosphere where I felt welcome to be in the classroom. The other teacher I had was an English teacher. She just had so much passion for her profession. It came through in everything and it really made me want to be there because everything was so exciting, everything was so new. It was really nice to be in that classroom.
>
> Now, when I look back on my experience in Grade 11 with these two teachers, I can see parts of them in my teaching. They cared that we handed in work and would push us, making sure that everyone was able to do their best. Like . . . right now I want everyone to succeed . . . I want to make sure everyone is the best they can be. I don't know if it came out in my early practicums but as soon as I started reflecting on these things I can actually see it in my own teaching.

David's growing understandings of the ways in which his past experiences as a learner are shaping his instructional practice and professional identity offer evidence of how important it is to engage conversation prompting consideration of where we have come from: it invites a space for puzzling out how past experiences make sense in the context of "the Now" (Carr, 1986, p. 95). Polkinghorne (1988) suggests we work to make our existence whole by "configuring personal events into a historical unity which includes not only what one has been but also anticipations of what one will be" (p. 150). Sharing narratives of past, present, and anticipated experiences is an essential aspect of developing self-understanding.

These four themes, represented as intertwined and overlapping circles of engagement, encourage the intentional consideration of who we are becoming as teachers. Ecologically, ecotones are areas of tension and struggle, of promise and possibility. This conceptual framework has the potential to guide teacher educators as they support preservice teachers in the construction of professional understandings on the borderlands of their final field experience.

## Points of Departure

> The outcome of any serious research can only be to make two questions grow where one question grew before. Every goal of research is necessarily a point of departure. (Veblen, 1969, p. 33)

Glesne (2006) suggests, "True research does not end. Instead, it points the way for yet another search" (p. 220). As this inquiry developed, I became increasingly intrigued by the nature of the relationship between the student teacher and the "more capable peer" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86): the mentor teacher. And while there is a growing body of literature focused on mentor teachers and their work with student teachers, a number of questions emerge, specifically, from the findings of this inquiry. First, in what ways do mentor teachers participate in the process of internalization wherein every function appears twice: initially on the social level and then within the individual. Is this process limited to the skills of instruction? How might mentor teachers share their own understandings of the professional self such that the process of internalization is enhanced? In what ways do mentor teachers draw novices into the culture of teaching?

Second, this study identified the essential role of the mentor teacher in supporting the construction of professional identity with interns. What is the experience of mentoring a new member of the professional community like? What does it mean to *be* a mentor? And in what ways could teacher educators support this relationship? These questions, related to the nature of the relationship between mentors and student teachers, invite points of departure worthy of further exploration.

## Reflections on Borderland Experiences

> We think of the self as a central continuity, yet recognizing that the self is not identical through time is the first step in celebrating it as fluid and variable, shaped and reshaped by learning. (Bateson, 1994, p. 64)

The borderlands are rich, shifting spaces. Glimpsed during my journeys over months of doctoral studies I became captivated by these landscapes where foliage of all kinds exists side by side, or perhaps on top of the other. Ecologically, these are ecotones. Metaphorically, their existence provoked me to think about these spaces as crossroads of being and becoming: times in our lives

when we are neither one nor the other, not a student nor yet fully a teacher. Ultimately, I came to understand these times of transition as borderlands of possibility.

Preservice teachers engage in coursework and field experiences that both validate and challenge their existing understandings of who they are and who they are becoming. Often unaware of the essential role these self-understandings assume in shaping classroom learning, they are focused on first knowing about mandated programs of study and then creating engaging learning experiences to meet these expectations. Yet, who we are as teachers—our professional self—has the power to influence the quality of learning opportunities for children and youth in classrooms (Hamachek, 1999; Aoki, 2005b).

This understanding prompted consideration of the ways in which teacher education programs are the site for the development of teachers ontologically: who we are and who we are becoming. Just as a child arrives at school and is, over time, transformed through discourse, cultural mediation, and within crucial relationships (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000), a student entering a first year of a teacher education program must begin to construct a new subject position: the teacher. While never complete, this transformation culminates in teacher education programs during the final field experience: that borderland space characterized by both uncertainty and possibility. School, Packer (2001) argues, "involves ontological change, change in the kind of person a child becomes" (p. 131); I suggest these borderlands have the power to invite ontological change: change in the kind of teacher a student becomes.

Two essential questions guided this exploration of the construction of professional identity with the four intern teachers taking part in this inquiry:

- In what ways do preservice teachers construct an emerging professional identity during their teacher education program?

- What prompts and nurtures, confronts and challenges understandings of professional identity in the lives of preservice teachers?

Data was gathered through conversational interviews. Our first conversation was shaped by each participant's completed pre-interview activity; as I reviewed transcript data over the 15 weeks of the internship subsequent conversations engaged both the questions crafted to explore the primary research questions as well as prompts responding to reflections made by each participant. In this way the inquiry was focused, yet responsive to developing understandings.

Four aspects of experience, emerging from the findings of this inquiry, informed the construction of a Conceptual Framework for Engagement (Figure 2). This model directly addresses the two inquiry questions posed at the outset and makes visible the importance of all four elements of experience, linked together, on the borderlands. Liminal spaces, ecological ecotones, provoke tension and struggle. Interns in this study experienced self-doubt because of a difficult relationship with a mentor, worries about meeting the learning needs of every child in the classroom, and tensions related to classroom management. These spaces also invite promise and possibility.

Findings of this inquiry indicate that preservice teachers are supported in their journey to construct understandings of their professional self when offered the opportunity, over time, to engage in conversations together, in written reflections, and in sharing narratives of challenge and success. Bateson (1994) suggests that the self is "fluid and variable, shaped and reshaped by

learning" (p. 64). Our responsibility as teacher educators is, then, to intentionally and purposefully craft curriculum focused on tracing growth in knowing and being, thereby prompting and nurturing the construction of professional understandings on the borderlands of possibility.

———————————————

Endnotes

[1]As I explored the idea of borderlands as a unifying concept in other academic areas it seemed logical to find it used in the discipline of history. However, I discovered that in addition to the more obvious connection to the political borders between nation states, quite literally the border-lands, the field of borderlands history challenges established centrist histories by paying attention to people and spaces at the margins. Hamalainen and Truett (2011) maintain that borderlands history "shares with other new histories postmodern, poststructuralist disenchantment with master narratives and draws its inspiration from the cultural turn, which attuned historians to the micro-workings of power, the ways people create meaning, and the open-endedness of social relationships" (p. 340).

[2]I am grateful to my colleague and friend, Gary McFarlane, who not only taught high school biology for his career in Medicine Hat, Alberta but is also a life-long inquirer. By first naming this space I described to him metaphorically, he then directed me to numerous resources explaining the ecological significance of ecotones. This information validated the tentative understandings I had of these in-between spaces and shaped the metaphor that guided this inquiry.

[3]*sin fronteras*, Spanish "without borders"

[4] Pseudonyms used.

## References

Ambrosetti, A. (2014). Are you ready to be a mentor? Preparing teachers for mentoring pre-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(6), 30-42. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2014v39n6.2

Ambrosetti, A., & Dekkers, J. (2010). The interconnectnedness of the roles of mentors and mentees in pre-service teacher education mentoring relationships. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education, 35*(6), 42-55. http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2010v35n6.3

Ambrosetti, A., Knight, B., & Dekkers, J. (2014). Maximizing the potential of mentoring: A framework for pre-service teacher education. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning, 22*(3), 224-239.

Anspal, T., Eisenschmidt, E., & Lofstrom, E. (2012). Finding myself as a teacher: Exploring the shaping of teacher identities through student teachers' narratives, *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 18*(2), 197-216. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2012.632268

Anzaldua, G. (1987). *Borderlands: La frontera.* San Francisco, CA: Spinsters/Aunt Lute Books.

Aoki, T. (2005a). Layered voices of teaching: The uncannily correct and the elusively true. In W.Pinar & R. Irwin, (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 187-197). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Aoki, T. (2005b). Teaching as in-dwelling between two curriculum worlds. In W. Pinar & R. Irwin, (Eds.), *Curriculum in a new key: The collected works of Ted T. Aoki* (pp. 159-165). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Awaya, A., McEwan, H., Heyler, D., Linsky, S., Lum, D., &Wakukawa, P. (2003). Mentoring as a journey. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*(1), 45-56.

Banks-Leite, C., & Ewers, R. (2009). Ecosystem boundaries. *Encyclopedia of life sciences.* Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons. doi: 10.1002/9780470015902.a0021232

Bateson, M.C. (1994). *Peripheral visions: Learning along the way.* New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2009). Understanding teacher identity: An overview of issues in the literature and implications for teacher education. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 39*(2), 175-189. doi:10.1080/03057640902902252

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2010). Reflecting on an ideal: Student teachers envision a future identity. *Reflective Practice, 11*(5), 631-643. doi: 10.1080/14623943.2010.516975

Beauchamp, C., & Thomas, L. (2011). New teachers' identity shifts at the boundary of teacher education and initial practice. *International Journal of Educational Research, 50*, 6-13. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2011.04.003

Beijaard, D., Meijer, P., & Verloop, N. (2004). Reconsidering research on teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(2), 107-128. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2003.07.001

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1992). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bradbury, L., & Koballa, T. (2008). Borders to cross: Identifying sources of tension in mentor-intern relationships. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(8), 2132-2145. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2008.03.002

Britzman, D. (2003). *Practice makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach* (2nd ed.). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Bruner, J. (2004). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 71*(3), 691-710.

Carr, D. (1986). *Time, narrative, and history.* Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press.

Carson, T. (1986). Closing the gap between research and practice: Conversation as a mode of doing research. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 4*(2), 73-85.

Coldron, J., & Smith, R. (1999). Active location in teachers' construction of their professional identities. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 31*(6), 711-726.

Cresswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process.* Los Angelos, CA: Sage Publications.

Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal, 32*(4), 601-616. doi:10.1080/01411920600775316

Ehrich, L., & Millwater, J. (2011). Internship: Interpreting micropolitical contexts. *Australian Educational Researcher, 38*(4), 467-481. doi: 10.1007/s13384-011-0035-7

Ellis, J. (2006). Researching children's experience hermeneutically and holistically. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 52*(3), 111-126.

Ellis, J., Janjic-Watrich, V., Macris, V., & Marynowski, R. (2011). Using exploratory interviews to re-frame planned research on classroom issues. *Northwest Passage, 9*(1). 11-18.

Erickson, E. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis.* New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.

Flores, M., & Day, C. (2006). Contexts which shape and reshape new teachers' identities: A multi-perspective study. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*(2), 219-232. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.09.002

Freese, A. (2006). Reframing one's teaching: Discovering our teacher selves through reflection and inquiry. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 22*, 100-119. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2005.07.003

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Graves, R. (2011). Ecotone. *The encyclopedia of Earth.* Retrieved from http://www.eoearth.org/view/article/152345

Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Jones, L. (2007). *Mister Pip.* Toronto, ON: Random House.

Hamachek, D. (1999). Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge. In R. Lipka & T. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp.189-224). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Hamalainen, P., & Truett, S. (2011). On borderlands. *The Journal of American History, 98*(2), 338-361.

Kerby, A. P. (1991). *Narrative and the self.* Bloomington, IL: Indiana University Press.

Korthagen, F. (2004). In search of the essence of a good teacher: Towards a more holistic approach in teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(1), 77-97. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2003.10.002

Kvale, S. (1986). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

McLean, C. V. (1999). Becoming a teacher: The person in the process. In R. Lipka & T. Brinthaupt (Eds.), *The role of self in teacher development* (pp. 55-91). New York, NY: State University of New York Press.

Mead, G. (1934). *Mind, self and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (pp. 26-43). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Miller Marsh, M. (2002). Examining the discourses that shape our teacher identities. *Curriculum Inquiry, 32*(4), 453-469.

Packer, M. (2001). Changing classes: Shifting the trajectory of development in school. In M. Packer & M. Tappan (Eds.), *Cultural and critical perspectives on human development* (pp.113-146). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Packer, M., & Greco-Brooks, D. (1999). School as a site for the production of persons. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 12*, 133-151.

Packer, M., & Goicoechea, J. (2000). Sociocultural and constructivist theories of learning: Ontology, not just epistemology. *Educational Psychologist, 35*(4), 227-241.

Palmer, P. (1998). *The courage to teach: Exploring the inner landscape of a teacher's life.* San Francisco, CA: John Wiley &Sons.

Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Sachs, J. (2005). Teacher education and the development of professional identity: Learning to be a teacher. In P. Denicolo & M. Kompf (Eds.), *Connecting policy and practice: Challenges for teaching and learning in schools and universities* (pp. 5-21). New York, NY: Routledge.

Segall, A. (2006). Book review: After (teacher) education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(2), 181-187. Retrieved from http://jte.sagepub.com/contnet/57/2/181

Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling identities: In search of an analytic tool for investigating learning as a culturally shaped activity. *Educational Researcher, 34*(4), 14-22. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3699942

Soreide, G. (2006). Narrative construction of teacher identity: Positioning and negotiation. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(5), 527-547. doi:10.1080/13540600600832247

Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stake, R.E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Stetsenko, A. (2004). Scientific legacy: Tool and sign in the development of the child. In R.W. Rieber & D.K. Robinson (Eds.), *The essential Vygotsky* (pp. 501-512). New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Sutherland, L., Howard, S., & Markauskaite, L. (2010). Professional identity creation: Examining the development of beginning pre-service teachers' understanding of their work as teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*(3), 455-465. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2009.06.006

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2007). Learning to live well as teachers in a changing world: Insights into developing a professional identity in teacher education. *Journal of Educational Thought, 41*(3), 229-243.

Thomas, L., & Beauchamp, C. (2011). Understanding new teachers' professional identities through metaphor. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(4), 762-769. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2010.12.007

Trent, J. (2011). 'Four years on, I'm ready to teach': Teacher education and the construction of teacher identities. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 17*(5), 529-543. doi: 10.1080/13540602.2011.602207

University of Lethbridge, Faculty of Education. (2009). *Comprehensive field experience handbook.* Lethbridge: AB: University of Lethbridge.

Urzua, A., & Vasquez, C. (2008). Reflection and professional identity in teachers' future-oriented discourse. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 24*(7), 1935-1946. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2008.04.008

Veblen, T. (1969). *Veblen on Marx, race, science and economics.* New York, NY: Capricorn Books.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). ), *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (A. R. Luria, M. Cole, M. Lopez-Morillas, & J. Wertsch, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Walkington, J. (2005). Becoming a teacher: Encouraging development of teacher identity through reflective practice. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 33*(1), 53-64.

Watson, C. (2006). Narratives of practice and the construction of identity in teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 12*(5), 509-526.doi: 10.1080/13540600600832213

Weber, S. (1986). The nature of interviewing. *Phenomenology + Pedagogy, 4*(2), 65-72.

# SNAP® For Schools: Impact on Internalizing Symptoms

## Kirstie L. Walker and Kristi D. Wright

### *University of Regina*

### Author Note

Kirstie L. Walker, Department of Psychology, University of Regina; and Kristi D. Wright, Department of Psychology, University of Regina.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Kirstie L. Walker, Department of Psychology, Administration and Humanities Building, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina, SK, Canada S4S 0A2. Email: Kirstie.Walker@uregina.ca and/or Kristi D. Wright, Department of Psychology, Administration and Humanities Building, 3737 Wascana Parkway, Regina, SK, Canada S4S 0A2. Email: Kristi.Wright@uregina.ca

### Abstract

Stop Now And Plan (SNAP®) is an empirically supported cognitive behavioural program for children identified as presenting with externalizing problems. The purpose of this investigation was to examine the implementation of the SNAP® for Schools program as a universal prevention program for children not identified as presenting with internalizing or externalizing problems, specifically, whether the program would lead to reductions in emotion dysregulation, anxiety, intolerance of uncertainty, and anxiety sensitivity. It was hypothesized that the SNAP® for Schools program would reduce emotion dysregulation and internalizing constructs in non-identified, school-aged children. The sample consisted of elementary school children in Grades 3 and 4. Participating children completed a battery of symptom measures one week pre- ($n = 65$) and post-SNAP® ($n = 57$) as well as one month after ($n = 54$) completing SNAP® in their classrooms. For children who scored in the upper 10% on the measure total and/or subscale scores, reductions in emotion dysregulation, anxiety, and anxiety sensitivity were observed. Findings contribute to a better understanding of the effectiveness of SNAP® for reducing emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms in children with elevated internalizing symptoms and emotion dysregulation. Limitations and future directions are discussed.

*Keywords:* Stop Now and Plan®; universal prevention program; internalizing symptoms; emotion dysregulation; cognitive behaviour therapy

**SNAP® For Schools: Impact on Internalizing Symptoms**

Stop Now And Plan (SNAP®) is a cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) intervention created by the Child Development Institute (CDI) in Ontario, Canada to help children regulate anger and impulsivity by teaching them to stop, think, and plan positive alternatives before they act (Augimeri, Jiang, Koegl, & Carey, 2006). SNAP® was designed to reduce behavioural problems (e.g., aggression), emotion dysregulation, and negative thinking by teaching effective emotion regulation, self-control, and problem solving skills (CDI, 2012). SNAP® has been demonstrated to be effective in reducing emotion dysregulation and externalizing symptoms in children (Augimeri, Farrington, Koegl, & Day, 2007; Augimeri, Jiang, et al., 2006; Augimeri, Koegl, Ferrante, & Slater, 2006; Koegl, Farrington, Augimeri, & Day, 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Lipman et al., 2008). However, research has not examined whether SNAP® may be effective for reducing other childhood symptoms associated with emotion dysregulation, such as internalizing symptoms.

It was anticipated that SNAP® may also facilitate reductions in internalizing symptoms (e.g., anxiety) because CBT intervention programs have been effective for internalizing symptoms such as separation anxiety, generalized and social anxiety, and obsessive compulsive symptoms (In-Albon & Schneider, 2007; James, Soler, & Weatherall, 2009). Similarly, researchers have hypothesized that emotion dysregulation (a target of SNAP®) underlies both internalizing and externalizing pathology and can be ameliorated through CBT (e.g., Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Eggum, 2010; Herts, McLaughlin, & Hatzenbuehler, 2012; Silk, Steinberg, & Morris, 2003; Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). Further, internalizing and externalizing symptoms often co-occur in children (Fanti & Henrich, 2010).

Intolerance of uncertainty (i.e., experiencing severe discomfort with the notion that negative events may occur in the future and there is no absolute way to predict such events; Carleton, 2012; Carleton, Norton, & Asmundson, 2007) and anxiety sensitivity (i.e., the fear of anxiety symptoms based on the belief that these symptoms have harmful physical, psychological, or social consequences; Reiss, 1991) are two constructs that have been identified as risk factors for internalizing symptoms such as anxiety. In adult samples, individuals who experience ambiguous events as catastrophic are at higher risk to develop generalized anxiety disorder (e.g., Dugas, Gagnon, Ladouceur, & Freeston, 1998), social anxiety disorder (e.g., Carleton, Collimore, & Asmundson, 2010), obsessive compulsive disorder (e.g., Gentes & Ruscio, 2011), and health anxiety (e.g., Fergus & Valentiner, 2011). Limited research exists exploring IU in childhood; however, research to date has demonstrated an association between self-reported intolerance of uncertainty and general anxiety, worry, and reassurance-seeking behaviour (Comer et al., 2009; Cowie, Clementi, & Alfano, 2016) as well as an association with anxiety sensitivity, social anxiety, and specific anxiety disorder symptoms (Boelen, Vrinssen, & van Tulder, 2010; Wright, Adams Lebell, & Carleton, 2016) in children as young as 8 years.

With respect to anxiety sensitivity, the heightened fear of arousal-related sensations and the potential for negative outcomes has been demonstrated to be associated with anxiety disorders in children and adults (Taylor, 2014). For example, anxiety sensitivity has been found to be a vulnerability factor in the development of anxiety symptoms among early adolescents ages 9 to 13 years (Schmidt et al., 2010), to predict panic symptoms in children and adolescents ages 7 to 18 years (Calamari et al., 2001), as well as to be an underlying factor of social phobia in adolescents ages 13 to 17 years (Anderson & Hope, 2009). Most recently, in a study of 128

children and adolescents, intolerance of uncertainty, anxiety disorders, and anxiety sensitivity were all related (Wright et al., 2016). Given the demonstrated relationship between intolerance of uncertainty, anxiety sensitivity, and anxiety in children, it was advantageous to include these constructs in the present investigation.

Originally SNAP® was designed to be delivered to children in the community; however, delivering the program in schools has the potential to increase identification and treatment of mental health problems in children that may otherwise remain unidentified (Levitt, Saka, Romanelli, & Hoagwood, 2007). Thus, the CDI, in partnership with the Toronto District School Boards, began delivering SNAP® in schools (Walsh & Hong, 2010). In this model, SNAP® is delivered to all children in classrooms where there have been several students with identified behavioural difficulties (Walsh & Hong, 2010). One uncontrolled study of the school-based model found, according to the parents' report, that participation led to significant decreases in behavioural issues (e.g., conduct problems and oppositional behaviours such as bullying, fighting, lying, and irresponsibility) in 28 children ages 7 to 12 years with a moderate treatment effect (Walsh & Hong, 2010). The majority of participants with clinically significant behaviour problems prior to SNAP® shifted to the non-clinical range post-SNAP® (Walsh & Hong, 2010). These findings demonstrate potential for school-based implementation of SNAP®.

What may occur while delivering school-based universal prevention programs such as SNAP® is that very few children in each classroom are identified with behavioural or mental health problems and have changes in their behaviour or symptoms monitored, yet hundreds of children receive the universal program. For example, in the aforementioned study (Walsh & Hong, 2010), 384 non-identified children (i.e., not identified with disruptive behaviour problems) completed SNAP®, but no outcome data were collected. It may be difficult to justify continuing to deliver a universal program in classrooms when outcome data for a significant portion of children are missing, coupled with the fact that identified children are often removed from class and receive a more intensive SNAP® program separately. Nevertheless, the initial positive findings (Walsh & Hong, 2010), paired with results of successful school-based universal prevention programs for treating emotion dysregulation, internalizing, and externalizing problems (e.g., FRIENDS for Life [FRIENDS]; Barrett & Ryan, 2004; Barrett, 2005), support our speculation that non-identified children in the classroom may also receive some benefit. To date no investigation has examined the SNAP® for Schools program for non-identified children and its effect on self-reported emotion dysregulation or internalizing symptoms.

In the current investigation, we examined the utility of the universally implemented SNAP® for Schools program for non-identified (i.e., those not previously identified as at-risk of behavioural difficulties as part of a larger multi-agency initiative), elementary-school-aged children. Specifically, we examined children's self-reported emotion dysregulation, anxiety disorder symptoms, anxiety sensitivity, and intolerance of uncertainty for reductions pre- to post-SNAP®, and short-term maintenance (i.e., over one month) of any reductions.

Our hypotheses were threefold. First, we hypothesized that emotion dysregulation would decrease as a function of participation in SNAP® based on research indicating that CBT programs reduce emotion dysregulation (Southam-Gerow & Kendall, 2002). Second, we hypothesized that internalizing constructs (i.e., anxiety, anxiety sensitivity, and intolerance of uncertainty) would decrease following participation in SNAP® based on research demonstrating that emotion dysregulation underlies internalizing constructs and that internalizing and

externalizing pathology frequently overlap and are effectively treated through CBT (Eisenberg et al., 1996; Fanti & Henrich, 2010). Though decreases in these constructs were desired for all students, it was acknowledged that most children in a given classroom would not fall in the clinical range on these measures; thus, we hypothesized that their scores may not decrease as much as children whose scores were most elevated (i.e., upper 10%). Examining children with the most elevated scores (who may be considered "high risk" for developing disorders) is a method employed by other researchers examining the utility of universal cognitive behavioural prevention programs (Barrett, Farrell, Ollendick, & Dadds, 2006; Barrett & Pahl, 2006; Stallard, Simpson, Anderson, & Goddard, 2008). Third, we hypothesized that symptom reductions observed one week post-SNAP® (Post 1) would be maintained one month post-SNAP® (Post 2).

## Method

### Participants

Participants were non-identified children in Grade 3 (*n* = 50) and Grade 4 (*n* = 15) attending one of three inner-city elementary schools in Saskatchewan, Canada ($M_{age}$ = 8.05, *SD* = 0.57). The distribution of participants across schools was similar (School A: *n* = 25; School B: *n* = 21; School C: *n* = 19). Approximately 54% (*n* = 35) of participants were girls. The majority of participants were Aboriginal (40%; *n* = 26), followed by non-Aboriginal and non-Caucasian (34%; *n* = 22), and Caucasian (26%; *n* = 17). The attrition rate by Post 2 was 17% due to moving away and lack of interest. A total of 57 children completed the measures at Post 1, and 54 completed them at Post 2. If absent on the day of data collection, the researcher went back the next possible day to complete the measures with the child. According to an a priori power analysis using G*Power software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), with a medium effect expected, a sample size of 34 children was necessary to detect significant effects (power = 80%; alpha = .05) through the analyses of interest (repeated measures ANOVA). As the SNAP® program was delivered in three classrooms, data from more than 34 children were collected. The greater number of participants provided greater statistical power to detect significant effects.

### Measures

**Children's Emotion Management Scale (CEMS; Zeman, Shipman, & Penza-Clyve, 2001).** The CEMS is a self-report measure of anger, sadness, and worry management in school-aged children. The measure is comprised of 33 items rated on 3-point Likert scales (*hardly ever*, *sometimes*, *often*). The CEMS contains three subscales for each of the three emotions measured: inhibition (suppression of emotion); dysregulated expression; and coping (adaptive methods of emotion management). Higher scores on the inhibition and dysregulation scales indicate poor coping with anger, sadness, or worry, while higher scores on the coping scales indicate good coping with anger, sadness, or worry. Researchers have found the CEMS to demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties supporting the reliability and validity of the scale (Zeman, Cassano, Suveg, & Shipman, 2010; Zeman et al., 2001). Poor to acceptable internal consistency, measured by Cronbach's alpha (α) was demonstrated for CEMS subscales in the current study–dysregulation (α = .53, 95% CI [.30 - .71]), coping (α = .70, 95% CI [.55 - .81]), and inhibition (α = .74, 95% CI [.61 - .84]).

**Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS; Spence, 1998).** The SCAS is a 44-item self-report measure designed to assess the presence of anxiety symptoms. Items are rated on 4-point Likert scales (*never* to *always*). While the SCAS is comprised of various subscales representing

subtypes of anxiety (e.g., panic/agoraphobia, social phobia, separation anxiety), in the current investigation, we utilized the total score, which ranges from zero to 114 as the positive filler items (six items) are not included; higher scores indicate greater anxiety (Spence, 1998). The SCAS possesses high internal consistency (Essau, Muris, & Ederer, 2002; Muris, Schmidt, & Merckelbach, 2000; Whiteside & Brown, 2008). The validity of the SCAS has also been demonstrated (Essau et al., 2002; Muris et al., 2000; Spence, 1998). In the current sample, excellent internal consistency was demonstrated for the SCAS total score (α = .91, 95% CI [.87 - .94]).

**Childhood Anxiety Sensitivity Index (CASI; Silverman, Fleisig, Rabian, & Peterson, 1991).** The CASI, designed to measure anxiety sensitivity in children (physical concerns, social concerns, and psychological concerns), has 18 items rated on 3-point Likert scales (*none, some, a lot*). The total score ranges from 18 to 54 and higher scores are indicative of greater anxiety sensitivity. The overall and test-retest reliability of the measure is high (Silverman et al., 1991). Validity is also supported (McLaughlin, Stewart, & Taylor, 2007). In the current study, good internal consistency was observed for the CASI total score (α = .86, 95% CI [.80 - .90]).

**Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale–Revised (IUS–R; Walker, Birrell, Rogers, Leekam, & Freeston, 2010).** The IUS–R assesses the central themes of intolerance of uncertainty in children (uncertainty, emotional and behavioural reactions to ambiguous situations, implications of being uncertain, and attempts to control the future). The 12 items are rated on 5-point Likert scales (*not at all like me* to *entirely like me*), with total scores ranging from 12 to 60; higher scores indicate greater intolerance of uncertainty. Studies have shown adequate reliability and validity of the measure (Wright et al., 2016). In the current study, we observed good internal consistency for the IUS–R total score (α = .84, 95% CI [.77 - .89]).

## Procedure

Schools were identified by school administration as potential hosts of SNAP® for having many students who demonstrate behavioural problems and absenteeism. These schools were considered to gain the most potential benefit from the program based on the targets of SNAP®. Within the schools, classrooms were chosen on the basis of age appropriateness for the SNAP® materials. After approval by the University's Research Ethics Board, we sent a letter describing the SNAP® program and research project to parents/guardians. Both child assent and parent/guardian consent were required for participation. One week prior to the implementation of SNAP®, children completed the measures in their classroom in small groups with the assistance of the first author or research assistants (e.g., to read items or provide meaning for an item when required). Next, the 13-week SNAP® program was delivered in the classrooms by teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors trained as facilitators.

Overall, the program teaches how to modulate emotions by providing a concrete structure (i.e., Stop Now And Plan) to employ when choosing a course of action. Content of the program has a strong emphasis on psychoeducation, cognitive restructuring, problem-solving, emotion regulation, and encouraging inclusiveness. Through a structured curriculum, facilitated discussion, and role plays, children learn to solve problems in provoking situations so that they are able to generate feasible, personalized alternative options that lead them away from further trouble (Koegl et al., 2008). The program is comprised of the following 13 components:

- Introduction to SNAP®,

- body cues,
- SNAP® learning log,
- dealing with anger,
- joining in,
- fair play and sportsmanship,
- review – avoiding trouble,
- dealing with bullying,
- dealing with peer pressure,
- SNAP® problem solving and apologizing,
- understanding stealing,
- complimenting and rewarding yourself, and
- the final celebration (Walsh & Hong, 2010).

Additional supports such as booster sessions are also available. Several of these sessions are directly based upon CBT, such as how to understand emotions with body cues, how to change negative thoughts (e.g., how to deal with peer pressure), and how to change behaviour (e.g., how to avoid trouble). Together with the other sessions, such as joining in and fair play, these are issues that many children may struggle with at some point, and all children should find elements of this program helpful.

Each 45-minute large-group session (i.e., with all children in the classroom) is composed of activities including (a) Check In and Practice Review (5 minutes), (b) Let's Talk (begin to explore problematic situations that require use of SNAP®; 15 minutes), (c) Lights! Camera! SNAP®! (leader modeling and child role plays; 20 minutes), (d) Check Out (complete a homework assignment based on the week's topic; 3 minutes), and (e) Leveling Off (relaxation; 2 minutes; Walsh & Hong, 2010). The same trained facilitators delivered the program the same way in all three schools. SNAP® fidelity/integrity of service delivery practices were conducted by the CDI, including file audits, and consultations and monitoring of the SNAP® groups and other SNAP® treatment components utilizing adherence and competency ratings (CDI, 2012). One week and one month after the termination of the SNAP® program, children completed the measures to obtain Post 1 and Post 2 intervention data.

**Data Analysis**

We performed statistical analyses using SPSS for Windows, version 22.0. We completed three primary sets of analyses: (a) descriptive statistics were computed for demographic information, questionnaire subscales, and total scores; (b) univariate ANOVAs were computed to examine potential differences in measures of emotional dysregulation and internalizing symptoms across school, gender, and ethnicity; and (c) repeated measures ANOVAs were computed to assess changes in emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms over time with the full sample, and with children who scored in the upper 10% on the measures. When significant group differences emerged in the ANOVAs, the specific variable was used as a covariate in a repeated measures ANCOVA.

<div align="center">

**Results**

</div>

**Descriptive Statistics and Group Differences**

We computed descriptive statistics for measure subscale and total scores (see Table 1).

Univariate ANOVAs were computed with Bonferroni post-hoc tests in order to examine pre-SNAP® differences in subscale and total scores across schools. A statistically significant difference between schools was found for the SCAS total score between School A and School C after Bonferroni correction ($M_{difference}$ = 15.48, $p$ = .02). Differences across schools on this measure are unclear. As mentioned, these schools were all chosen for their inner-city demographic, being the types of schools where SNAP® would normally be implemented by the CDI. There were no known differences in demographics or socioeconomic risk factors.

Univariate ANOVAs were computed in order to examine pre-SNAP® differences in subscale and total scores across gender (post-hoc tests were not computed due to there being fewer than three groups). A statistically significant difference was found for CEMS anger coping, $F(1, 58) = 5.75$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .09$, with girls scoring higher than boys ($M_{girls}$ = 9.20, $SD$ = 1.69; $M_{boys}$ = 8.13, $SD$ = 1.76). We computed univariate ANOVAs with Bonferroni post-hoc tests in order to examine pre-SNAP® differences in subscale and total scores across ethnicity. No statistically significant differences were found. Thus, the primary analyses were completed with the inclusion of school or gender as a covariate as appropriate.

## Changes in Emotion Regulation and Internalizing Symptoms

**Full sample.** We hypothesized that emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms would decrease through participation in SNAP®. For the full sample, repeated measures ANOVAs (or ANCOVAs) were computed (see Table 1 for pre-SNAP® to Post 1 differences). No statistically significant decreases in emotion dysregulation or internalizing symptoms were observed. Bonferroni post-hoc tests were not examined as no statistically significant decreases were observed. This lack of significant effects also nullified our hypothesis that decreases would be the maintained at Post 2 (i.e., one month after participation).

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations for Measures at Pre-SNAP®, Post 1 and Post 2 and Significant Changes Pre-SNAP® to Post 1 for the Full Sample*

| Measure | Pre-SNAP® $M(SD)$ | Post 1 $M(SD)$ | Post 2 $M(SD)$ | Pre-SNAP® to Post 1 $F$ | $df$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CEMS Anger | | | | | |
|     Inhibition | 8.40(2.17)[d] | 7.71(1.96)[d] | 7.94(1.52)[d] | 2.03 | 2, 94 |
|     Dysregulation | 4.49(1.54)[d] | 4.21(1.37)[d] | 4.67(1.55)[d] | 1.79 | 2, 94 |
|     *Coping | 8.79(1.71)[d] | 8.67(1.49)[d] | 8.76(1.80)[d] | 0.91 | 2, 92 |
| CEMS Sadness | | | | | |
|     Inhibition | 7.78(2.20)[e] | 8.20(2.10)[e] | 8.39(2.09)[e] | 1.39 | 2, 90 |
|     Dysregulation | 5.16(1.47)[e] | 5.11(1.46)[e] | 5.13(1.41)[e] | 0.03 | 2, 90 |
|     Coping | 10.87(2.16)[e] | 10.63(1.87)[e] | 11.35(2.01)[e] | 1.62 | 2, 90 |
| CEMS Worry | | | | | |
|     Inhibition | 8.58(2.22)[f] | 8.77(2.06)[f] | 8.77(2.04)[f] | 0.14 | 2, 78 |
|     Dysregulation | 5.14(1.30)[f] | 4.77(1.66)[f] | 4.90(1.53)[f] | 0.87 | 2, 78 |
|     Coping | 6.40(1.53)[f] | 5.95(1.58)[f] | 6.55(1.15)[f] | 2.19 | 2, 78 |
| CASI Total | 31.75(7.06)[a] | 30.26(6.12)[a] | 29.41(6.92)[a] | 3.12 | 2, 106 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| IUS–R Total | 26.11(8.75)[b] | 25.99(8.66)[c] | 24.37(7.60)[b] | 1.35 | 2, 102 |
| *SCAS Total | 32.66(18.29)[c] | 32.00(16.39)[c] | 28.22(16.95)[c] | 1.24 | 2, 96 |

*Note.* *Variables of school or gender have been added as covariates. Superscript letters after the standard deviation values indicate sample size as follows: [a]$n = 54$. [b]$n = 52$. [c]$n = 50$. [d]$n = 58$. [e]$n = 46$. [f]$n = 40$. CEMS = Children's Emotion Management Scale; CASI = Childhood Anxiety Sensitivity Index; IUS–R = Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale–Revised; SCAS = Spence Children's Anxiety Scale

**Upper 10 per cent of sample.** A second series of repeated measures ANOVAs (or ANCOVAs) was computed for children who had the most elevated scores on the measure total or subscale scores before participating in SNAP® (i.e., upper 10%; $n = 4\text{-}11$ for individual measures; see Table 2). Although these analyses were limited by group size and reduction in the statistical power to find significant effects, we found several statistically significant differences pre-SNAP® to Post 1 after Bonferroni correction for the number of tests, including both emotion dysregulation (anger inhibition and dysregulation, sadness coping, worry dysregulation and coping scores) and internalizing measures (CASI total score). The effect sizes ranged from small ($\eta_p^2 = .45$) to medium ($\eta_p^2 = .66$).

In terms of maintenance of reductions for emotion dysregulation, the majority of reductions were maintained at Post 2; this was true of anger inhibition and dysregulation, sadness coping, and worry coping subscale scores. While a significant decrease was not observed pre-SNAP® to Post 1 for sadness dysregulation, scores on this subscale decreased further from Post 1 to Post 2, making the decrease from pre-SNAP® to Post 2 statistically significant ($M_{pre} = 7.33$, $M_{post1} = 6.11$, $M_{post2} = 5.33$). Contrarily, sadness coping scores at Post 2 rose slightly and no longer differed from pre-SNAP® with Bonferroni correction ($M_{pre} = 15.00$, $M_{post1} = 11.00$, $M_{post2} = 11.20$). Worry dysregulation scores also increased by Post 2, not differing from pre-SNAP® after Bonferroni correction ($M_{pre} = 7.33$, $M_{post1} = 5.00$, $M_{post2} = 7.00$). With regard to internalizing constructs, the decrease in anxiety sensitivity (CASI total score) was not maintained to Post 2 after Bonferroni correction ($M_{pre} = 42.50$, $M_{post1} = 33.71$, $M_{post2} = 34.43$). Though decreases in the IUS–R total score were not seen pre-SNAP® to Post 1, the difference between pre-SNAP® and Post 2 was significant as a further decrease occurred between Post 1 and Post 2 ($M_{pre} = 40.75$, $M_{post1} = 32.63$, $M_{post2} = 29.25$).

Table 2

*Changes in Levels of Emotion Regulation, Internalizing Constructs, and Anxiety Disorder Symptoms for the Upper 10% of the Sample*

| Measure | Split at | $n$ | Pre *M(SD)* | *F* | *df* | $\eta_p^2$ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CEMS Anger inhibition | 10.5 | 11 | 11.45(0.52) | 14.03** | 2, 20 | .58 |
| CEMS Anger dysregulation | 6.5 | 7 | 7.29(0.49) | 7.24* | 2, 12 | .55 |
| [a]CEMS Anger coping | 10.5 | 8 | 11.63(0.52) | 0.53 | 2, 12 | -- |
| CEMS Sadness inhibition | 10.5 | 5 | 11.60(0.55) | 4.07 | 2, 8 | -- |
| [b]CEMS Sadness dysregulation | 6.5 | 9 | 7.33(0.50) | 6.54** | 2, 16 | .45 |
| CEMS Sadness coping | 14.5 | 5 | 15.00(0) | 7.85* | 2, 8 | .66 |
| CEMS Worry inhibition | 11.5 | 4 | 12.00(0) | 2.70 | 2, 6 | -- |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CEMS Worry dysregulation | 6.5 | 6 | 7.33(0.52) | 9.35* | 2, 10 | .65 |
| CEMS Worry coping | 7.5 | 11 | 8.27(0.47) | 8.85** | 2, 20 | .54 |
| CASI Total score | 39.5 | 7 | 42.50(2.25) | 5.86** | 2, 12 | .49 |
| [b]IUS–R Total score | 38.5 | 8 | 40.75(1.49) | 7.67** | 2, 14 | .52 |
| [a]SCAS Total score | 58.5 | 6 | 63.98(5.68) | <0.01 | 2, 8 | -- |

*Note.* [a]Variables of school or gender have been added as covariates. [b]Difference is statistically significant only between pre-SNAP® and Post 2. *$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. Benchmarks for eta-squared are as follows: .20 is a small effect size; .50 is a medium effect size, and .80 is a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Pre = Pre-SNAP®; CEMS = Children's Emotion Management Scale; CASI = Child Anxiety Sensitivity Index; IUS–R = Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale– Revised; SCAS = Spence Children's Anxiety Scale.

## Discussion

This investigation was the first to examine the effectiveness of the universally implemented SNAP® for Schools program in reducing emotion dysregulation and internalizing constructs in non-identified elementary-school-aged children. Overall, our findings did not support the hypothesis that the SNAP® for Schools program would facilitate reductions in self-reported emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms in all non-identified children because no reductions were observed pre-SNAP® to Post 1. In contrast, several reductions were observed for self-reported emotion dysregulation and anxiety sensitivity for children scoring in the upper 10% on each measure. The effect sizes were small to medium, though it is difficult to comment on the potential clinical significance of the findings due to the uncontrolled nature of this investigation and the small number of participants that comprise this upper 10%. In the upper 10% of the sample, some of the reductions in symptoms seen pre-SNAP® to Post 1 were maintained at Post 2, and two further decreases in symptoms were seen by Post 2 (i.e., sadness dysregulation, intolerance of uncertainty). While we hoped that SNAP® would provide benefit to most children in the classroom, it is important to note that only a small percentage of children in a given classroom will experience significant behavioural or mental health problems, and therefore it follows that not all children will receive intervention benefit from programs such as SNAP®, but rather will receive preventative benefit. Research supports universal interventions as all children receive a sufficient level of skill acquisition to provide symptom prevention (see Barrett & Pahl, 2006 for a review).

Evaluations of universal cognitive behavioural prevention programs (e.g., FRIENDS) generally examine children in a "high risk group" who score in the upper portion on the measures (e.g., internalizing, externalizing, emotion regulation) compared to all children participating (i.e., the upper 10%). Children in the high risk group tend to decrease in anxiety and depressive symptoms, and children in the lower risk group do not show increases in anxiety or depressive symptoms (Barrett & Pahl, 2006). For example, an uncontrolled study found 67% of children in the high risk for anxiety and depression category had moved into the low risk category after participating in FRIENDS, and none of the children at low risk for anxiety or depression had moved to the high risk category by follow up (Stallard et al., 2008). Our findings appear consistent with FRIENDS (Barrett & Pahl, 2006). While it is not known how many children in the current study would have developed significant internalizing or emotion dysregulation symptoms without SNAP®, the results are promising in that no significant increases in symptoms occurred during or after the program. Our findings appear to be in line

with the existing prevention program literature, lending support to the universal classroom-based implementation of SNAP®; however longitudinal studies with inclusion of a control group are necessary to confirm our findings.

**Methodological Strengths and Limitations**

The current investigation has a number of methodological strengths. First, while several studies have examined the utility of the other SNAP® programs, this was the second study to examine the school-based model, and the first to examine the utility of this model for non-identified elementary school children. The previous study examining the school-based model focused solely on children previously identified as at-risk for behavioural problems (Walsh & Hong, 2010). Second, a unique aspect of this investigation was its focus on self-reported emotion dysregulation and internalizing pathology. Previous research has only employed parent and teacher reports of child behaviour problems via the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2001) and primarily focused on externalizing symptoms (Augimeri et al., 2007; Augimeri, Jiang, et al., 2006; Koegl et al., 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Lipman et al., 2008).

There are also some study limitations to consider. First, due to the lack of a control group it is unclear whether the pre-SNAP® to Post 1 and Post 2 changes observed reflect effects of the intervention, spontaneous improvements with time, or regression to the mean (Cook & Campbell, 1979), despite the potential for preventative benefit. A second limitation is sample size. While according to the power analysis we had an adequate sample size to discover medium effects overall, to examine the upper 10% of the sample a larger sample size would have been desirable. This set of analyses included less than 12 children and thus was underpowered. This limits generalizability of these findings to other samples. A third limitation was the use of child self-report measures only. Neither parents nor teachers were asked to complete measures. A more complete picture may have been obtained by including both child self-report and parent/teacher-reports of child emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms. It is also possible that the children responded to the measures after participating in SNAP® in such a way as to please the researcher. Parent and teacher reports would have aided in detecting this possible response bias. A fourth limitation was the low internal consistency of the emotion dysregulation scales of the CEMS. This low internal consistency reduces the reliability of findings from this measure.

**Future Directions**

Potential future research directions may be drawn from the above discussion. First, future research should include a control group because this would allow a more definitive statement to be made regarding the effectiveness of the SNAP® for Schools program for reducing emotion dysregulation and internalizing constructs. Second, researchers wishing to examine subgroups such as the upper 10% of children in their sample should seek to have a larger sample size so to have sufficient power for these analyses. Third, a more complete understanding of the SNAP® school-based model's utility would be achieved by inclusion of both child self-report and parent/teacher-report measures of child emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms. This would allow for comparison of parent or teacher and child responses on measures designed to examine the same constructs. Fourth, inclusion of a longer follow-up period (e.g., three months to one year) would allow for evaluation of potential long-term gains of participating in the SNAP® for Schools program.

**Conclusion**

This investigation was the first to examine the utility of the SNAP® for Schools program in reducing emotion dysregulation and internalizing constructs in non-identified elementary school children. These findings were intended to add to the SNAP® literature by examining a new subpopulation of interest (non-identified children) and new outcomes (self-reported emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms). Further, it adds to the literature regarding the use of CBT-based universal prevention programs in the classroom, since this may be the most efficient avenue to proactively reach children who may not yet be identified as at-risk for behavioural or mental health problems. Overall, the findings suggest that the SNAP® for Schools program may play a role in reducing emotion dysregulation and internalizing symptoms for those with high levels of these symptoms in the short-term.

**References**

Achenbach, T. M., & Rescorla, L. A. (2001). *Manual for the ASEBA School-Age Forms & Profiles* (Manual). Burlington, VT: University of Vermont, Research Center for Children, Youth, & Families.

Anderson, E. R., & Hope, D. A. (2009). The relationship among social phobia, objective and perceived physiological reactivity, and anxiety sensitivity in an adolescent population. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 23*(1), 18-26. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2008.03.011

Augimeri, L. K., Farrington, D. P., Koegl, C. J., & Day, D. M. (2007). The SNAP™ under 12 outreach project: Effects of a community based program for children with conduct problems. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 16*(6), 799-807. doi: 10.1007/s10826-006-9126-x

Augimeri, L. K., Jiang, D., Koegl, C. J., & Carey, J. (2006). *Differential effects of the SNAP™ under 12 outreach project (SNAP™ ORP) associated with client risk and treatment intensity.* (Program Evaluation). Toronto, Ontario: Child Development Institute.

Augimeri, L. K., Koegl, C. J., Ferrante, P., & Slater, N. (2006, Fall). Why and how: Conducting effective clinical risk assessments with children with conduct problems. *Canada's Children 12*(2), 24-27.

Barrett, P. M. (2005). *FRIENDS for Life: Group leaders manual for youth.* Brisbane, AU: Australian Academic Press.

Barrett, P. M., Farrell, L. J., Ollendick, T. H., & Dadds, M. (2006). Long-term outcomes of an Australian universal prevention trial of anxiety and depression symptoms in children and youth: An evaluation of the FRIENDS program. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 35*(3), 403-411. doi:10.1207/s15374424jccp3503_5

Barrett, P. M., & Pahl, K. (2006). School-based intervention: Examining a universal approach to anxiety management. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling, 16*, 55-75. doi:10.1375/ajgc.16.1.55

Barrett, P., & Ryan, S. (2004). *Friends for Life: For children*. Brisbane, AU: Australian Academic Press.

Boelen, P. A., Vrinssen, I., & van Tulder, F. (2010). Intolerance of uncertainty in adolescents: Correlations with worry, social anxiety, and depression. *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, 198*(3), 194-200. doi:10.1097/NMD.0b013e3181d143de

Calamari, J. E., Hale, L. R., Heffelfinger, S. K., Janeck, A. S., Lau, J. J., Weerts, M. A., ... & Schisler, R. L. (2001). Relations between anxiety sensitivity and panic symptoms in nonreferred children and adolescents. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry*, *32*(3), 117-136. doi:10.1016/S0005-7916(01)00026-X

Carleton, R. N. (2012). The intolerance of uncertainty construct in the context of anxiety disorders: Theoretical and practical perspectives. *Expert Review of Neurotherapeutics, 12*(8), 937-947. doi:10.1586/ERN.12.82

Carleton, R. N., Collimore, K. C., & Asmundson, G. J. (2010). "It's not just the judgements–It's that I don't know": Intolerance of uncertainty as a predictor of social anxiety. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 24*(2), 189-195. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2009.10.007

Carleton, R. N., Norton, P. J., & Asmundson, G. J. (2007). Fearing the unknown: A short version of the intolerance of uncertainty scale. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders, 21*(1), 105-117. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2006.03.014

Child Development Institute (CDI). (2012). *SNAP®: An evidence-based, gender sensitive children's mental health solution*. Toronto, Ont: Child Development Institute.

Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Comer, J. S., Roy, A. K., Furr, J. M., Gotimer, K., Beidas, R. S., Dugas, M. J., & Kendall, P. C. (2009). The intolerance of uncertainty scale for children: A psychometric evaluation. *Psychological Assessment*, *21*(3), 402-411. doi:10.1037/a0016719

Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (1979). *Quasi-experimentation: Design and analysis issues for field settings*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

Cowie, J., Clementi, M. A., & Alfano, C. A. (2016). Examination of the intolerance of uncertainty construct in youth with generalized anxiety disorder. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, 00*(00), 1-9. doi:10.1080/15374416.2016.1212358

Dugas, M. J., Gagnon, F., Ladouceur, R., & Freeston, M. H. (1998). Generalized anxiety disorder: a preliminary test of a conceptual model. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36*(2), 215-226. doi:10.1016/s0005-7967(97)00070-3

Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R. A., Guthrie, I. K., Murphy, B. C., Maszk, P., Holmgren, R., & Suh, K. (1996). The relations of regulation and emotionality to problem behavior in elementary school children. *Development and Psychopathology, 8*(1), 141-162. doi:10.1017/S095457940000701X

Eisenberg, N., Spinrad, T. L., & Eggum, N. D. (2010). Emotion-related self-regulation and its relation to children's maladjustment. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 6*, 495-525. doi:10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.121208.131208

Essau, C. A., Muris, P., & Ederer, E. M. (2002). Reliability and validity of the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale and the Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders in German children. *Journal of Behavior Therapy and Experimental Psychiatry, 33*(1), 1-18. doi:10.1016/S0005-7916(02)00005-8

Fanti, K. A., & Henrich, C. C. (2010). Trajectories of pure and co-occurring internalizing and externalizing problems from age 2 to age 12: Findings from the national institute of child health and human development study of early child care. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(5), 1159-1175. doi:10.1037/a0020659

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*Power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioural, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods, 39*(2), 175-191. doi:10.3758/BF03193146

Fergus, T., & Valentiner, D. (2011). Intolerance of uncertainty moderates the relationship between catastrophic health appraisals and health anxiety. *Cognitive Therapy & Research, 35*(6), 560-565. doi:10.1007/s10608-011-9392-9

Gentes, E. L., & Ruscio, A. M. (2011). A meta-analysis of the relation of intolerance of uncertainty to symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. *Clinical Psychology Review, 31*(6), 923-933. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2011.05.001

Herts, K. L., McLaughlin, K. A., & Hatzenbuehler, M. L. (2012). Emotion dysregulation as a mechanism linking stress exposure to adolescent aggressive behavior. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40*(7), 1111-1122. doi:10.1007/s10802-012-9629-4

In-Albon T., & Schneider S. (2007). Psychotherapy of childhood anxiety disorders: A meta-analysis. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 76*(1), 15-24. doi:10.1159/000096361

James, A. A., Soler, A., & Weatherall, R. R. (2009). Cognitive behavioural therapy for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents (review). *The Cochrane Library,*(1), 1-35.

Koegl, C. J., Farrington, D. P., Augimeri, L. K., & Day, D. M. (2008). Evaluation of a targeted cognitive-behavioral program for children with conduct problems -- the SNAP® under 12 outreach project: Service intensity, age and gender effects on short- and long-term outcomes. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 13*(3), 419-434. doi: 10.1177/1359104508090606

Levitt, J. M., Saka, N., Romanelli, L. H., & Hoagwood, K. (2007). Early identification of mental health problems in schools: The status of instrumentation. *Journal of School Psychology, 45*(2), 163-191. doi:10.1016/j.jsp.2006.11.005

Lewis, M. D., Granic, I., Lamm, C., Zelazo, P. D., Stieben, J., Todd, R. M., . . . Pepler, D. (2008). Changes in the neural bases of emotion regulation associated with clinical improvement in children with behavior problems. *Development and Psychopathology, 20*(03), 913-939. doi:10.1017/S0954579408000448

Lipman, E. L., Kenny, M., Sniderman, C., O'Grady, S., Augimeri, L., Khayutin, S., & Boyle, M. H. (2008). Evaluation of a community-based program for young boys at-risk of antisocial behaviour: Results and issues. *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 17*(1), 12-19.

McLaughlin, E. N., Stewart, S. H., & Taylor, S. (2007). Childhood anxiety sensitivity index factors predict unique variance in DSM-IV anxiety disorder symptoms. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, 36*(4), 210-219. doi:10.1080/16506070701499988

Muris, P., Schmidt, H., & Merckelbach, H. (2000). Correlations among two self-report questionnaires for measuring DSM-defined anxiety disorder symptoms in children: The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders and the Spence Children's Anxiety Scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 28*(2), 333-346. doi:10.1016/S0191-8869(99)00102-6

Reiss, S. (1991). Expectancy model of fear, anxiety, and panic. *Clinical Psychology Review, 11*(2), 141-153. doi:10.1016/0272-7358(91)90092-9

Schmidt, N. B., Keough, M. E., Mitchell, M. A., Reynolds, E. K., MacPherson, L., Zvolensky, M. J., & Lejuez, C. W. (2010). Anxiety sensitivity: Prospective prediction of anxiety among early adolescents. *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, *24*(5), 503-508. doi: 10.1016/j.janxdis.2010.03.007

Silk, J. S., Steinberg, L., & Morris, A. S. (2003). Adolescents' emotion regulation in daily life: Links to depressive symptoms and problem behavior. *Child Development, 74*(6), 1869-1880. doi: 10.1046/j.1467-8624.2003.00643.x

Silverman, W. K., Fleisig, W., Rabian, B., & Peterson, R. A. (1991). Childhood Anxiety Sensitivity Index. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 20*(2), 162-168. doi: 10.1207/s15374424jccp2002_7

Southam-Gerow, M. A., & Kendall, P. C. (2002). Emotion regulation and understanding: Implications for child psychopathology and therapy. *Clinical Psychology Review, 22*(2), 189-222. doi:10.1016/S0272-7358(01)00087-3

Spence, S. H. (1998). A measure of anxiety symptoms among children. *Behaviour Research and Therapy, 36*(5), 545-566. doi:10.1016/S0005-7967(98)00034-5

Stallard, P., Simpson, N., Anderson, S., & Goddard, M. (2008). The FRIENDS emotional health prevention programme: 12 month follow-up of a universal UK school based trial. *European Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 17*(5), 283-289. doi: 10.1007/s00787-007-0665-5

Taylor, S. (Ed.). (2014). *Anxiety sensitivity: Theory, research, and treatment of the fear of anxiety*. New York, NY: Routledge

Walker, S., Birrell, J., Rogers, J., Leekam, S., & Freeston, M. H. (2010). *Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale -- Revised.* Unpublished manuscript.

Walsh, M., & Hong, L. (2010). *The efficacy of school-based mental health service: SNAP®.* Toronto, ON: Child Development Institute.

Whiteside, S. P., & Brown, A. M. (2008). Exploring the utility of the Spence Children's Anxiety
    Scales parent- and child-report forms in a North American sample. *Journal of Anxiety
    Disorders, 22*(8), 1440-1446. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2008.02.006

Wright, K. D., Adams Lebell, M. A. N., & Carleton, R. N. (2016). Intolerance of uncertainty,
    anxiety sensitivity, health anxiety, and anxiety disorder symptoms in youth. *Journal of
    Anxiety Disorders, 41,* 35-42. doi:10.1016/j.janxdis.2016.04.011

Zeman, J., Cassano, M., Suveg, C., & Shipman, K. (2010). Initial validation of the children's
    worry management scale. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 19*(4), 381-392.
    doi:10.1007/s10826-009-9308-4

Zeman, J., Shipman, K., & Penza-Clyve, S. (2001). Development and initial validation of the
    children's sadness management scale. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 25*(3), 187-205.
    doi:10.1023/A:1010623226626

**Socialization Through (Online) Design: Moving into Online Critical Spaces of Learning**

Dennis Murphy Odo, *Pusan National University*

Christi Pace and Peggy Albers, *Georgia State University*

**Abstract**

This research investigates the social and socialization practices within an online professional development web seminar. The aim of this study was to identify the kinds of social and community building practices that occur in online professional development webinars by exploring how communication tools such as chat are used for community building and socializing purposes. Data was comprised of all electronically generated web seminar (*webinar*), written chat comment transcripts that were automatically generated during this series of webinars. Data were analyzed inductively and recursively using the constant comparative method. Findings revealed that the Online Web Seminars in Literacy project (oWSL) built community through moderators and participants greeting, assisting, and offering one another support. Moreover, social practices found within and across seminars included social talk, thoughtful debate, and the formation of nested affinity groups. This research revealed that this online professional development webinar provided a space where social practices like creating a sense of community through mutual support and engaging in productive disagreement among participants can stimulate informative critical dialogue that webinar organizers can draw upon to form dynamic and productive online professional development communities.

*Keywords:* Online communities of practice; socialization; web seminars (webinars); professional development; critical literacy

**Socialization Through (Online) Design: Moving Into Online Critical Spaces of Learning**

The rapid proliferation of digital technologies (i.e., Blackboard Collaborate, Twitter, MOOCS, Google docs, etc.) has changed the landscape of how teachers engage in language and literacy professional development. No longer confined by geographic boundaries of time and place, global others can now synchronously participate in professional teaching and learning opportunities, resulting in any time, any place learning. Brick and mortar boundaries once determined where and when people learned; today, advanced technologies have changed where, when, and *how* we learn. Kop, Fournier, and Mak (2011) contend that "the structure of the learning environment, the place and presence of learners and educators within the institutional boundaries, and the nature of knowing and learning are all challenged by the fast pace of technological change" (p. 74).

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2010) reports that there are over 5.3 billion mobile cellular subscriptions worldwide, and according to Ally and Samaka (2013), the digital hardware divide is disappearing. That is, more and more people access online resources through mobile and computer-mediated communication (CMC) devices; however, these researchers suggest that a *learning divide* has emerged between those who can afford learning materials and those who cannot. Such a divide has opened up the arena to countless open educational resources (OER) (Andrade et al., 2011), and yet, little has been written about OER that are not course-related (e.g., online classes, MOOCs). Further, access, once considered highly significant, has been questioned by a group of scholars who argue that how OER are used—or the pedagogy around open access resources—must be considered as highly significant in one's learning (Andrade et al., 2011; Ehlers, 2011; Gurell, Kuo, & Walker, 2010). The work of these scholars, and others, extend the "focus beyond 'access' to 'innovative open educational practices' (OEP)" (Andrade et al., 2011, p. 2). According to these scholars, OER must be accompanied by a set of "educational practices" that "promote quality and innovation in teaching and learning" (Ehlers, 2011, p. 2). In essence, open access resources offer a wealth of information; however, without a sense of the practices to support learning, access to OER fundamentally may not be the key question. The most important question may be but how practice contributes to a deeper understanding of OER.

A relationship between OER and OEP has the potential, as Olcott (2012) argues, to transform the global education landscape. While literature in online spaces has identified the importance of access to OER and/or its challenges (Hylén, 2006; Keller & Mossink, 2008) less is known about the social relationships and practices that emerge when open access resources like web seminars (*webinars*) have a pedagogical focus, especially in terms of professional development. While the literature regarding the nature of the social in online educational spaces (e.g., university online courses, MOOCs) has burgeoned in the last decade (Ashby, Sadera & McNary, 2011; Santally, 2005; Sing & Khine, 2006; Wanstreet & Stein, 2011), insufficient research currently exists regarding the social within other educational online spaces such as web seminars, especially those that are on-going and focused on a singular area of research and practice. More specifically, especially with open access to online resources, research on social interactions, social practices, and on how such communities emerge and become established within web seminars is warranted.

**Review of the Literature**

Much of what we know about socializing and socialization in online networked spaces developed out of a body of research on communities of practice (CoPs), a concept originally developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). As a sociocultural construct, learning within CoPs occurs through socially situated practice. Learning is a by-product of our lived experiences in and with the social world (Lave, 1991). Lave (1991) explains, "This view claims that learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people engaged in activity *in, with, and arising from the socially and culturally structured world*" (p. 67). Learning, therefore, becomes at once culturally situated within social activity and transformative with practice or experience (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave, 1991). In online networked spaces, social activity typically takes the shape of participation in discourse exchanges, both spoken (e.g., using a microphone) and written, namely in the form of chat messages. Through our ongoing experiences, culturally and socially situated within activity (i.e., talk and cognition), we shape our identities in the world— who we are, what we know, how we think. Language as social practice, thus, provides the medium for learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Full community engagement means understanding the beliefs, practices, language, and ways of being and acting in the social learning culture (Brown et al., 1989). Lave and Wenger (1991) explain, "As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relationship to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (p. 53). By engaging in socially situated practice, therefore, participants come to learn a community's norms and gain a sense of belonging, thereby making socializing and socialization integral components for fostering and sustaining learning, engagement, and identity within an online network of learners (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

**The Socialization Process**

The process of socialization into a learning community, initially conceptualized in face-to-face communities, is a matter of prospective members becoming gradually acclimated and integrated into the community through the process of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). That is, "The newcomer's participation at first is legitimately peripheral, but over time is centripetally drawn inwards and becomes more engaged and more complex" (Floding & Sweir, 2012, p. 193). In this manner, the learner moves from marginal participation to central participation over time.

However, through Lave and Wenger's (1991) deconstruction of legitimate peripheral practice, we see three components that work in tandem to describe the social practice of learning: legitimate intimates various modes of belonging, while peripheral suggests degree of engagement, and participation denotes interaction. Hence, taken together, legitimate peripheral participation emphasizes learning through the social practice of engaging through participation. Participation so defined is not meant to imply an actual location designated as central or peripheral, but rather, "peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more- or less-engaged and -inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). In this sense, participation at all levels is recognized as important to the community's practice. So, while the socialization process takes place with the assistance of a few key current community members, Wenger (1996) comments that for a

learning community to sustain itself, experienced community members (i.e., "old-timers") must share their knowledge with new members or "newcomers" who also contribute to the community by developing new knowledge for the group. In this sense, Lave and Wenger (1991) posit, "The partial participation of newcomers is by no means 'disconnected' from the practice of interest" (p. 37). This socialization process takes time but it is vital to nourishing a community. Wenger (1996) states, "[in] particular, it takes sustained engagement in practice with old-timers in order for the depth and subtleties of practice to be shared with newcomers and for new generations to develop their own contributions" (p. 24). Thus, newcomers need continued engagement with old-timers to become enculturated into the community and to reach full participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

We see this as a behavioral process, and largely unidirectional, one in which current community members instruct the newcomer on the social behaviors of the community, which over time, do then fit into the norms of the community. The newcomer then becomes the old-timer who instructs "newbies" in a similar fashion. We see this as a social process in which experienced community members instruct the newcomer on the social behaviors of the community, which over time, do then fit into the norms of the community. The newcomer then becomes the "old-timer" who instructs "newbies" in a similar fashion.

Figure 1: Behavioural and Social Process



Particular veteran community members also contribute proportionately more to the socialization of new learning community members. In her study of online communities of K-12 teachers, for example, Booth (2012) found a number of voluntary informal roles being played by community members, which included that of mentor. She also concluded, "[these] unofficial roles…were based on both the personalities and the knowledgeability of the members who assumed them" (Booth, 2012, p. 21). Similarly, Brooks (2010) contends that "online CoPs that include both junior and senior faculty can serve many of the functions of traditional mentoring relationships without many of the associated complications" (p. 266), such as traditional barriers of race, class, gender, and disability. Also, Wenger (2009) describes the role of social artists (often moderators) who have an intuitive ability to facilitate social learning by making participants feel relaxed and involved. They are able to use their intuitive grasp of social dynamics to create and sustain productive social energy among participants that helps the community have a sense of making progress.

Online learning communities also provide options to participants in terms of unique interactional affordances (like anonymity) that some may prefer. Providing forums for online learning communities to develop along with face-to-face approaches to student or junior faculty socialization, development, and support may thus offer flexibility and accessibility, giving

people options for developing relationships with their peers, especially those relationships that are so critical for acculturating into the academy. Online groups can be supportive spaces where participants can find a sense of belonging (Wellman & Guilia, 1999). Some research is beginning to show that pre-service teacher participants expressed a strong intent to join online communities of praxis demonstrating that online social networks provide promising opportunities for students in teacher education programs to engage in beneficial professional development (Reich, Levinson, & Johnston, 2011).

       Social communications also contribute to the socialization of new community members. Researchers investigating social discourse in online learning communities report that social messages account for approximately 10% (Schallert et al., 2009) to 27% (Chen, Chen, & Tsai, 2009) of all messages. Amin and Roberts (2008) agree that "virtual knowing seems to work best when technological and human intermediaries are available to help cultivate a 'net' sociality building on purposefulness, social interaction, and affective commitment" (p. 364). They add that an online learning community can reach a comparable level of social interaction and collaboration as face-to-face communities, but this online sociality has to take into account the physical distance between participants. All of these findings underscore the point that the social aspect of learning communities cannot be ignored. As Chiu, Hsu, and Wang (2006) observe, "People who come to a virtual community are not just seeking information or knowledge to solve problems but they also treat it as a place to meet other people, to seek support, friendship and a sense of belonging" (p. 1874). Therefore, the social aspect of online communities needs to be recognized as a key feature that attracts participants.

       Stories are one means by which group members are socialized into learning communities and group identity is constructed (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Gray (2004) investigated online learning communities comprised of teachers and found stories to be a common means of fashioning group identity in the learning communities that she studied. Gray (2004) notes that through telling stories and shared problem-solving "the members of the group formed a social community … through mutual engagement the group developed a shared repertoire of stories and cases that functioned as a dynamic knowledge source on which to base future practice" (p. 34). She concluded that stories shaped the identities of individual community members and the community as a whole as they used the online community to help them understand their work.

       Community feedback is another means by which individual learning community members become socialized into the larger group. Within these learning communities, literacy teachers are able to articulate their tentative literacy understandings and thinking and receive supportive group feedback that generally reinforced or expanded on what they said (Bransford et al., 2000; Wenger, 1998). Additionally, participants' perceptions of community norms affect their sense of virtual community and willingness to publicly exchange support with other online participants (Blanchard, 2008). At other times, the feedback offers positive correction and the learning community can help refine the individual's understanding (Courtney & King, 2009). Participation in these kinds of exchanges may also affect members' sense of self-efficacy (Takahashi, 2011).

**Potential Inhibitors to Socialization**

In addition to the mechanisms and people that support socialization and continued regeneration of membership in online learning communities, several potential challenges also threaten the viability of these online learning communities. One is the development of close-knit cliques that become exclusive and overly focused on harmonious relationships (Wenger et al., 2002). Such a tight-knit group tends to suppress individual member contributions because they may fear being perceived as deviating from the community's thinking. Researchers contend that this groupthink and defensiveness can hinder the flow of honest and healthy internal critique that is necessary for learning communities to continue to grow in the understanding required to refine practice (Sing & Khine, 2006; Wenger et al., 2002). Carr and Chambers (2006) point out that critical reflection on practice is vital for the free sharing of knowledge. This comment reveals how central a culture of open exchange of ideas is to the development of a vibrant learning community.

A second potential problem for some online learning communities can also stem from group cohesiveness. In his research with Emirati preservice teachers involved in an online community of practice, Clark (2009) concluded, "The price of the powerful coherence that has been fostered among community members…has been an 'otherization', as the community defines its beliefs, delineates its boundaries and unites its members in contradistinction to the 'constitutive outside' of the community" (p. 2343). That is, the community appears to achieve its sense of identity at the expense of members' negative views of non-members. Such an "us versus them" mentality may prove detrimental to the group as they interact with the wider community. Cloistering themselves in this way can cut the group off from potential sources of new knowledge.

Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) contend that excessive focus on egalitarianism is another potential short-circuit to communities flourishing. They argue that if participants do not have peer recognition in the form of status as an incentive there will be little motivation for them to innovate. Equally, Wenger et al. (2002) claim that an unproductive fixation on equality must be balanced against the risk of undue group stratification where some members feel more like "real members" that may prevent the formation of a common identity. Thus, it appears learning communities might walk the fine line of using status to encourage innovation while still allowing most participants to feel like genuine members.

A fourth danger is the overreliance on one "leader" (often the moderator), which can leave the community feeling lost if the leader departs. The presence of an overly powerful leader can also constrain open and honest dialog within the community (Wenger et al., 2002). Navigating the community leadership is no easy task. Moderators must struggle with how to facilitate meaningful discourse in an online space (Chen, Chen & Tsai, 2009). Likewise, they are faced with the challenge of "how to provide a comfortable environment so that the participants are willing to share, and also push them to focus on the discussion topic and to reflect on their own knowledge and improve their practice" (Chen, Chen, & Tsai, 2009, p. 1165). This observation indicates that the job of moderator is a somewhat delicate balancing act of ensuring participant comfort while meeting the social and knowledge sharing needs of the group.

Wenger et al. (2002) also note that some oversized and widely distributed learning communities may lack a clear identity and member commitment. In their research with widely

dispersed in-service K-12 teachers in Australia, Carr and Chambers (2006) found an absence of perceived commonality of purpose among the participants, which in turn influenced their failure to buy in and prioritize accessing the online teacher learning community within the myriad of demands on their limited time. Wenger et al. (2002) also mentioned the threat of *localism* whereby widely spread out community members become isolated and unable to engage in idea sharing and community building. Additionally, an inability to attract new members is a serious threat to the long-term viability of any learning community. Thus, when communities fail to grow through procuring new members, developing new ideas and different ways of thinking and engaging in practice, they risk becoming stifled and collapsing (Li et al., 2009).

Inadequate participant knowledge can also be a significant obstacle to the sustainability of online learning communities. Even if they are motivated to join an online community, a shortage of technical knowledge about the topic of interest and experience in using computer-mediated communication tools will present a substantial barrier to potential members (Carr & Chambers, 2006). Several additional obstacles relate to the generation of sufficiently deep knowledge building discourse during teacher professional development. These include participants' inability to detect gaps in their own understanding, inadequate knowledge of colleagues' teaching context, lack of social tact necessary to carefully express criticisms, and failure to view themselves as legitimate knowledge producers (Sing & Khine, 2006).

Lastly, impediments to participants' willingness to work with others may also exist within the online space. For instance, in one study, undergraduate preservice teachers demonstrated reticence to collaborate in an asynchronous online course unless the cooperation was a feature of the course (Vonderwell, 2003). Wilson and Whitlock (1998) similarly noted that the majority of the undergraduate distance learning students in their study refused to collaborate online with others or do extra work due to their concerns about it being excessively time consuming.

As the foregoing discussion illustrates, researchers are beginning to identify the key sustainers and inhibitors to socialization within a variety of online learning communities. However, questions remain regarding the kinds of social and community building practices that occur in online professional development web seminars. This is particularly the case regarding how communication tools used in these spaces, such as chat, are used for community building and socializing purposes. Bearing this in mind, we asked the following questions to guide this component of a larger ongoing research project: (a) How are participants socialized into an online community interested in literacy, (b) how does "socialization" emerge in an on-going live literacy web seminar project, and (c) what social practices are visible within and across the web seminar project?

## Methods

### Context and Researchers' Role

The current investigation is part of an ongoing study of an online professional development web seminar project, online Web Seminars in Literacy (oWL), which features internationally renowned scholars in the field of literacy whose presentations are offered live online. As an open educational resource (OER) through the Blackboard Collaborate platform, anyone with an Internet connection can participate in the live web seminars by hyperlinking

through the portal located on the oWL website. Those who are unable to attend a live seminar can access it on the oWL YouTube channel, which at this writing has had nearly 9000 views. While oWL serves as a venue where the audience may increase their professional knowledge of critical literacy issues, a number of questions remain regarding how the space is used in light of the social. The purpose, therefore, of the current study is to understand the role of the social in on-going, online professional development web seminar spaces, particularly oWL, in which participation is situated around critical issues in literacy.

This study occurred over the course of an academic year as we collected data for seven web seminars. Seminars were 1-hour long presentations delivered via Blackboard Collaborate software. Seminar presenters were world-renown scholars in language and literacy education. Participants were primarily teachers, administrators, graduate and undergraduate students in education and literacy scholars.

In terms of our own roles within the oWL project, one of the authors founded the project and the remaining authors served as moderators for the web seminars. Therefore, as researchers, we have a level of investment in the project that goes beyond that of a casual interest. Though we have striven to be conscious of the potential impact of our role in oWL on our research, we must acknowledge that this personal connection to the project may cause us to be unaware of subtle influence on our interpretations of our findings.

**Data Collection**

Data collection for the current study occurred from September 2012 to April 2013 across seven web seminars. Data were comprised of web seminar chat transcripts that were electronically generated during this series of web seminars. One chat transcript was generated for each seminar, and captured approximately 180 minutes of actual time, starting 90 minutes prior to the web seminar until approximately 15 minutes after the seminar ended. As the seminars were offered entirely online, all data were collected by saving and storing transcripts of participants' anonymous online chat comments made during seminars. Most screen names of participants did not reveal their identity and if we felt a participant's identity could be deduced from the transcripts, they were given pseudonyms.

**Data Analysis**

The research follows the procedures for what has been termed a "generic qualitative study" (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003; Lichtman, 2009; Merriam, 2002, 2009) that incorporates various elements from several qualitative research traditions. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1990), which involved an iterative process of coding data sets and drafting analytical memos (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to generate and connect themes that addressed the research questions. Internal validity was addressed through our separate analysis of the data and documentation of initial themes. Coding began with our independent open coding of chat transcript data using RQDA software. Initial coding was followed by debriefing sessions where we compared our codes, negotiated meanings, and collapsed or eliminated less useful codes until we reached consensus on the central themes in the data (Lichtman, 2012; Merriam, 2009). We then organized our more carefully developed categories into an overall unified scheme of related categories and subcategories that addressed our research questions (Glesne, 1998) and generalized about the relationships among themes and concepts in the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gibbs, 2007; Hatch, 2002).

## Findings

Several findings emerged from this study, the two most salient are discussed here. The first finding indicated that socialization in oWLS occurs through community building. Our second finding suggests that social and socializing practices within and across seminars included social chat, disagreement and debate, and the formation of nested affinity groups. The specifics pertaining to these findings are outlined below.

### Socializing Through Community Building

Socialization occurred through community building during seminars and was a prominent theme that emerged across the data. First, community building emerged through social practices initiated by moderators' encouraging interactions. Second, it was made visible through oWL participants' (both first and multiple timers) as they offered greetings, assistance, and mutual encouragement to other participants.

**Moderator encouraging interactions.** Valuing and validating others' comments, connecting to comments, and extending comments all contribute to socializing in this space. oWL moderators contributed to community building by both explicitly and implicitly encouraging interaction with speaker and participant views throughout the seminars. Moderators explicitly did this first, during the introduction of each seminar by verbally explaining how participants could interact using the chat box, while at the same time referring to a PowerPoint slide with instructions for how to do this, and second, during seminars, when they prompted participants to ask questions. The excerpts below show instances of the moderators explicitly encouraging participants to interact with the presenter's ideas by asking questions across three different seminars.

Fall 2012 Seminar 3

1:45:03 – [Moderator 1]: [Participant], do you have a question?

Spring 2013 Seminar 4

34:19 – [Moderator 2]: Please write your questions into the chat area when they arise for you.

Spring 2013 Seminar 1

1:21:52 – [Moderator 3]: Hello, everyone. Please feel free to type your questions into the chat window and I can ask them to Dr. [Presenter].

By asking questions such as "Do you have a question?" or "Please write your questions…", moderators explicitly socialize participants that writing in the chat is part of the seminar experience, and even more descriptive is the type of writing questions. oWL moderators also prompted participants to ask questions in preparation for the Q&A that follows the presentation. Further, moderators' suggestions position participants, especially those who may be new to online seminars, to know what to expect and how to participate in this setting.

In addition to the explicit question prompts, moderators indirectly and implicitly encouraged interaction within the chat, demonstrating types of comments that participants might themselves write. Further, moderators' comments demonstrate their own involvement in the seminar, and connection to issues that the presenter raised. This form of moderator participation took place through chat comments they made during presentations. The three excerpts below show moderators sharing their own thoughts across three different seminars.

Fall 2012, Seminar 3

2:27:28 – [Moderator 2]: Yes...art often provides an avenue for ELs to express their ideas

Fall 2012 Seminar 1

2:22:40 – [Moderator 1]: Yes, and kids talk to each other about the cards and games. It becomes part of their discourse.

Spring 2013, Seminar 1

1:26:01 – [Moderator 2]: That's really interesting...how these woman present themselves...never thought of how I look in pictures and how I might be viewed over and across pictures

Each of these moderator chat comments was made on the content of a presenter's remarks. The moderators expressed agreement with the presenter's comment and added a thought of their own. This type of self-disclosure demonstrated for other participants how they, too, could use the same type of discourse to engage around the ideas in the presentation through participation in the chat. Moderator remarks also served to draw other participants into conversation around the topics being presented, offering an opening for participants who might feel intimidated or reluctant to immediately get involved. Moderators' comments to other participants' statements also appear to have tacitly encouraged seminar participants to see oWL as an interactive space to talk back to the ideas being presented. These moderator remarks could serve to engage the participants in further conversation and demonstrate to other "lurkers" that the chat space can be used in this way.

Spring 2013, Seminar 7

30:37 – [Moderator 3]: Exxon has been doing STEM commercials throughout the Masters

Spring 2013, Seminar 4

1:36:52 – [Moderator 2]: Interesting question, [Participant]—are they intending this information for themselves even though others can see this?

One moderator was even more explicit in her community building throughout the seminars as she reached out to participants to inform them that their presence was valued within

the space. For example, during Seminar 2, she typed, "We hope all of you will join us for all of our speakers—they're really top notch!" In Seminar 5, this same moderator typed into the chat box, "Yes...staff, faculty, students, and the public...we would love to see the public come in!" These comments reveal the moderator's commitment to encourage participants to continue to return to the space across time and to develop a sense of inclusiveness of participants. Such encouragement of other participants to contribute to the discussion, according to Butler, Sproull, Kiesler, and Kraut (2007), serves to "ensure that the group does not collapse due to abuse of the public space created by the communications infrastructure, and to render the group a comfortable and enjoyable place to interact" (p. 5-6). These researchers also note that social management is particularly crucial for online communities because participants are able to leave more easily than in face-to-face groups whose members may have more binding ties to the community or space. Therefore, moderators' efforts to generate participant interaction within the oWL web seminar space serve as important attempts at community building and community maintenance.

**Participants greeting, helping, and mutual encouragement.** Another example of community building in oWL web seminars was the greetings shared among participants. These greetings took the form of various salutations among individual participants, subgroups (e.g., classes), moderators, and speakers. The exchange of greetings included moderators greeting all new entrants into the web seminar space. Other individual participants also greeted people they knew or had met in previous oWLS web seminars. This frequent exchange of salutations by such a wide variety of participants appeared to create a welcoming and collegial atmosphere.

Community building also occurred through participants' occasional attempts to forge connections among themselves during seminars. As demonstrated below, participants primarily connected over their shared interest in the presenter's scholarship. Some solicited the group to see if anyone shared an interest in a particular topic. Still, others attempted to reach out to someone from his or her local area through the chat. Moderators did not prompt these participants' attempts to make connections and build community among themselves. These spontaneous attempts at community building suggest that participants view the web seminar as a community space where they can connect with peers who share their interest in critical literacy issues.

Spring 2013, Seminar 6

[Participant 1] to [Participant 2]: I'm doing a study using Dr. [Presenter] ideas, it would be nice to talk to other people who are interested in her concepts too

[Participant 2] to [Participant 3]: found you on FB and small world we have a friend in common :) I hope we can keep in touch.

Fall 2012, Seminar 1

2:48:44 – [Participant 1]: I would love to join in blogging over international and/or multicultural literature....anyone out there interested?

2:49:15 – [Participant 2]: I would love it, [Participant 1]!!

We must note, however, that not all invitations to make connections were accepted. For instance, during the seventh and final web seminar of the 2012-2013 season, one participant poses a question to the whole group of participants asking, "Hi, is there anyone in here from STL?" but receives no reply. In another example, a participant asks another participant, "[are] you in atl [?]" but again does not get a response. We acknowledge, therefore, that not all web seminar participants may feel an equally strong sense of community or willingness to engage with fellow participants. Of course, there may also have been other reasons why other participants failed to respond such as no one being from that location or those from that location failing to see that particular chat message due to not following the chat at that time.

Another way that community building emerged was when oWL participants assumed the role of informal helper through offering guidance on navigating the space. This guidance included advice on how to launch videos, adjust the sound, view the presenter's slides, as well as access the archived seminars. The following excerpts illustrate participants' willingness to provide assistance.

Spring 2013, Seminar 6

[Participant] to: … Moderators I've just noted that only a few particiapnts [*sic*] have access to the whiteboard tools - the last column in the Participants list as I see it.

Fall 2012, Seminar 2

1:11:07 to: [Participant] you don't have to do anything with the sldies [*sic*] the presenter changes these so we are currently on slide 8 which has the model displayed.

Spring 2013, Seminar 7

1:20:47 to: [Participant 1] really wish if I could have access to the whole thing again

1:21:02 to: [Participant 2] it will be archived

In the first excerpt above, a participant has sent a chat message to all of the moderators regarding her observance that some participants cannot access the Blackboard Collaborate tools, thus showing her concern for her other participants. In the second example, a participant is observed instructing another participant, most likely one new to oWLS presentations, about who controls advancing the slides. Finally, in the third interaction, P2 explains to P1 how she can "have access to the whole thing again" through the archive. Participant willingness, thus, to share this information during seminars reveals some level of commitment to the space and to the other participants, as well as a sort of mentoring less experienced participants. We also interpret this to mean that oWLS participants have enculturated the norms for using the technological tools of the online space, navigating the space, and the social norms for offering navigational assistance.

Finally, community was fostered within oWL through supportive feedback comments made in chat interactions as well. An illustrative example of this was participants' sharing encouragement for others' contributions to the chat. These encouraging remarks included comments to express agreement with each other such as "I agree," "exactly," and "so true."

Participants also occasionally gave general praise for each other's statements like "interesting point," "good point," or "good question." Additional broad positive exclamations included "bravo," "that's great" or "nice call." At times, participants took advantage of semiotic devices such as creating smiley faces and using exclamations to show emotion. Along with these brief encouraging remarks, participants also shared more extended responses that often involved personal connections to the original comment, as the following two conversations demonstrate.

> Spring 2013, Seminar 5
>
> 2:42:30 – [Participant 1]: Telling stories orally is another way non-"reading" parents can participate and encourage literacy
>
> 2:42:52 – [Participant 2]: i [*sic*] like that idea [Participant 1]
>
> 2:43:02 – [Participant 3]: Yes, regardless of the language oral stories happen in.
>
> 2:43:08 – [Participant 4]: Yes, good point [Participant 1]. I make up stories with my nephew all the time. There isn't a book or any pictures. We just use our imagination and my nephew is VERY creative in telling stories. :)

In this first conversation (Spring 2013), P1 offers a possible solution for parents who do not speak English to support their children's literacy development, while P2, 3, and 4 provide responses in the form of positive feedback that indicates support and acceptance of P1's idea about telling stories. The second discussion (Fall 2012) ensues when P1 explains how she integrated technology through a blogging activity involving her students and graduate students. P2 then offers how she has used blogging in the past, affirming the strategy as "free and interactive."

This growing sense of community was also explicitly mentioned and praised during web seminar chats. For instance, during seminar 6, one participant stated, "This community is incredible!!!" and another said, "This is a wonderful initiative and community." That participants applied the discourse of "community" to describe oWL suggests that these participants clearly identify oWL as a communal space. A participant during seminar 5 also remarked that it was "nice to be a part of the conversation," indicating a feeling of involvement that points toward a sense of community belonging.

The preceding discussion provides evidence that community building occurred in oWL web seminars through moderators' encouragement of interaction in the space and participants' community-oriented behaviors of greeting, helping, and offering mutual encouragement. The following section will explore our second finding concerning the kinds of social and socializing practices within and across seminars, as evidenced by the chat transcripts.

## Social and Socializing Practices

This study's second finding is that social and socializing practices were made visible within and across seminars. These practices involved social chat, disagreement and debate, and the formation of nested affinity groups.

**Social chat.** A variety of social interactions took place among participants within the oWL space. Moderators tended to interact with presenters primarily during practice sessions, just prior to the start of seminars, and after each seminar, once participants had logged out or had

been removed by the moderator of the Blackboard Collaborate room. During practice sessions and just before the start of a seminar, moderators and presenters often engaged in social talk about topics such as local weather, mutual hobbies (e.g., art), and upcoming events in the literacy education world (e.g., conferences). After seminars, moderators engaged presenters in a brief interview about their experience presenting in a live seminar. Minimal social interaction was observed among the moderators during the actual seminars, with most of their social chat occurring before and after the seminars. We attribute this lack of moderator social interaction during seminars to the fact that their role as moderators kept them busy with attending to technical tasks, helping participants with navigational issues, and engaging participants in chat.

Participants (including moderators), on the other hand, engaged in a wider range of social interactions during the web seminars. Many of these interactions involved "chit-chat" and on the surface appeared to serve no purpose beyond exchanging pleasantries. Yet, upon analysis within and across chat transcripts, patterns emerged of participants reconnecting with colleagues physically located miles apart, reminiscing with friends, and even occasional joke telling. The few excerpts below are examples of the many instances when such socializing occurred across several different seminars.

Fall 2012, Seminar 1

[Participant 1]: Hi [Participant 2]!! How's everything in Winnipeg?

[Participant 1]: [Participant 2], are you still working with [scholar's] drama approaches?


Spring 2013, Seminar 4

[Moderator 1]: I'm used to snow I come from South Dakota...where the drifts were about 6-8 feet at times!

[Moderator 2 to [Moderators 1, and Speaker]: None in Atlanta either, in case you were wondering

[Moderator 2]: No snow in Atlanta

[Participant 2]: we are -37 Celsius with the wind chill in Winnipeg

Social interactions, such as the ones above, indicate that the oWLS web seminars provide a space where participants, should they choose to do so, engage in social exchanges, and that such social interactions suggest a kind of socializing that would be expected within the boundaries of a communal space in which participants feel, perhaps, a sense of belonging and comfortable conversing.

**Disagreement and debate.** Although participants were generally respectful and collegial, chat interactions were not always free from disagreement or debate. In fact, at times, communications could be somewhat provocative as participants challenged one another's chat comments. The excerpts below illustrate some of the more confrontational interactions that took place during web seminars.

Fall 2012, Session 3

2:16:23 – [Participant 1]: A lot of English language learners engage in quite complex registers outside of school. One of my students (first language Spanish) teaches high school and one of her students is highly engaged, knowledgeable, and conversant in the cognitively complex language of horses (i.e., dressage). Her teachers, though, argue that she as "trouble" with academic language.

2:17:31 – [Participant 2]: just because she's mastered the "academic language" of horses doesn't mean she's mastered it in general, though. like writing a formal paper or something

2:19:36 – [Participant 1]: I understand-I haven't mastered the academic language of everything, either. I'm bothered that what she DOES know is not valued and it's false to say she does not have a.l.

Fall 2012, Seminar 1

2:32:43 – [Participant 1]: Let's not pretend that any 'game' is ideologically neutral.

2:32:57 – [Participant 2]: What are they, [Participant 3]?

2:33:03 – [Participant 4]: [Participant 1], how so?

2:33:06 – [Participant 5]: @[Participant 6] as a mom, I don't see my son going on to HS for the 4 years. There r so many other ways to learn that are enjoyable.

2:33:09 – [Participant 7]: What in the world is ideologically neutral?

2:33:14 – [Participant 7]: Is anything in the world ideologically neutral?

2:33:15 – [Participant 2]: Nada

The first exchange illustrates a brief disagreement between two participants, P1 and P2, in which P2 attempts to give an example of student knowledge of horses as qualifying as a type of academic language that is undervalued in schools. However, P1 disagrees that knowledge of technical language of horses ensures the student has mastered many of the academic genres of school. P2 responds that his/her point is that the student's knowledge of technical language is not valued at school. In the second exchange, P1 mentions that games are not ideologically neutral to which P2 asks if anything is and P7 responds, "nada," apparently referring to nothing being ideologically neutral. This interaction demonstrates one participant pressing another on what he perceived as a simplistic statement. Meanwhile, P4 and P5 simultaneously engage in independent chat, unrelated to each other and the other participants. Thus, several distinct conversations may occur simultaneously but due to chat's linearity, these conversations appear as a single dialogue, rather than as several distinct conversations. Nevertheless, these two exchanges highlight the fact that while oWL generally appeared to be a respectful space, participants were willing to challenge other participants' ideology around important critical literacy issues, even at the risk of offending one another. Wenger (2000) identifies these kinds of challenges as "tensions" and sees them as important for new learning to occur, stating that "learning so defined is an interplay between social competence and personal experience. It is a dynamic two-way relationship between people and the social learning system in which they participate" (p. 227). Wenger

defines social competence as knowing the norms and behaviors that it takes to be seen as a community member. Hence, social learning in a community is a convergence of the community's social competences and the lived experiences that we bring to the community. In this way, transformative learning occurs as the community continues to grow (Wenger, 2000).

**Nested affinity group formation.** An intriguing social practice within oWL is the formation of what we have identified as small parallel "affinity groups" in the chat sessions that took place throughout the web seminar (Albers, Pace, & Brown, 2013). The interaction below illustrates three simultaneous discussions taking place among several affinity groups.

Conversation 1:

Fall 2012, Seminar 1

1:01:38 to: [Participant 1] Yes, the new test [*sic*] in my school district are now mostly extended response.

1:01:41 to: [Participant 2] Going back to the hornworm example - the language in the second example was more complex than the language in the first example. Would you say that the two statements are about different worlds?

Conversation 2:

1:02:06 to: [Participant 3] I like how engaging children with language can go across all of the content standards not just reading

1:02:10 to: [Participant 4] wouldn't experiences reading the world vary for individuals? How can teachers with goals of language literacy for students create experiences reading the world?

Conversation 3:

1:02:18 to: [Participant 5] [Participant 1], I LOVE THAT!!!!!!!! What state are you in? I think the NY state is still divided between MC and [extended response].

1:02:19 to: [Participant 6] The transition to the Common core empahsizes [*sic*] both the oral dialogue and the "reading the world" mentality by having students use technology and resources to help them understand academic vocabulary

The above excerpts identify three separate conversations happening concurrently within the same time frame and that connect to points that the presenter made during the web seminar. The first exchange between P1and P2 is about the types of test questions used in a respondent's district, while in the second conversation, P3 and P4discuss the idea of "reading the world." The third dialogue between P5 and P6 focuses on language across numerous content standards. Participants appeared to weave in and out of a number of these groupings throughout the course of any seminar. Their length of time spent in any single group discussion seems to depend on their interest in the topic and whether or not they are drawn toward other discussions vying for their attention. We have termed these clusters of participants "nested affinity groups" because they are flexible as they form and re-form around various topics throughout the course of the web seminar. Again, the linearity of chat makes these conversations appear to occur unilaterally when in real time, they are taking place simultaneously. We find this to be a unique feature in

that all participants are privy to the information exchanged in all three conversations and can choose which ones, if any, they want to take up. These affinity groups further allow participants to move in and out of a variety of different conversations happening in the chat space that relate to points raised in the seminar that interest them. Affinity group participants are only bound to each other as long as the conversation continues though they can leave at any time. In this way, these affinity groups can be conceptualized somewhat like affinity spaces except they are organized around topic rather than permanent membership or space. Although Gee (2010) has explored the concept of affinity spaces in some depth, there does not seem to be as much literature around how participants in synchronous online spaces configure and reconfigure around the various points of interest raised in a web seminar.

Our data revealed social chat, disagreement and debate, and formation of affinity groups around various topics as instances of social and socializing practices that occurred during the oWL web seminars. Each of these oWL social practices connects to the key features identified as prerequisites for a vibrant online social space. The social chat observed demonstrates an atmosphere of trust among participants and the willingness to engage in debate shows focused and open interchange of ideas, while the affinity groups show a space that inspires self-expression to which all participants have access. All of these features of the space indicate that oWL is a virtual place where a variety of social interactions occurs. Additionally, limited discussion currently exists in the research literature regarding the role that disagreement and debate can play in these online spaces. Through the present research, we have learned that web seminars can provide a democratic space where participants with divergent perspectives can share their views and engage in productive disagreement around the issues being presented.

The knowledge sharing that occurred through "nested affinity groups," the social and socializing practices visible within and across seminars, and the oWL community practices all help define oWL as a unique kind of learning community. We began this discussion with a statement that oWL did not appear to fit neatly into current conceptions of learning communities. Our findings related to knowledge sharing and social and community practices supported this claim. Therefore, we drew upon the work of several scholars to include the concepts of networks, affinity spaces, and praxis that we propose comprise the kind of distinctive learning space we believe oWL represents.

## Discussion

The main purpose of this study was to explore the social and community building practices visible in a teacher professional development web seminar series that is dedicated to discussing critical literacy issues. A key finding was that community building occurred through moderator-encouraged interactions, participant greetings, helping, and mutual encouragement. Social practices that occurred within and across seminars included social chat, disagreement and debate, and the formation of nested affinity groups.

These findings are noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, the observation that community-building actions of many seminar participants contributed to a generally collegial atmosphere of good will highlights the importance of the plurality of routine actions and interactions to the collegial atmosphere of an online community. It also reminds us that in many ways moderators and core members serve as role models for new participants. Additionally, the social chat, productive disagreements, and nested affinity groups exemplify the various social

practices that occurred across the oWLS series of web seminars. These social practices reveal these seminars as a space where participants engaged in forms of social interaction that, as yet, have not been unidentified in previous research.

In terms of community building, the foregoing discussion demonstrates how oWL moderators often function as social artists (Wenger, 2009) who facilitate social learning by nurturing online sociality (Amin & Roberts, 2008) and supporting the social relationships and the sense of belonging that participants desire (Chiu et al., 2006) through their ongoing encouragement of interaction in the space. In contrast, the findings for participant greetings, helping, and mutual encouragement appear to contradict previous research, which found that when students do not see each other, they can ignore each other's help requests (Vonderwell, 2003 that they may perceive as being too time consuming (Wilson & Whitlock, 1998). We must note, however, that the only extant related research was conducted with asynchronous online classes so we must use caution when relating these scholars' results to the present study. Participants' willingness to offer assistance to each other may depend on the type of online space (e.g., formal class versus web seminar) and possibly whether or not the space is synchronous. It may be that competition for grades in classroom communities or other reasons for gathering in the space (e.g., course credit versus professional development) affect participants' willingness to assist one another. Only additional research can answer this question.

Wellman and Guilia (1999) contend that when messages of support are exchanged publicly, participants perceive the group as being very supportive and all group participants benefit from the supportive exchanges even though they may not have directly participated in them. As participants join the web seminar and observe others exchanging support, they eventually come to see this behavior as the norm, which then further intensifies their attachment to the group (Blanchard, 2008). That is, as members engage in these kinds of supportive exchanges, they are building a sense of community. Previous scholarship explored support through asynchronous means but not the role of supportive chat comments in fostering a sense of community in web seminars. The unique contribution of our findings is that they suggest that same process occurs in the chat space of an online web seminar.

Regarding previous findings related to social practices, researchers have identified a number of key features that must exist to foster socialization in online communities. These features include learners' ability to identify with the community (Diaz, Swan, Ice, & Kupczynski, 2010; Kreijns, Kirschner, Jochems & Buuren, 2007) and their engagement in purposeful and open exchange of ideas and information (Diaz et al., 2010; Irwin & Berge, 2006). Equally important are the existence of an atmosphere of trust that facilitates the construction of personal relationships (Garrison, Cleveland, Innes, & Fung, 2010) and that the online space encourages self-expression (Diaz et al., 2010; Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, & Archer, 1999). Based on our findings, we encourage scholars and practitioners to add exploration of productive disagreements among participants and formation of affinity groups to the current discussions of social practices within online web seminar spaces.

Lastly, the question remains regarding how the findings reported here connect to current theoretical understandings of the social dynamics of online web seminars. Figure 2 below illustrates how we believe the various components of Networked Spaces of Praxis fit together. Brown and Duguid (1991, 2001) developed the concept *networks of practice* to describe relations among group members, which are significantly looser than those in a community of practice. The

participants in these networks may never actually meet each other in person, yet they are still able to share knowledge amongst themselves. They also characterize networks of practice as being less hierarchical than most CoPs in that members do not have to first earn status within the group before they can contribute knowledge. We have come to view oWL as a type of network rather than a community because involvement in the oWL space is quite fluid as participants come and go freely within and across seminars, yet interaction within the network nurtures a sense of belonging. The fluidity of the space may be encouraged by the fact that there is no formal membership required to participate in oWL seminars. Additionally, Gee (2009) contends that the feature of an affinity space that distinguishes it from a community of practice is that it is organized around the virtual space, while communities of practice are organized around membership (Lave, 1991). This lack of formal membership and the fluidity of the space also suggest that web seminar spaces like oWL may be better conceived as being organized around space rather than membership.

Praxis is the final component in our conception of the kind of online entity that oWL represents. Reich, Levinson, and Johnston (2011) discuss the use of online communities to develop praxis. They borrow from Freire's conception of the term, which they define as "the virtuous interplay of reflection and action in effective educational practice" (Reich, Levinson, & Johnston, 2011, p. 382). We concur with their emphasis on the term praxis rather than practice "in order to emphasize the essential continued interplay of theory, reflection, and action" (Reich, Levinson, & Johnston, 2011, p. 383). Anderson and Freebody (2012) also emphasize the praxis concept and add, "[The] community of praxis is … seeking to reconcile the theoretical work done in university settings with the practice of everyday classrooms" (p. 362-363). Both of these definitions of a praxis-based community of learners correspond to our understanding of oWL. According to our findings related to knowledge sharing and socialization practices, oWL web seminars appear to organize around praxis to transform thinking about critical literacy, to move toward practice that is more ethical. That is, we posit that oWL web seminars organize around "mission" rather than membership or space.

As the preceding discussion illustrates, we have come to view oWL as an example of what we identify as an *online networked space of praxis*. That is, it consists of networks of participants who enter the web seminar space to engage in dialogue around how they can align their practice with current understandings of critical literacy. This space of praxis contrasts with typical communities of practice, or affinity spaces, which tend to focus more upon improving practice or solving practical problems. In this way, the oWL project self-consciously infuses an ethical dimension into the space that is missing in many other online learning groups.

Figure 2: Social Practices and Community Building in Online Networked Spaces of Praxis
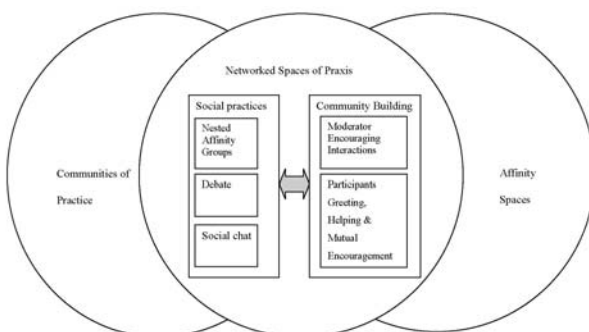
## Conclusion

The present study addressed the following questions: (a) How are participants socialized into an online community interested in literacy, (b) how does "socialization" emerge in an on-going live literacy web seminar project, and (c) what social practices are visible within and across the web seminar project? We observed that oWL community building occurred through moderators and participants greeting, helping, and offering mutual encouragement. Additionally, social practices visible within and across seminars included social chat, respectful debate, and the formation of nested affinity groups.

Implications exist for both theory and practice related to online teacher professional development. In terms of expanding our understanding of online networked spaces of praxis, this study's findings inform us that participants' supportive actions contribute to the creation of a sense of community within an online venue such as oWLS. In addition, this research revealed that this online professional development web seminar provided a space where social practices like productive disagreement among participants can stimulate informative critical dialogue.

Findings from this study have the potential to influence the practice of online teacher professional development in two ways. First, they illuminate some of the potential actions that creators and stakeholders may need to undertake to build community in an online teacher professional development web seminar space. Secondly, these findings encourage web seminar developers to consider the benefits of harnessing social practices such as respectful debate of critical issues. As evidenced in the current study, such debates allow participants to engage with the ideas and their colleagues on a deeper level as they attempt to connect those ideas to their own pedagogical practice, with the ultimate goal of transformation.

Critical to transformation in education is the role of social presence in online professional development. While the platform itself isolates it also serves to bring an audience into socializing practices. The longer and more present a social space is, the more a participant will feel comfortable in these spaces to talk and to share ideas. In PD this is critical as often one-time PD does not offer this space. Especially in spaces like conferences where social presence is visible, what is less visible is the comfort with which participants will engage in social talk. Those whose research is around the topic under discussion and those who have confidence in their social roles will speak up while others will not. In online spaces, especially those that are on-going like oWL and focused on a topic in which those who attend have common interests in that topic, social presence is vital and can be cultivated. For example, [Ragina], who attends nearly all of the seminars, is socially present and has contact with others who also notice she is there.

Further, with mobile technologies, audiences can manage their social engagements and interactions to fit their lives and lifestyles, including their participation in web seminars. In increasing numbers, participants join web seminars not from computer-mediated communication (CMC) or Web 2.0 technologies, but from the convenience of their mobile devices. When [Participant 1] indicated her participation from a mobile device, such visibility opens up the possibility for those who view from their laptops or communities an idea that they can also join from anywhere and with alternative technological devices. What this suggests to us is that participants show interest, desire, and commitment to an area of research. Participants show keen interest in advancing their knowledge (professional development), a desire to share their

thoughts with others and to engage in live discussions with the presenter and interested others, and a commitment to critical literacy as a space for transformation.

Mobile technologies and CMC provides alternative hardware from which to participate. That is, while [Participant 1] joined in on a mobile phone, others joined from iPads, laptops, and desktops. For us, this suggests that social presence is extremely important to supporting online PD, and flexibility in the use of technologies offers opportunities for all to engage in live conversations. The use of mobile and CMC devices increases proximity as well as immediacy of personal communication. In this way oWL creates a space where participants can be close together while also being far apart. With increased mobile device use and oWL participation, we argue that mobile devices have decreased the social presence space and increased the space for socializing and socialization. Mobile devices manage social acts at anytime and anywhere through mobile technologies

We acknowledge potential limitations of this study that include some uncertainties regarding the straightforward generalizability of our findings to other contexts, and the threat of bias in our analysis given our participation in the project. The community building dynamics and productive disagreement and debate observed in oWL offer tantalizing examples of the unique possibilities these web seminars may offer to enhance literacy teacher professional development. However, we must also consider that these observations made within the oWL may not look quite the same in other online spaces and communities. Secondly, we acknowledge that, unbeknownst to us, our role as oWL moderators might have had some inadvertent impact on our perceptions of the data. Nevertheless, these limitations mainly point to prospective avenues for future research. That is, other investigators might explore in other online spaces the dynamics around community building and debate that we observed to determine the strength our findings.

## References

Albers, P., Pace, C., & Brown, D.W., Jr. (2013). Critical participation in literacy research through new and emerging technologies: A study of web seminars and global engagement. *Journal of Literacy and Technology, 14*(2), 78–114.

Ally, M., & Samaka, M. (2013). Open education resources and mobile technology to narrow the learning divide. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 14*(2), 14-27.

Amin, A., & Roberts, J. (2008). Knowing in action: Beyond communities of practice. *Research Policy, 37*(2), 353-369.

Anderson, M. J., & Freebody, K. (2012). Developing communities of praxis: Bridging the theory practice divide in teacher education. *McGill Journal of Education, 47*(3), 359-377.

Andrade A., Caine A., Carneiro R., Conole G., Ehlers U.-D., Holmberg C., Kairamo A.-K., Koskinen T., Kretschmer T., Moe-Pryce N., Mundin P., Nozes J., Reinhardt R., Richter T., & Silva G. (2011*). Beyond OER – Shifting focus to open educational practices.* OPAL Report 2011. Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn=urn:nbn:de:hbz:464-20110208-115314-6

Ashby, J., Sadera, W. A., & McNary, S. W. (2011). Comparing student success between developmental math courses offered online, blended, and face-to-face. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 10*(3), 128-140.

Blanchard, A. L. (2008). Testing a model of sense of virtual community. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *24*(5), 2107-2123.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, K. S. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). New Delhi, India: Pearson.

Booth, S. E. (2012). Cultivating knowledge sharing and trust in online communities for educators. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 47*(1), 1-31.

Bransford, J., Brophy, S., & Williams, S. (2000). When computer technologies meet the learning sciences: Issues and opportunities. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 21*(1), 59-84.

Brooks, C. (2010). Toward "hybridised" faculty development for the twenty-first century: Blending online communities of practice and face-to-face meetings in instructional and professional support programmes. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International, 47*, 261-270.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher, 18*(1), 32-42.

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (1991). Organizational learning and communities of practice: Towards a unified view of working, learning, and innovation. *Organization Science, 2*, 40-57.

Brown, J. S., & Duguid, P. (2001) 'Knowledge and organization: A social-practice perspective. *Organization Science, 12*(2), 198–215.

Butler, B., Sproull, L., Kiesler, S., & Kraut, R. (2007). *Community effort in online groups: Who does the work and why?* Human-Computer Interaction Institute. Paper 90. http://repository.cmu.edu/hcii/90

Caelli, K., Ray, L., & Mill, J. (2003). 'Clear as mud': Toward greater clarity in generic qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(2), 1-13.

Carr, N., & Chambers, D. P. (2006). Teacher professional learning in an online community: The experiences of the National Quality Schooling Framework Pilot Project. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education, 15*(2), 143-157.

Chen, Y., Chen, N., & Tsai, C. (2009). The use of online synchronous discussion for web-based professional development for teachers. *Computers & Education, 53*, 1155-1166.

Chiu, C. M., Hsu, M. H., & Wang, E. T. (2006). Understanding knowledge sharing in virtual communities: An integration of social capital and social cognitive theories. *Decision Support Systems, 42*(3), 1872-1888.

Clarke, M. (2009). The discursive construction of interpersonal relations in an online community of practice. *Journal of Pragmatics, 41*(11), 2333-2344.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. (1990). Grounded theory research: Procedures, canons, and evaluative criteria. *Qualitative Sociology, 13*(1), 3-21.

Courtney, A. M., & King, F. B. (2009). Online dialog: A tool to support preservice teacher candidates' understanding of literacy teaching and practice. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 9*(3), 226-256.

Diaz, S., Swan, K., Ice, P., & Kupczynski, L., (2010). Student ratings of the importance of survey items, multiplicative factor analysis, and the validity of the community of inquiry survey. *Internet and Higher Education, 13*, 22-30.

Ehlers, U. D. (2011). Extending the territory: From open educational resources to open educational practices. *Journal of Open Flexible and Distance Learning, 15*(2), 1-10.

Floding, M., & Sweir, G. (2012). Legitimate peripheral participation: Entering a community of practice. *Reflective Practice, 31*, 193-204.

Garrison, D.R., Cleveland, Innes, M., & Fung, T., (2010). Exploring causal relationships among teaching, cognitive and social presence: Student perceptions of the community of inquiry framework. *Internet and Higher Education, 13*, 31-36.

Gee, J. P. (2009). *Affinity spaces: From Age of Mythology to today's schools*. Retrieved from http://jamespaulgee.com/node

Gee, J. P. (2010). New digital media and learning as an emerging area and "worked examples" as one way forward. Retrieved from http://ehis.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/nlebk_307695_AN?sid=1c537d2d-518b-4353-8d72-c3f377d32822 @sessionmgr113&vid=1&hid=116&format=EB

Gibbs, G. R. (2008). *Analyzing qualitative data.* Los Angeles: Sage.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. (1967). *The discovery of ground theory*. New York, NY: Alpine.

Glesne, C. (1998). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction.* White Plains, NY: Longman.

Gray, B. (2004). Informal learning in an online community of practice. *Journal of Distance Education, 19*(1), 20-35.

Gurell, S., Kuo, Y. C., & Walker, A. (2010). The pedagogical enhancement of open education: An examination of problem-based learning. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 11*(3), 95-105.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany: SUNY Press.

Hylén, J. (2006). Open educational resources: Opportunities and challenges. *Proceedings of Open Education, Utah State University, Logan, Utah, 27–29 September.* Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jan_Hylen/publication/235984502_Open_educational_resources_Opportunities_and_challenges/links/54d321a80cf250179181779b.pdf.

Irwin, C., & Berge, Z. (2006). Socialization in the online classroom. *E-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*, *9*(1), 1-7. Retrieved from http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/e-jist/docs/vol9_no1/papers/full_papers/irwin_berge.pdf.

Keller, P., & Mossink, W. (2008). *Reuse of material in the context of education and research*. SURFfoundation. Retrieved from http://www.surffoundation.nl/SiteCollectionDocuments/Report_SURFCC_Reuse%20of%20material_Eng_DEF.doc

Kop, R., Fournier, H., & Mak, J. S. F. (2011). A pedagogy of abundance or a pedagogy to support human beings? Participant support on massive open online courses. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning, 12*(7), 74-93.

Kreijns, K., Kirschner, P., Jochems, W., & Buuren, H. (2007). Measuring perceived sociability of computer-supported collaborative learning environments. *Computers and Education*, 49, 176-192.

Lave, J. (1991). Situating learning in communities of practice. In L. B. Resnick, J. M. Levine, & S. D. Teasley (Eds.), *Perspectives on socially shared cognition* (pp. 63-82). Retrieved from http://www.udel.edu/educ/whitson/files/Lave,%20Situating%20learning%20in%20communities%20of%20practice.pdf

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Li, L., Grimshaw, J., Nielsen, C., Judd, M., Coyte, P., & Graham, I. (2009) Evolution of Wenger's concept of community of practice. *Implementation Science, 4*(1), 11.

Lichtman, M. (2012). *Qualitative research in education: A user's guide*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Olcott, D. (2012). OER perspectives: Emerging issues for universities. *Distance Education, 33*(2), 283-290.

Reich, J., Levinson, M., & Johnston, W. (2011). Using online social networks to foster preservice teachers' membership in a networked community of praxis. *Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher Education, 11*(4), 382-397.

Rourke, L., Anderson, T., Garrison, D. R., & Archer, W. (1999). Assessing social presence in asynchronous text-based computer conferencing. *Journal of Distance Education, 14*(2), 50-71.

Santally, M. (2005). From face-to-face classrooms to innovative computer-mediated pedagogies: Observations from the field. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 3*(4), 1-14.

Schallert, D. L., Chiang, Y. H. V., Park, Y., Jordan, M. E., Lee, H., Cheng, A. C. J., Chu, H. N. R., Lee, S. A., Kim, T., & Song, K. (2009). Being polite while fulfilling different

discourse functions in online classroom discussions. *Computers & Education, 53*(3), 713-725.

Sing, C. C., & Khine, M. S. (2006). An analysis of interaction and participation in online community. *Educational Technology & Society, 9*(1), 250-261.

Takahashi, S. (2011). Co-constructing efficacy: A "communities of practice" perspective on teachers' efficacy beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(4), 732-741.

Vonderwell, S. (2003). An examination of asynchronous communication experiences and perspectives of students in an online course: A case study. *The Internet and Higher Education, 6*(1), 77-90.

Wanstreet, C. E., & Stein, D. S. (2011). Presence over time in synchronous communities of inquiry. *American Journal of Distance Education, 25*(3), 162-177.

Wellman, B., & Guilia, M. (1999). Net surfers don't ride alone: Virtual communities as communities. In B. Wellman (Ed.), *Networks in the global village: Life in contemporary communities* (pp. 331–366). Boulder, CO: Westview.

Wenger, E. (1996). Communities of practice: The social fabric of a learning organization. *Healthcare Forum, 39*(4), 20–26.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning systems. *Organization, 7*(2), 225-246. doi: 10.1177/135050840072002.

Wenger, E. (2009). Communities of practice and social learning systems: The career of a concept. In C. Blackmore (Ed.), *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp. 179-198). New York, NY: Springer London.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Wilson, T., & Whitlock, D. (1998). Monitoring the online behavior of distance learning students. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning, 14*, 91–99.

# The Light to the Left: Conceptions of Social Justice Among Christian Social Studies Teachers

Paul Orlowski

*University of Saskatchewan*

## Abstract

This article describes a study that took place in Saskatchewan, Canada, during 2013-2014. Ten practicing high school social studies teachers who self-identified as Christian answered an unsolicited invitation to participate in a qualitative study about the ways in which they think about social justice. Almost evenly split between Catholic and Protestant, female and male, and urban and rural, most participants were very progressive in their thinking about important economic and social issues. For example, all supported paying taxes and the social welfare state, and almost all supported gay rights and feminism. As well, an important emergent theme arose: The majority spoke about breaking from the teachings of their church if the teachings did not fit with contemporary society. All of them claimed that their faith influenced their thinking about social justice. The study challenges some secular notions about the values held by Christian social studies teachers. Situated in Canada, the study challenges American research findings about the political ideology and values of Christian social studies teachers.

*Keywords:* social studies education; teaching for social justice; controversial issues; teacher beliefs; Christian teaching

## The Light to the Left: Conceptions of Social Justice Among Christian Social Studies Teachers

> The educational problem is to find a way to respect religious teachings while reproducing in each generation the values, attitudes, and dispositions guaranteed by and for a liberal democracy. (Feinberg, 2006, p. xxi)

Although without consensus, there has been much support for the notion that social studies as a high school teaching subject should promote the values necessary to function and participate in a liberal democracy (Dewey, 1916; Feinberg, 2006; Kunzman, 2006b). To this end, social studies should help students develop a sincere respect for the Other, especially important in our increasingly diverse society. It should address a range of perspectives with the objective of striving for compromise and accommodation with an eye toward the common good (Kunzman, 2006a).

This article describes a study that explores the degree to which high school social studies teachers who self-identify as Christian think about the values of a liberal democracy. The study took place in 2013-2014 in Saskatchewan. Ten practicing high school social studies teachers who self-identified as Christian answered an unsolicited invitation to participate in a qualitative study about the ways in which they think about social justice.

There is little doubt that a person's faith mediates the way they see and act in the world. The majority of teachers in the public schools of Saskatchewan come from Christian backgrounds. Some empirical research has been done around teaching Bible courses in American public schools (Feinberg & Layton, 2013). Moreover, there has been some research on the growing use of Bible curriculum in public schools (Chancey, 2007; Haynes, 2011). Studies that examine the influence of *conservative* Christianity in American social studies and civics classrooms have been published (James, 2010; Journell, 2011; Schweber, 2006). There is a dearth of research, however, that explores how social studies teachers think about social justice based on Christian principles of social justice. Moreover, very little research has been done that explores the values of Christian social studies teachers in Canada.

This situation inspired me to ask the following two related research questions in this study: How do practicing teachers of social studies who adhere to the Christian faith understand the term *social justice*? How do they claim that this understanding of social justice influences their teaching of values and perspectives on political issues?

### My Social Positionality

This study was influenced by my own experience. I was raised Catholic in Toronto by immigrant parents, and did my entire K-13 schooling in Toronto's Catholic schools in the 1960s and 1970s. This was an interesting time and place to be a young Catholic: Vatican II was passed in 1965, and with this came a progressive orientation to Toronto's Catholic Churches and schools (Schmidt, 2007). I became politically conscious in high school through my faith with initiatives such as the Cesar Chavez-led campaign of the early 1970s to boycott California Grapes (Levy, 1975). By the 1980s, I had left the Catholic Church because my own political stances were becoming more progressive at the same time that the Church was moving back toward a staunch conservatism. Consequently, to a certain extent I inhabit both *insider* and *outsider* status in this study. My use of the term *politically progressive* implies that I support an

inclusive society that supports human rights for everyone. Moreover, I consider it to be the government's role to intervene in a nation's economy to help those people who are experiencing economic marginalization.

It is noteworthy that I also inhabit insider and outsider status with the participants in terms of occupation. For 19 years I was a high school teacher in British Columbia, mostly teaching social science courses such as social studies and civic studies. I left the high school setting 11 years ago to become a full-time teacher educator. In both settings, the focus of my pedagogy has been on teaching for political consciousness.

### A Brief Overview of the Current Context in Saskatchewan

Indigenous issues are a major concern in Saskatchewan, both from a social and an economic standpoint.[1] The province is currently enjoying a period of unprecedented economic prosperity based on resource extraction, agriculture, and knowledge industries. This newfound prosperity, however, is not distributed evenly across racial lines: An overwhelming 57.9% of First Nations children in Saskatchewan regularly go without some of the basic necessities of life (Douglas & Gingrich, 2009). Indigenous youth will soon represent close to half of the students in the province's K-12 school system (Howe, 2011).

A large body of research suggests that the pervasive disadvantages experienced by Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan emanate from, and are reflected in, poor educational achievement normalized by the legacy of colonialism, including a residential school policy that lasted for over a century with devastating effects still felt today (Battiste, 2013; Richards, 2008). In order to rectify this situation, the Saskatchewan Government created Treaty kits for every school in the province (Tupper, 2012). Each kit contains resources and unit plans for teachers in each grade from kindergarten to the 12th grade. Teachers are mandated to use these resources to educate students on Treaties and Indigenous perspectives.

The history of Saskatchewan has primarily been about settler and Indigenous society (Waiser, 2005). In recent years, however, Saskatchewan's population has also significantly increased because of immigration, predominantly from Europe and Asia. From 2002-2011, the province's immigration rate increased by 437 per cent (Government of Saskatchewan, 2011). Moreover, the number of young immigrants to Saskatchewan is expected to double from 2013 to 2023 (Elliott, 2014). This increase is clearly connected to the economic boom and low unemployment rates resulting from resource extraction.

The recent economic prosperity has seemingly altered the dominant political ideology of Saskatchewan. The province has a long history of socialist, social democratic, and liberal governments, and in 1962 became the first province in Canada to implement a fully public healthcare system (McGrane, 2011). In the recent past, however, Saskatchewan voters have overwhelmingly elected representatives from conservative-oriented parties at both the federal and provincial levels (Orlowski, 2015).

### Literature Review

Political ideology is at the root of this study in that I examine the discourses used by the teachers through an ideological lens. Canadian politics have been dominated by three ideologies: conservatism, liberalism, and social democracy (Orlowski, 2011). For the purposes of this study, however, the binary of conservatism and progressivism will be used. In terms of social issues,

and to a lesser extent on economic issues, liberalism and social democracy share many positions, all of which are progressive (Orlowski, 2011; Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2013). It is important, however, not to conflate the ideologies of conservative Christians and progressive Christians with the ideologies of Canadian political parties.

**Progressivism and Conservatism in the Canadian Political Spectrum: A Brief Overview**

Although it is beyond the scope of this article to delve into the characteristics of liberalism and social democracy and their differences, it is fair to claim that both ideologies share similar positions on social issues (Orlowski, 2011). Progressive values include rights for marginalized groups such as Indigenous and LGBTQ communities, as well as a woman's right to choose and a disdain for capital punishment. Liberals and social democratic parties in Canada support these progressive values. Although they differ on economic issues, differences in how liberal and social democratic political parties in Canada support Keynesian economics vary only in degree. The progressive economic model in Canada supports the notion of state intervention in the economy to help groups falling through the cracks created by capitalism.

Moreover, conservatism in Canada is not a monolithic political ideology. However, for the purposes of this research there are some general traits associated with it. Support for well-entrenched traditional social hierarchies based on gender, class, and race is part of the conservative ideology. This is demonstrated by less financial support for affordable daycare and affordable housing, as well as full support for the federal temporary worker program that virtually negates the rights of workers brought in from non-Western nations. In economic terms, the notion of individual responsibility figures more prominently in conservatism than with the progressive perspective. Vestiges of the social welfare state remain in Canada, but the recent decade of governance by the Conservative Party of Canada has resulted in less social program funding and a decrease in the collective bargaining rights of workers (Orlowski, 2014, 2011).

On social issues, conservatism in Canada is not as far to the right as in the United Sates. For example, conservative governments in Canada do not attempt to repeal laws that support equal rights for LGBQT communities or gay marriage. Nor do they limit a woman's right to choose. They are, however, less supportive of the political goals supported by feminism. This decreased support is demonstrated by decreased funding for women's programs (Gergin, 2011), and by not respecting treaty rights of Indigenous peoples on issues such as education and healthcare (Rennie, 2014). As a former Canadian conservative politician puts it, in the conservative worldview "social justice is achieved when an individual successfully moves from dependence to independence" (Solberg, 2009). In sum, conservative governments in Canada offer less support for social justice initiatives.

As with almost everything pertaining to social relations, social justice is a contested term rooted in ideology. Indeed, progressive notions of social justice promote social programs to help economically marginalized people and promote cultural pluralism through the help of the state (Orlowski, 2011). Progressives believe in the role of government to intervene in social and economic relations such that the suffering of marginalized groups along axes of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, ability, and age is mitigated. By contrast, conservative conceptions of social justice encourage acts of charity to help lessen suffering rather than state intervention (Anderson, 2011). In the next section, this broad generalization will be described in more nuanced terms of what is meant by conservative Christianity's relation to social justice.

From a progressive perspective, teaching for social justice is to encourage students to "perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1995, p. 17). Greene (1998) argues that to teach for social justice is to teach "for the recognition of social wrongs, of sufferings" (p. xlv). Many citizens would not agree that teaching for social justice is the proper role for teachers. Often these differing perspectives are the result of ideological differences. Sometimes these ideological differences around social justice are the result of one's faith.

**Progressive and Conservative Christianity: Exploring Social Justice Issues**

Christian responses to social justice in North America run along a continuum. According to theologian Ronald Sider (2008), "Christians embrace contradictory positions on almost every political issue" (p. 11). This is not a new development: For many centuries Christianity has been divided along ideological lines (Bass, 2009; Choquette, 2004). There is a long running debate within Christian circles about whether one should focus on living a life that ensures their entry into heaven, or whether it is best to devote one's life to social justice issues in order to lessen the suffering of others in the here and now (Bass, 2009; Blaikie, 2011; Sider, 2008). This binary can also be expressed as individualism versus the commons, or self-interest versus altruism. The extent to which a Christian focuses on social justice is paramount to understanding this debate.

Within Protestantism, fighting for social justice is most closely aligned with the Social Gospel tradition that posits progressive social reform rather than personal salvation is in the true spirit of Christianity (Blaikie, 2011). One noteworthy accomplishment within the American Social Gospel tradition is the American Civil Rights movement headed by Baptist preacher Martin Luther King Jr. that culminated with the Civil Rights Act of 1965. In Canada, the Baptist preacher Tommy Douglas led a successful struggle for a fully funded public healthcare system in the province of Saskatchewan that came to fruition in 1962. Progressive Catholicism in politics, especially in Latin American circles, is most often associated with Liberation Theology, a theological movement that emanated out of Latin America in the 1960s. It emphasized that the Gospels were meant to help liberate the downtrodden from poverty and oppression. Involving the Catholic faith into political and civic affairs was the strategy to end their suffering. Pope Francis, who grew up in Argentina, has long been influenced by Liberation Theology (Ivereigh, 2014).

As with the politics of most social groups, the ideology of Christians is situated across the political spectrum. An example of the contradictions within contemporary Christianity in the United States occurred in 2010 when a popular television show host on *Fox News*, Glenn Beck, told his listeners to leave any church that uses the words "social justice" (as cited in Wallis, 2011). A progressive Christian leader, Jim Wallis (2011), quickly responded to Beck's declaration, writing, "The Bible is clear: from the Mosaic Law of Jubilee, to the Hebrew prophets, to Jesus Christ, *social justice* is an integral part of God's plan for humanity" (p.1). Indeed, it is this clear distinction around the two ideological positions around Christian conceptions of social justice that led me to undertake this study.

Caution must be exercised in assumptions about conservative Christians in Canada and their American counterparts. Christian theologians in Canada and the United States share similar theological interpretations of the Bible as well as moral concerns (Reimer, 2003; Stackhouse, 1993). It is important to note, however, that Canadian Christians are influenced by mainstream Canadian values and Canadian political culture in the same way that American Christians are

affected by American values and politics. In other words, it is dangerous to apply generalizations and analysis of American Christian rhetoric to the Canadian context. For example, conservative evangelicals in Canada demonstrate much more tolerance than American evangelicals (Reimer, 2003). Rayside and Wilcox (2011) found that during the 1970s there was a dramatic increase in both countries for gay rights. "Public recognition of sexual minorities have been politically settled" in Canada (Rayside & Wilcox, 2011, p. 5). All federal political parties, including the Conservative Party of Canada, have now accepted gay marriage. This is the not the case with most American conservative Christians, nor with the Republican Party (Sider, 2008).

To assume a common political ideology for Canadian Christians is a misguided endeavor. As an example of an issue addressed in this study, the President of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada made the following claim about how best to address poverty: "Some evangelicals want a more interventionist state; others want smaller governments and more ownership by charities and individuals in addressing social needs" (Clemenger, 2004, p. 1). Moreover, the political ideology of Canadian Christians is fluid. Pollsters found that the Liberal Party of Canada at one time received more support from evangelicals than the other parties (Hutchinson, 2009). In recent years, however, more voters that are evangelical support the Conservative Party of Canada, often because of a perceived anti-evangelical attitude among Liberal leaders (Hutchinson, 2009).

Different ideological interpretations of the Bible pertain to the notion of human rights. Quite often, rights along both civil-political and social-economic axes collide. The progressive stance supports the following principles:

- The needs of the poor are above the wants of the wealthy;
- The freedom of the dominated over the liberty of the powerful; and
- The democratic participation of marginalized groups takes precedence over the exclusionary status quo.

In sum, the progressive Christian perspective on social justice measures a society by the manner in which the poor and marginalized are treated (Sider, 2008). This is not the conservative Christian perspective. How does this play out in American social studies classrooms?

**Christian Teaching of the Social Sciences in the United States**

Studies of Christian teachers in the United States indicate that conservative values are the norm rather than the exception in social studies and civic studies classrooms. Indeed, most studies indicate a general reluctance to deliberate multiple viewpoints, eschewing one of the cornerstones of sound democratic education (Sikkink, 2010). According to the research, conservative Christian teachers do not address controversial issues. If they do, progressive perspectives are absent, using omission as a hegemonic strategy (Kunzman, 2006a, 2006b). There are exceptions, of course. For example, Whitlock (2007, 2010) has written about the process of reconciling her Christian church-going past with being a lesbian teacher and teacher educator, and of her difficulties in teaching preservice teachers about queer politics.

In a study of elementary social studies methods courses, James (2010) found that many conservative Christian preservice teachers in her classes have difficulty embracing certain democratic ideals, particularly those that require deliberation and participation. "Theologically certain" students, according to James, often refuse to participate in class discussions or ponder opinions that differ from their own. This mirrors current trends in American society. Moreover,

James (2010) contends that some conservative Christian preservice teachers "resist the very notion that democracy constitutes a worthy end of public education at all" (p. 619). Clearly, such people are not well-suited to teach social studies in schools. To eschew democratic education is to step away from supporting the public good and the commons in favor of the individual and private interest. James (2010) makes the important point, however, that some Christian preservice teachers demonstrate "mature religiosity," or a willingness to participate in dialogue with people who do not necessarily share the same viewpoints on social and economic matters (p. 631).

Kunzman (2006a) examined a civics education curriculum intended for "the million-plus and growing number of conservative Christian homeschooled students in the United States" (p. 164). The curriculum, called Generation Joshua, included pedagogy on how to ban gay marriage, on discouraging women from taking leadership positions, and on supporting a Christian United States of America. Kunzman (2006a) found that in general, "civic education for conservative religious homeschoolers … is little better than no civic knowledge and skills at all" (pp. 165-166). This finding led him to conclude that teachers and teacher educators need to cultivate in students skills to discern the difference between reasonable disagreement and irrational, closed positions based on faith. The latter position is similar to what James (2010) refers to as "theological certainty." Kunzman (2006a) furthers this line of reasoning by stating that teacher education should engage in a "sort of societal construction project" focused on civic deliberation skills that are necessary to help decide "how to live together in society" (p. 168). Social studies and civics, according to Kunzman, must hold "mutual goodwill" as a major objective.

Kunzman (2006b) considers religiously informed citizenship to be a major challenge in the struggle to strengthen civil society. In order to bring Christian conservative students into class discussions of controversial issues, he implores teachers to eschew any pretense of neutrality and help students "thoughtfully and respectfully grapple with the good as it is envisioned by a range of religious and other ethical perspectives" (p. 4). In short, teachers and teacher educators must model and encourage ethical dialogue among students. This involves "cultivating empathetic understanding of unfamiliar ethical perspectives," followed by "civic deliberation in light of this understanding" (p. 6).

This study examines how Christian principles of social justice influence the ways in which Christian teachers think about Indigenous peoples, multiculturalism, poverty, social programs, unions, and the rights of gay and lesbian people. One must be cautious in making assumptions, of course, but one could assume that their thinking influenced how they teach about these important topics.

## Methodology

### Recruiting the Participants

The participants were recruited through a mail-out invitation my research assistant sent to the 48 active secondary social studies teachers who belonged to the Saskatchewan Social Science Teachers Association. The mail-out contained a letter inviting participation and a pamphlet briefly highlighting the study. Beneath the University logo, the pamphlet cover had in large bold words: **Christianity, Social Studies, & Social Justice**. There were two requirements for the potential participants that were clearly stated in both the letter of invitation and the pamphlet: First, they must self-identify as a Christian; and second, they must have at least three years of

experience teaching social studies at the high school level. I wanted high school teachers because many of the topics I was inquiring about, such as labor unions and taxes, are only included in the high school curriculum. The mail-out strategy worked—ten teachers who met the requirements contacted me. Subsequent correspondence led to their participation.

**Data Collection**

This was a qualitative study and one-on-one, face-to-face interviewing was the only source of data collection used (Conrad & Schober, 2008). It would have been valuable to triangulate what the teachers claimed in the interviews by actually observing them teach. Yet, this would have been impractical—the teachers taught in schools across the entire province, and the variety of topics would have been covered at varied times during the school year by each teacher. How closely do the teachers' descriptions of how they think and teach about social justice issues match what they do and say in the classroom? I assumed that the teachers tried their best to describe their thoughts and actions around teaching the issues about which I had asked. The educational literature in the United States consistently demonstrates that teachers strive to integrate their personal and professional identities (Sikkink, 2010).

For this study, I developed a set of semi-structured, open-ended questions that enabled me to gain insight into the teachers' thoughts about social justice issues (see Appendix A). In late 2013 and through 2014, I conducted one-on-one interviews with all 10 teachers in settings of their choice in both urban and rural locations across Saskatchewan. Each interview was between 60 and 90 minutes.

In terms of demographics, the participants were equally divided between Catholics and Protestants. Four of them taught primarily in public schools, while three taught in Christian schools and the other three taught in the Catholic school system.[2] There were six men and four women, six taught in urban schools while four taught in rural Saskatchewan, and all of them had taught for at least five years (see Table 1). All 10 teacher participants were White, and all self-identified as practicing Christians; all claimed to attend either Catholic Mass or Protestant Church services on most Sundays. The data analysis determined that most participants shared certain values about society, as well.

Table 1: Participating Teachers Demographics*

| Name | Gender | Catholic or Protestant | Type Of School | Urban or Rural | Number of Years Teaching |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Walter | Male | Catholic | Public | Urban | 5 |
| Darlene | Female | Catholic | Catholic | Urban | 21 |
| Steve | Male | Protestant | Public | Rural | 15 |
| Barbara | Female | Protestant | Christian (Public) | Urban | 5 |
| Neil | Male | Protestant | Christian (Private) | Rural | 14 |
| Cathy | Female | Protestant | Christian (Public) | Urban | 5 |
| Wendy | Female | Protestant | Public | Rural | 12 |
| Tom | Male | Catholic | Catholic | Urban | 6 |

| Edward | Male | Catholic | Catholic/Public | Rural | 6 |
| Kevin | Male | Catholic | Catholic | Urban | 28 |

*Notes: Teachers are listed in chronological order of the actual interviews. Pseudonyms are used for all participants.

## Data Analysis

There was only one data source for this study, namely, the transcripts for the 10 interviews. Coding of the transcripts was accomplished using an inductive approach. In other words, particular codes were assigned to text segments, which often turned into major themes. The codes were examined for inconsistencies, commonalities, assumptions, potential themes, connections to the literature, and given the research question, statements that indicated political ideology. The process was also reiterative, meaning that I repeated the process of analyzing the transcripts several times. This contributed to the rigour of the analysis (Creswell, 2012). The interview questions were designed to elicit discourses that indicated ideological perspectives on various social and economic issues (see Appendix A). The discussion in the Literature Review described the binary used. Perspectives were considered progressive on social issues if they supported minority rights and conservative if they did not. Progressive perspectives on economic issues were indicated for support of unions or for using tax dollars to strengthen the social welfare state. By corollary, if a participant expressed support for tax cuts or disdain for unions, they were categorized as conservative on that particular issue.

This study is an example of descriptive explanatory—themes and patterns emerged from analyzing the transcripts that helped explain the participants' beliefs and values. The responses by the teacher participants were rich and personal, and indicated the meaning each gave to various social justice initiatives based on their Christian faith. The analytic framework incorporated the binary of progressive versus conservative Christian positions on various issues as outlined in the Literature Review. The human condition is very complex, of course, and an individual would sometimes express conservative thoughts on some issues and progressive stances on others. This corresponds to many secular teachers as well as to the general public (Orlowski, 2011), and is addressed in the Discussion section.

## Findings

In order to present the findings in a coherent manner, I will begin with discussions about the teachers' thoughts on two general topics: Teaching Social Studies, and Teaching for Social Justice. After analyzing the teachers' thoughts about teaching for social justice in general, subsections will follow on specific topics that include race, class, gender, and sexuality issues. Pseudonyms were used for all 10 participants throughout the entire paper. A discussion of the findings will follow this section.

### Right, Responsibilities, and Engaged Citizenship in Social Studies Teaching

Three of the interview questions pertained to the main tenets of social studies education (see Appendix A, Questions 3, 4, and 8.) When asked what is the purpose of social studies, eight of the 10 participants said it was to help develop critically thinking and engaged citizens. Most said variations of the theme put succinctly by participant Wendy when she said that social studies is about "morals and ethics." Yet, the morals espoused by almost all of the participants in

their teaching were not very different from what progressive secular social studies teachers claim (see Orlowski, 2011). The following quote by Walter encapsulates the dominant view:

> I think what should be part of any social studies program is to teach about the oppression faced by any group in our society like gays and lesbians, First Nations … When I teach about the exploitation of workers during the Industrial Revolution in History 10, I link it to the same sorts of things that happen to workers today.

For Walter and most of the other participants, the focus of social studies should be a type of anti-oppression education.

Neil, a veteran teacher of 14 years who was also a graduate student at a local university, went much further with his reply to the question about the purpose of social studies:

> Neil: I think it's really important to distinguish my sense of what social studies could be versus the purpose I think it serves in society … When I read curriculum documents I hear very staunchly a dominant sense of our province and our relationships kind of dragged kicking and screaming to anti-racist or progressive notions about what social studies might be about. I think social studies and history is where the norm is made normal, where it's normalized.

> Paul: Are you suggesting that the result of social studies and history is often to entrench hegemonic norms?

> Neil: Absolutely. This idea of reading the word and reading the world. I want to imagine a social studies where the kinds of reading of the word that we do gives possibilities of reading the world differently … There is the potential within social studies to question, to deconstruct, and maybe offer a different way of being through how we teach social studies.

Neil clearly believed that social studies could be so much more progressive than it currently is. He said repeatedly throughout the interview that he taught social studies to deconstruct White racist attitudes toward Indigenous peoples. It is clear that Neil understood that there are multiple interpretations about the purpose of social studies, much like his understanding that there are different interpretations of the Bible itself. This stance is an example of what James (2010) and others call mature religiosity.

The fourth question pertains to the idea that social studies should have a focus on the duties and responsibilities of being a citizen in a democracy. Christian influences permeated the responses of the majority of participants to this question. The following excerpts from two teachers demonstrate the influence of their Catholic faith on their views of citizenship:

> Edward: Obeying authority just for the sake of it is definitely not the goal of what I mean to be a good citizen. Maybe surprising to some, [but] from a Catholic perspective just to obey authority has never been the goal. Teachers should have an active role to develop participation. We should help develop certain qualities of leadership in our students.

> Kevin: Our main focus should be preparing students to participate in democratic society, to become citizens in a democracy. We have to allow people to have varying viewpoints … Students will participate in all kinds of arguments on all kinds of issues. Even in our [Catholic] school, a majority of students feel that people should have access to pro-choice

[on abortion], and some kids will cringe. I'll always say, "This is a democracy and we become richer by debating. You will learn from it. You will become a better person by listening to people that disagree with you. That's what I think we should be doing in Social Studies."

The notion that an informed and active citizenry with the ability to understand multiple perspectives on complex social issues, as described by Kevin, is a progressive understanding of social studies. His response is very much in keeping with the goals of a liberal democracy. Kevin claims to encourage debate with his students as a way of becoming a "better person by listening to people that disagree with you." It would seem that Kevin in particular supports Kunzman's (2006b) notion of "grappling with the good" by deliberating a range of perspectives. Clearly, both teachers support the Deweyan notion that public education should be used to strengthen democracy. They claim to be cultivating in their students the ability to discern the difference between reasonable disagreement and an irrational close-mindedness based on faith (Kunzman, 2006a). In other words, they demonstrate *mature religiosity* rather than theological certainty (James, 2010).

A progressive view of democracy supports an inclusive political system best suited to increasing political, social, and economic rights for as many people as possible. The responses to the question around rights and responsibilities indicate near unanimity in their thinking (see Question 8): The group believed both are vitally important for students to understand. This question elicited some interesting answers, ones that took interesting twists and turns. Barbara, who teaches in a Christian school, offered one of these unexpected responses:

It's more important to teach about responsibilities because rights can be very dangerous. They lead to entitlement, and our students are already filled with a sense of entitlement and that's a real danger that I run into in my teaching. Because from our Christian perspective, God has given us this Earth to be keepers of it, so we have a responsibility to take care of it. We do not have the right to abuse it or take it for granted.

Barbara's interpretation of human rights is uncommon—she pointed to the manner in which a right can be taken to a negative extreme. Barbara was one of six participants who expressed unsolicited concerns about environmental degradation.

Wendy offered another interesting response to the question on rights and responsibilities:

If you have a *right* to live on this land that was traditionally the land of First Nations people, then you have a *responsibility* to learn about treaties and how they have affected you and how your family was able to get a house here on this land. [emphasis hers]

Many of the participants suggested that possessing rights means we have a responsibility to safeguard them for future citizens. Wendy's response, however, was positioned within the frame of Indigenous Land Treaties, a somewhat controversial topic in contemporary Saskatchewan (Tupper, 2012). She clearly supports the idea that residents have a *responsibility* to learn about treaties before they form an opinion of them, and before they assume land rights.

From the preceding discussion, it is obvious that the Christian participants in this study believe that democratic education should be part of social studies, unlike the Christian preservice teachers in James' (2010) study. This is one of many progressive positions that these Christian teachers held on important social issues.

### Christian Teachers' Interpretations of Social Justice

Six of the interview questions pertained to the broad topic of what it means to teach for social justice (Questions 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15). The discussion begins by exploring the participants' thoughts on the actual phrase *social justice*. When asked what social justice means, and whether the role of the teacher is to teach for social justice, the responses would likely surprise many secular people: All 10 participants expressed strong support for the notion of teaching for social justice.

Barbara distanced herself from conceptions of social justice as acts of charity. She points to the transformative aspect of teaching for social justice inherent in Freire's *conscientization* (1970):

> Social justice is more than just charity. You can't get out of my classes and not be changed forever. My own life has changed drastically after learning and teaching about these topics.

Barbara grew up in a conservative Baptist Church, one that she claims "is not known for social justice, it's just not part of their DNA." Her life's journey has included lots of travel around the world. This experience has enabled her to see the world through a more progressive lens. She believes that the changes she has undergone are not transitory: "How I teach for social justice for the entire world, it isn't going to change. I've changed and will not go back to how I saw things before."

Many of the other participants demonstrated the influence of their Christian faith in how they think about teaching for social justice. Here are some short excerpts from the responses of Steve, Darlene, and Kevin:

> Steve: Teaching for social justice is the Golden Rule.

> Darlene: My definition of social justice is definitely grounded in my faith. Social justice is an important part of the Catholic Church's teachings. It is bringing a faith-based perspective to what's happening in the world, what is not right in the world. It's based on the concept of Jesus' preferential option for the poor.

> Kevin: Social Justice is about the preferential treatment of the poor. I say to students that the biggest of our teachings is loving the poor. That's what Christ did. The measure of a society is how it treats its most vulnerable people.

These excerpts do not delineate between acts of charity and more leftist or state-interventionist considerations of what social justice means. One of the participants, however, made a clear distinction between the two ideological interpretations of social justice.

> Neil: There were these Catholic guys like Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich who were saying some pretty important things in their progressive critiques of education. Their work, plus my background in the Old Testament, gave me a solid grounding in social justice … There is a small L liberal version of social justice that actually is toothless. Teaching for social justice is really anti-oppression education.

Neil was not raised in the church, but became a Protestant as a young adult. He showed a degree of mature religiosity by being open to the radical teachings of Catholics such as Paulo Freire

(1970, 1995) and Ivan Illich. Neil became aware of the work of Freire and Illich in a Teacher Education course called Christian Ethics that has a focus on social justice.

## Thinking About the Church, Indigeniety, and Other Cultures

I asked the participants to share their views about Indigenous representation in the curriculum (see Question 11). All 10 participants were unanimous in their position: There is an acute need to teach about the unfair treatment of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Each teacher claimed to use the Treaty Kits that the Provincial Government sent to each school. All of the participants spoke of the need to teach about the racist residential schools policy and its legacy. The residential school policy, in which Indigenous children were taken from their families from ages six to 16, came into effect with the passing of the Indian Act in 1876. Its sordid history included the abuse of thousands of Indigenous children, and it is generally regarded as a particularly vile part of Canada's past (Battiste, 2013).

It is significant that four of the 10 participants want the role of the Church included in this topic. The responses of two Catholic teachers demonstrate a passion they possess for teaching about residential schools, including the role of the Catholic Church. White washing the ugly role the Church played in maintaining these schools was not part of their thinking.

> Kevin: When we look back at First Contact, the Church felt that First Nations people were sub-human. At the time, this is what the Church believed. They were wrong, and I tell my students that they were wrong.

> Edward: Aboriginal education and Aboriginal rights are something that I'm passionate about. As for dealing with Catholic Church issues, how could the Church be involved in the residential schools? Well, let's acknowledge that today no one thinks this was right … Can you judge it today? Can you fault them? Yes. Could you reconcile it? Yes, we can reconcile it, we can hope, we can be stronger because of reconciling it.

It is clear that these teachers do not eschew pointing out grave mistakes made by the Catholic Church in its dealings with Indigenous people. It is also evident that at least some of today's Canadian Christian teachers are willing to acknowledge the role of the Church in the operations of the racist residential schools, and to criticize it for its complicity.

The Church was not the only institution that some of these teachers criticized. Two were particularly incensed when they learned that their own high school experience was a demonstration of how omission is used as a hegemonic strategy. Wendy, who lives and teaches in a predominantly First Nations community, explained how she felt when she first learned about the colonization of First Nations people.

> Wendy: In my Bachelor of Education program, I had a few courses on First Nations history. I remember being angry, getting defensive as a White person, upset with the professor. And now I live here and work alongside First Nations people, and I'm learning more about the treaties and everything that has happened to First Nations people. So then I became angry at the government and got angry at my own high school education, thinking *how could all this have been a secret my whole life*? So I was just upset, *completely* upset. [emphasis hers]

Wendy grew up thinking that what she was learning in school must be close to the truth, and felt outrage when years later she learned about Canada's colonial past. She vowed to rectify this omission in her own teaching, and claims she has done so. In fact, all 10 of the participants spoke of the need to teach about treaties and the importance for the Federal Government to finally honor the promises it made in the treaties that it signed in the 1870s.

As a result of the prosperous economy in recent years, most immigrants to Saskatchewan have come from non-European countries (Elliott, 2014, p. 21). It is interesting to note that only six of the 10 participants said they engage with multicultural education. Significantly, all six teach in urban settings, where most new immigrants reside. The position of the four teachers from rural communities is perhaps best summed up by the position of Edward:

> Multicultural education. Does it equate to respect? I'm not sure, maybe it does. Learning about a culture without knowing someone from that culture, they're not as interested. I see that in the community where I live, you know, many people are racist against Aboriginal people. As I mentioned earlier, that's where my passion for teaching and social justice is.

It would appear that these teachers have become aware of the long history of colonialism and suffering experienced by the Indigenous peoples living on the territory now called Saskatchewan, and seem to be committed to teaching about it. The situation with the province's immigrants, however, has not made as significant an impact in their minds, especially among the rural participants. Given the relative novelty of residents from backgrounds other than Indigenous or European ancestry, this is perhaps at least partially understandable. Yet, at the same time, most students in rural Saskatchewan schools will come into contact with other racial minorities throughout their lives. In terms of teaching in a liberal democracy, multicultural education is an area in which these teachers appear to need professional development.

Two of the participants remarked on the disproportionate number of Indigenous people living in poverty. This race/class intersection is a serious issue in Saskatchewan. The study explored the participants' thoughts around economic issues in general.

## Christian Teachers on Helping the Poor and the Working Classes

Two questions dealt with taxes, poverty, and unions (see Questions 13 and 14). Six of the 10 participants said that charity is not enough to lessen poverty, that government policy is the best way to help economically marginalized people. Darlene, Steve, and Edward succinctly explained their positions.

> Darlene: I don't think charity is enough. I absolutely think that the government has to step in. The poverty problem is systemic. It is not something that can be solved by donating money or food, so it has to be fixed with changes to the system.

> Steve: Canada is one of the wealthiest nations in the world. To have people living below the poverty line, no matter how one defines it, is a tragedy. I think absolutely the government has to respond. People living in substandard housing, people with addictions, people with mental and physical health issues, the government as my proxy needs to step in. I can't help them all, but the government can.

> Edward: I teach kids with a single mom working hard, raising three or four kids, and it's a struggle. Our governments have lost perspective on what the family does for society. People are not supported enough.

Responses such as these indicate very progressive stances toward poverty, tending toward a Keynesian model of government intervention in the economy. This stance positions them away from the conservative preference for self-reliance and small government. The binary of conservatism/progressivism fails to locate Edward's ideology, however. He expressed concern for the family, but by pointing to the need for single mothers to receive support, he did not invoke more familiar conservative discourses around family. In this regard, and throughout the entire interview, Edward, a Catholic teacher in rural Saskatchewan, demonstrated aspects of both conservatism and progressivism.

Most responses to the question about taxes and social welfare programs were quite progressive. For example, Kevin gave the following explanation about offering support for teen mothers at the Catholic high school where he teaches:

> Kevin: If you're pro-life it doesn't mean that you're anti-abortion. That's what's good about our [Catholic] school—we have a program for teen moms. If we don't want them to abort that child, then darn it, we better support them and help them out!

Kevin proceeded to broach a topic that has puzzled me: Why do many Christians feel so strongly about the sanctity of life up until a child is born, yet support political parties opposed to social programs that help economically marginalized families?

> Kevin: That's their attitude and it's the wrong attitude. When students in my classes say that the Conservatives are pro-life, I ask them how many abortions do they think the Conservatives have stopped with their tax cut policies? None! Not one!

Kevin's response suggests he eschews any pretense of political neutrality. Indeed, his position is an embrace of mature religiosity. Moreover, his reasoning suggests that economic policy affects the social lives of working-class people in important ways. Social programs such as the government-subsidized daycare policy of Quebec are opposed by Conservative parties across Canada. Yet these programs are designed to help struggling families with young children make ends meet by allowing a parent to get a job without paying exorbitant daycare fees. Kevin seemed to understand this disconnect within the conservative ideology. In this respect he demonstrated a progressive political consciousness.

Teacher neutrality was also absent when I asked the participants about labor issues, including whether they taught about unions. Only two of them took a decidedly clear anti-union position. Seven out of the 10 participants said that they teach about the contributions unions have made to society. Most discuss the rise of the trade union movement while teaching about the deplorable working conditions during the Industrial Revolution. Five of the teachers say that they use this topic to segue into teaching about the contemporary abhorrent practice of using sweatshop labor. Tom described how he used the Industrial Revolution to teach his students about workers' rights and the use of labor strikes.

> Tom: Last year I was teaching about the Industrial Revolution in England and workers' rights and started to talk about why workers sometimes strike to have their voice heard. Well, right as this unit was just about finished the [province's] teachers went on strike

here. I saw that the students were hearing what their parents were saying about it, and what the media was saying about it. And we as teachers were told to not talk about it very much. Well, why not? The kids didn't know anything about why we were striking. Mom and Dad don't know either if they're not using a critical lens to view what's being told in the media.

Tom is obviously overt about his pro-union stance. This surprised me to some extent because other studies I have been involved with demonstrated the reluctance of many secular teachers to show their support for unions in the classroom (See Orlowski, 2011). Tom was not the only one taking a supportive stance on unions, however. Kevin explained:

I have a poster on my classroom door of a *little* boy saying, "If it wasn't for unions, I'd already be working." Our students need to understand what unions have done for us in Canada and elsewhere. [emphasis added]

This support for unions immediately positions Kevin as a progressive on this issue. By contrast, two of the participants expressed variations of an anti-union perspective. Almost all of the participants, however, expressed gratitude for being part of the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation. This suggests that the majority have progressive politics toward labor issues, including unions.

Taken collectively, the group of participants was very much in favor of a strong social welfare state. It is noteworthy that five of the participants said that they refer to the Christian phrase "Preferential Option for the Poor" in their classroom teaching.[3] In this study, the Christian teachers did not seem to be influenced by right wing economic discourses that favor individual responsibility and a smaller social welfare state.

## Weighing in on the Rights of Women and LGBTQ People

The question on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, legislation that came into being in 1982, included probes around feminism and sexuality (see Question 15). Eight of the 10 teachers claimed to be supportive of teaching for a more egalitarian society in terms of gender. Three of them said they actively teach about the rights of women when they cover the Charter in History 30. One of the two dissenting voices, Edward, expressed resistance to a particular strand of feminism in particular, but also to feminism in general:

You've got to bring out the spectrum of feminism because there's a wide variety, including a very extreme radical feminism … Has feminism helped the situation for women? No, I don't think so. The way women are now being treated in society, the gross amount of single mothers, the lack of support for them, the way they are perceived in the media, is that better off? Are we any better off than how it was 50 years ago? Not really.

Many of Edward's comments around gender seemed to emanate from good intentions. (Recall his lament for the lack of government support for single mothers.) Yet, this statement clearly emanates from a conservative perspective that supports patriarchy. He has not considered the experiences of most women who feel that their own mothers and especially their grandmothers led much tougher lives than they now lead. Edward's remark linking feminism to how they are perceived in the media misses how capitalism and patriarchy have combined to create the objectification and sexualized representation of women in the media. Overall, Edward's view exemplified a typical conservative perspective toward gender.

Edward was also the only participant to oppose the notion of gay rights. His reasoning was strictly because of his interpretation of biblical passages. He exhibited theological certainty on issues of sexuality and gender. This suggests he is not interested in teaching students the mutual goodwill (Kunzman, 2006a) or cultivating empathetic understanding (Kunzman, 2006b). Not only did he oppose gay rights, Edward was also staunchly opposed to sex education being taught in the schools. He incorrectly claimed that such programs actually *increase* the number of teen pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Edward said that he tells his students this when they ask about sex education. This was one of the few examples in the entire study that secular concern about the content taught in religious schools goes against what a liberal democracy stands for (Feinberg, 2006). Edward was a clear anomaly in the study around issues of gender and sexuality.

Nine of the participants were supportive of gay rights, and eight of them claimed to actively teach about it. I asked Walter how his pro-gay rights position is reconciled with the official anti-gay rights stance of the Catholic Church.

> Walter: I self-identify as a Catholic, but I always describe myself as a *critical* Catholic. I think that learning catechism is important but I also live in the world today. I don't subscribe to the idea that the Bible was written through divine influence. It's a human document and must be interpreted in a historical perspective … If you're going to criticize gay marriage, then I'm going to ask if you think we should stone adulterers caught in the act, or ask why you're wearing poly-cotton clothes.

Walter mentioned an issue that I have heard many secular progressives state: the notion of cherry-picking biblical verses that support a particular political position and ignoring ones that oppose it. He was not concerned that the Bible is filled with verses diametrically opposed to each other on various positions. As Walter said, "It's all about interpretation."

Walter was one of seven participants who suggested that they veer away from Biblical interpretations that do not conform to the values of mainstream contemporary society in Canada. This was an unexpected theme that emerged from the data. It is also of great importance in terms of teaching for mutual goodwill and how best to live together in an increasingly diverse society (Kunzman, 2006a).

As an example of this, Darlene took a very pro-gay rights position and expressed both gratitude and pride that the Catholic School Division where she works "has done some serious anti-homophobic professional development" with its teachers. "We need to welcome everyone," she said. Darlene's position was very much the majority view among the participants. On the issue of teaching about gay rights, all 10 claimed to drop any pretense of neutrality in the classroom, something Kunzman (2006b) stresses is important if students are to learn how to live together in society. Yet, the closed-minded views of Edward around gender and sexuality are problematic and would inevitably prove to be an obstacle in teaching for mutual goodwill.

Seven of the 10 participants said that they actively encourage their students to voice their opinions on controversial topics in their classrooms. This is a foundational principle of schooling in a liberal democracy. Cathy, who teaches in a Christian school, explained her pedagogical strategy:

> I play devil's advocate quite a bit because I want the students to figure out what their own opinion is … If your opinion is in opposition to what our faith says, you better be able to back it up—if you can, that's fine. Gay rights is one of those topics.

Cathy's explanation answers one of the study's research questions, namely, how do Christian social studies teachers claim that Christian interpretations of social justice influences their teaching of values and perspectives on political issues? Cathy's response, as well as responses by most of the others, indicates support for this important educational objective of schooling in a liberal democracy.

## Summary

Overall, the majority of the participants held progressive views on every one of the potentially controversial issues we discussed in the interviews (see Table 2). Looking at the binaries of Protestant-Catholic, female-male, and urban-rural, only geography provided any significant difference in the expressed views of the teachers. Although most responses tended toward the ideologically progressive, all 10 negative positions out of the 60 in total were from teachers working in rural communities.

The 10 teachers were unanimous in their views about the need to teach Indigenous perspectives on Canadian history, including the treaties. Four participants called for teachers to discuss the role of the Christian churches in the horrific experiences many First Nations children had in residential schools. There was some discrepancy in the teachers' thinking around multicultural education. All four teachers based in rural communities did not consider this an important topic in their social studies courses. By comparison, all six teachers based in urban settings considered it an important topic. This discrepancy is likely influenced by differing cultural compositions of the cities compared to rural Saskatchewan.

There was complete unanimity among the participants in their thinking about issues related to poverty and social programs; although the discussions did not delve into the pedagogy they used to teach these topics. There was less agreement, however, on the need to teach students about the trade union movement's contributions to civil society: three of the four rural teachers expressed dissenting views about teaching labor history. Although there were two dissenting voices on teaching feminist perspectives and one on gay rights, the majority of participants were in favor of an egalitarian society based on gender and sexuality.

Table 2: Teachers' Views on Teaching About Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality From a Progressive Standpoint

| Name | Sex | Religion/Location | Race Focus IndigenousEd/ Multicultural Ed | Class Focus SocialPrograms /LaborUnions | Gender/ Sexuality Focus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Walter | Male | Catholic/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |
| Darlene | Female | Catholic/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |
| Steve | Male | Protestant/Rural | Yes/No | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |

| Barbara | Female | Protestant/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neil | Male | Protestant/Rural | Yes/No | Yes/No | Yes/Yes |
| Cathy | Female | Protestant/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |
| Wendy | Female | Protestant/Rural | Yes/No | Yes/No | No/Yes |
| Tom | Male | Catholic/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |
| Edward | Male | Catholic/Rural | Yes/No | Yes/No | No/No |
| Kevin | Male | Catholic/Urban | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes | Yes/Yes |

To some extent the discrepancies in the responses between the urban and rural teachers makes sense. In Saskatchewan, as in most regions of Canada and the United States, rural communities tend to be more conservative. This comes out in voting patterns, of course, and it is corroborated by the study's findings. Teachers may find themselves in trouble with school administrators or parents if they teach certain perspectives that do not correspond to community values. Yet, overall, it is interesting to note that all of the teachers in the rural communities held progressive perspectives on Indigenous and working-class issues. All six urban teachers expressed progressive views on every issue about which I asked. The four rural teachers expressed a combination of progressive and conservative responses, depending on the issue.

### Discussion and Significance of the Study

The findings in this study challenge and complicate studies of Christian social studies teachers in the United States. On each political issue explored with the 10 Saskatchewan teachers, the majority voiced progressive stances. An important question that begs to be asked is this: Why are the Christian teachers in this study so much more progressive than in the American studies? I argue that religious people are influenced by mainstream political values just like everyone else, and this would also hold for religious teachers, of course. This suggests that mainstream Canadian society might be considered more progressive than mainstream American society. Support for Canada's universal healthcare system is one indicator. Certainly, this would also be the situation around gay marriage and the rights of LGBQT people—Conservative governments across Canada have accepted these progressive stances while Republican governments have not. (This is not to suggest, however, that homophobic attitudes are near non-existent in Canada.)

The different ideological stances on political matters between the American and Canadian teachers may possibly also be a result of differences in teacher education programs in the two countries. In Saskatchewan, there are two universities with teacher education programs. All preservice teachers are required to take courses that address Treaty Education. Moreover, at the University of Saskatchewan, all students planning to teach in the Catholic school system are required to take a course called Christian Ethics. Some Protestant preservice teachers take this course, as well. The focus is on discussion of controversial issues from a Christian perspective. At the University of Regina (in Saskatchewan), there is a course for preservice teachers called Moral Education. Many also access a Catholic Studies elective course called Theory and Practice of Catholic Education through a local university college affiliated with the University of Regina.

The mandate of this Catholic university college is to offer a liberal arts education to the Catholic students of southern Saskatchewan. These teacher education courses in Treaty Education and Christian Ethics may provide a major reason why the Saskatchewan Christian social studies teachers in the study were decidedly more progressive than those in the American studies. For example, Neil expressed support "to deconstruct [hegemonic norms] and offer a different way of being through how we teach social studies." He cited progressive Catholic educators Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich that he came across in the Christian Ethics course in his teacher education program as instrumental in his own political awakening.

The findings in this study, however, point to areas in which teacher education programs in Saskatchewan could also improve. All six participants teaching in urban schools voiced support for progressive positions on *every* issue discussed—but this was not the case with the four rural-based participants. For example, as mentioned in the Summary section, the six urban-based teachers considered multicultural education an important component of social studies while all four rural-based teachers did not. Yet, students in rural schools may find themselves working alongside people from other cultures once they leave school. This will also be the likely scenario around diverse sexualities. Perhaps courses can highlight or even model best pedagogical practices to address controversial issues in communities with entrenched oppressive attitudes toward the Other.

The current Christian Ethics and Moral Education courses in Saskatchewan's teacher education programs should also incorporate content that illuminates the Church's role in the dark side of Canadian history. Four teachers expressed unsolicited opinions that the Church's role in subjugating First Nations children to horrific abuse in the century-long residential school policy should be taught. Indeed, these four teachers claimed to teach about this sordid history so that the Church "can be stronger from reconciling" this experience, as Edward put it. These teacher education courses in ethics should demonstrate to preservice teachers how to pedagogically approach controversial issues such as the Church's historical role in oppressing Indigenous people, women, and LGBTQ people.

A few other points revealed in this study as they relate to the Literature Review are worth mentioning. Seven of the 10 participants claimed to actively encourage discussions around controversial issues with their students. Each one of them claimed to promote a progressive social justice stance on these issues. Cathy, a teacher in a Christian school, claimed to play the "devil's advocate" with her students on issues such as gay rights: "If your opinion is in opposition to what our faith says, you better be able to back it up. If you can, that's fine." This stance is completely in line with teaching in a liberal democracy (Feinberg, 2006). For the most part, these Christian teachers demonstrated a "mature religiosity" (James, 2010) in which they appeared to be open to different and more progressive perspectives than the typical conservative stance. Indeed, seven of them stated that they do not accept biblical interpretations that work to oppress marginalized peoples in contemporary society.

Kunzman (2006a) calls for teachers to design pedagogy that asks, "How do we live together in society?" Although my study did not observe classroom teaching, each teacher offered thoughts that support Kunzman's suggestion. The fact that all 10 claimed to feel strongly about the need to teach about the government's unfulfilled promises toward First Nations peoples is a testament to that. Further, all 10 discussed the need to teach about poverty and social programs from a progressive standpoint. Kunzman (2006b) argues that teachers should drop any

pretense of neutrality and provide students with a plethora of perspectives. All 10 interviews were replete with examples of teachers claiming to offer their stances on political topics. Indeed, one striking example was when Kevin, the most senior participant, claimed he would help his Catholic students understand that the Conservative Government's penchant for tax cuts and weakened social programs works *against* the objective of decreasing the number of abortions.

One flaw in this study that may also account for ideological differences between the participant perspectives in this study and the cited American ones was likely a result of the recruitment process I used. The initial mail-out specifically asked for Christian social studies teachers who wanted to discuss social justice issues. The inclusion of the term *social justice* may have discouraged more conservative teachers from participating. There are definitely Christian teachers in Saskatchewan who adhere to the conservative ideology. This study, however, is evidence that some Christian teachers in the province are progressive on social and economic issues. It is clear that Christian teachers in Saskatchewan schools cannot be considered a monolithic group on political matters. This in itself is an important finding in terms of responding to secular critiques of the influence of Christianity in Saskatchewan schools today.

## Conclusions

This is the only study I am aware of that asks how high school, Christian, social studies teachers think about social justice and various social and economic issues. I expect that readers will have a better understanding of why the article is entitled "The Light to the Left." The vast majority of the political stances were progressive; very few emanated out of conservatism.

The first of the two research questions asked: How do practicing teachers of social studies who adhere to the Christian faith understand the term *social justice*? Although many of the 10 participants mentioned Christian tenets (such as the Preferential Option for the Poor), their positions were not very different from secular progressive teachers. This was especially the case with the six urban teachers. The second research question asked: How do they claim that this understanding of social justice influences their teaching of values and perspectives on political issues? Again, in almost every case the participants claimed to teach from a progressive standpoint on the issues explored in this study. If we make the reasonable assumption that social studies pedagogy is influenced by one's personal perspectives, however, then it is safe to say that these teachers educate their students to become more tolerant toward the marginalized Other.

It would be unwise to make too many wide sweeping generalizations about these findings. After all, 10 social studies teachers in one Canadian province is too small a sample set to provide significant reliability or verisimilitude. Yet, the findings appear to complicate and challenge common secular perceptions of Christians in general, let alone Christian social studies teachers. This study is important for that reason, but also because the findings suggest ideas for teacher education programs that focus on how we can live together more harmoniously despite differences. Social studies is a vitally important course for this endeavour, regardless of whether the teacher is religious or secular.

---

Endnotes

[1]*Indigenous* is an inclusive term that refers to First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. *Aboriginal* is a Eurocentric term that also refers to the same three groups. In this paper, I use Indigenous, but some of the teachers' quotes include the term Aboriginal.

[2] In Saskatchewan, all Catholic schools are funded from tax dollars to the same extent as public schools. The Christian schools represented in this study are also publicly funded and are administered through public school divisions.

[3]The Preferential Option for the Poor is a relatively new Christian phrase. Its first use in a Church document is from a 1968 meeting of the Conference of Latin American Bishops held in Medellin, Columbia. It refers to the importance of Christian service to the (economically) marginalized in society. Pope Francis has mentioned it in several of his recent speeches.

## References

Anderson, R. (2011, November 7). Conservatives and social justice. *Public Discourse.* Retrieved from http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2011/11/4244/

Bass, D. B. (2009). *A people's history of Christianity: The other side of the story*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.

Battiste, M. (2013). *Decolonizing education: Nourishing the learning spirit.* Saskatoon, SK: Purich.

Blaikie, B. (2011). *The Blaikie report: An insider's look at faith and politics.* Toronto, ON: United Church Publishing House.

Chancey, M. (2007). A textbook example of the Christian Right: The National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, *75*(3), 554-581.

Choquette, R. (2004). *Canada's religions.* Ottawa, ON: University of Ottawa Press.

Clemenger, B. (2004, May/June). How and Why Evangelicals Vote. *Faith Today.* Retrieved from http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=1753

Conrad, F., & Schober, M. (2008). New frontiers in standardized survey interviewing. In S. Hesse-Biber & P. Leavy, (Eds.), *Handbook of emergent methods,* (pp. 173-188). New York, NY: Guilford.

Creswell, J. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Columbus, OH: Merill Prentice Hall.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York, NY: MacMillan.

Douglas, F., & Gingrich, P. (2009, November). *Child and family poverty: Saskatchewan report.* Social Policy Research Unit, University of Regina. Retrieved from http://www.campaign2000.ca/reportCards/provincial/Saskatchewan/2009PovertyReportCard.pdf

Elliott, D. (2014). Demographic trends in Saskatchewan. *Sask Trends Monitor.* Retrieved from http://www.saskculture.ca/content/generic_atoms/titlefilecaption-files/14.05.26.Diversity.Doug_Elliot.pdf

Feinberg, W. (2006). *For goodness sake: Religious schools and education for democratic citizenry*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Feinberg,W., & Layton, R. (2013). Teaching Bible in public high schools: Toward a conception of educational legitimacy. *American Educational Research Journal, 50*(6), 1279-1307. doi: 10.3102/0002831213502517

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York, NY: Continuum.

Freire, P. (1995). *Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare to teach.* New York, NY: Perseus Books.

Gergin, M. (2011, April 6). *Silencing dissent: The Conservative record*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Retrieved from https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/silencing-dissent-conservative-record

Government of Saskatchewan (2011). *Saskatchewan Statistical Immigration Report: 2002-2011*. Retrieved from http://www.economy.gov.sk.ca/immigration/sk-immigration-statistical-report-2011

Greene, M. (1998). Introduction: Teaching for social justice. In W. Ayers, J. A. Hunt, & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice* (pp. xxvii-xlvi). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Haynes, C. (2011). Getting religion right in public schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(4), 8-14.

Howe, E. (2011). *Bridging the Aboriginal education gap in Saskatchewan*. Saskatoon, SK: Gabriel Dumont Institute.

Hutchinson, D. (2009, August). Evangelical voting trends by region, 1996-2008. *Church & Faith Trends*, *2*(3). Retrieved from http://files.efc-canada.net/min/rc/cft/V02I03/Evangelical_Voting_Trends_1996-2008.pdf

Ivereigh, A. (2014). *The great reformer: Francis and the making of a radical pope*. New York: NY: Harry Holt.

James, J. H. (2010). "Democracy is the devil's snare": Theological certainty in teacher education. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 38,* 618-639.

Journell, W. (2011). Teachers' controversial issue decisions related to race, gender, and religion during the 2008 Presidential Election. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 39,* 348-392.

Kunzman, R. (2006a). The civic (and pedagogical) virtue of recognizing reasonable disagreement. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 34,* 162-182.

Kunzman, R. (2006b). *Grappling with the good: Talking about religion and morality in public schools*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Levy, J. (1975). *Cesar Chavez: Autobiography of La Causa*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.

McGrane, D. (Ed.). (2011). *New directions in Saskatchewan public policy*. Regina, SK: Canadian Plains Research Centre Press.

Orlowski, P. (2015). Neoliberalism, its effects on Saskatchewan, and a teacher educator's response. *Alternate Routes: A Journal of Critical Social Research*, *26*(1), 223-250.

Orlowski, P. (2014). Social studies & civil society: Making the case to take on neoliberalism, *in education*, *20*(1), 3-24.

Orlowski, P. (2011). *Teaching about hegemony: Race, class & democracy in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Springer.

Rayside, D., & Wilcox, C. (2011). *Faith, politics, and sexual diversity in Canada and the United States.* Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Reimer, S. (2003). *Evangelicals and the continental divide: The conservative Protestant subculture in Canada and the United States*. Montreal, PQ: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Rennie, S. (2014, April 28). First Nations leaders call on Conservatives to scrap Aboriginal education bill, hint at blockades. *National Post*. Retrieved from http://news.nationalpost.com/2014/04/28/first-nations-leaders-call-on-conservatives-to-scrap-aboriginal-education-bill-hint-at-blockades/

Richards, J. (2008). *A disastrous gap: How high schools have failed Canada's Aboriginal students*. Toronto, ON: C. D. Howe Institute.

Sadovnik, A., Cookson, P., & Semel, S. (2013). *Exploring education: An introduction to the foundations of education,* 4th ed. New York, NY: Routledge.

Schmidt, T. (2007). *Journeys to the heart of Catholicism.* Hamilton, ON: Seraphim Editions.

Schweber, S. (2006). "Breaking down barriers" or "building strong Christians": Two treatments of Holocaust history. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 34,* 9-33.

Sider, R. (2008). *The scandal of evangelical politics: Why are Christians missing the chance to really change the world?* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Sikkink, D. (2010). Do religious school teachers take their faith to work? Research evidence from the United States. *Theo Web: Academic Journal of Religious Education*, *9*(1), 160-179. Retrieved from http://www.theo-web.de/zeitschrift/ausgabe-2010-01/12.pdf

Solberg, M. (2009, November 26). The conservative vision of social justice. *C2C Journal*. Retrieved from http://c2cjournal.ca/2009/11/the-conservative-vision-of-social-justice/

Stackhouse, J. (1993). *Canadian evangelism in the twentieth century: An introduction to its character*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Tupper, J. (2012). Treaty education for ethically engaged citizenship: Settler identities, historical consciousness and the need for reconciliation. *Citizenship Teaching & Learning*, *7*(2), 143-156.

Waiser, W. (2005). *Saskatchewan: A new history*. Calgary, AB: Fifth House.

Wallis, J. (2011). "Biblical social justice and Glenn Beck." *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jim-wallis/biblical-social-justice-a_b_493875.html

Whitlock, R. (2007). Queerly fundamental: Surviving straightness in a rural southern high school. In N. Rodriguez & W. Pinar (Eds.), *Queering straight teachers: Discourse and identity in education* (pp. 65-93). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Whitlock, R. (2010). Getting queer: Teacher education, gender studies, and the cross-disciplinary quest for queer pedagogies. *Issues in Teacher Education*, *19*(2), 81-104.

**Appendix A**

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a teacher? Where have you taught? What grades and subjects have you taught? In terms of the courses in the Social Sciences, what specific courses and grade levels have you taught?

2. Can you please describe the student population currently served by your school? [Probes: socioeconomic status, cultural diversity, religious influence, percentage of two-parent and one-parent families, etc.]

3. In your opinion, what is the purpose of Social Studies? Do you believe Social Studies to be a political enterprise? Explain.

4. What are your thoughts on the following statement? "Social Studies must prepare students with the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democracy."

5. Does religion have any place in Social Studies? Explain.

6. Some teachers think that it is important that they remain neutral, not express their opinion in class, and instead focus on creating an open and supportive environment where students feel free to express their thoughts and feelings. Others, while agreeing that diverse views should get a fair hearing, think that it is important for teachers to clearly articulate their own positions. Where do you stand on this issue? Explain.

7. Do you encourage classroom discussions around controversial issues? (If not), why not? (If so), which ones? Why those ones?

8. What is more important to teach about in Social Studies: rights or responsibilities? Explain.

9. In light of more and more immigrants moving to Saskatchewan, do you think multicultural education should become a more important part of the Social Studies curriculum? What about the ways you teach about issues of race?

10. Do Christian activists such as Tommy Douglas or Martin Luther King enter into your teaching? If so, do you make connections to their Christian backgrounds? Explain.

11. Do you feel that the Social Studies (and/or History) curricula adequately covers the contributions or experiences of Aboriginal peoples? [If not], do you do anything to compensate for this? What? Why?

12. What does the term *social justice* mean to you? Do you think the role of the teacher should include encouraging a social justice perspective in students? Do you think charity is enough to help the poor, or should the government step in? Explain.

13. Do you feel that the Social Studies (and/or History) curricula adequately covers the contributions or experiences of the working classes or labour unions? [If not], do you do anything to compensate for this? What? Why?

14. What are your thoughts on economic issues like taxes and tax cuts as well as social welfare programs? Do you cover these topics in your teaching? Explain.

15. Many scholars point out that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms has strengthened the feminist movement and given rise to the gay rights movement. Do you agree? Do you cover the Charter in your teaching? If so, do you make these connections to feminism and gay rights? Explain.

# The Experiences of Selected Teachers in Implementing Place-Based Education

Dianne Miller and Sampson Twum

*University of Saskatchewan*

Author Note

## Abstract

This study explores the experiences of selected teachers undertaking place-based education (PBE) in a prairie region, the challenges they encounter, and their understanding of the knowledge and skills required to implement PBE. PBE is defined and described. Five individual teachers and one teaching team of two who practice PBE are interviewed. The findings are reported thematically and implications for teacher education are discussed. The varied practice of these teachers is instructive for educators interested in holistic, inquiry-based methodologies rooted in local settings and points to directions for teacher education programs to take in implementation.

*Keywords*: Place-based education; outdoor learning; community engagement; experiential learning; curriculum outcomes; assessment; teacher education; deschooling

### The Experiences of Selected Teachers in Implementing Place-Based Education

This research explores practicing teachers' qualitative experiences in implementing place-based education (PBE), their challenges in undertaking this work, and their understanding of the knowledge and skills required to implement PBE. The latter is particularly instructive for teacher education programs in preparing teacher candidates to take up place-based pedagogies. While PBE is relatively well known in some educational contexts (rural education, environmental education), to date little is known about how teacher education programs engage (or not) this orientation to teaching and learning. Focusing on a select sample of teachers in a prairie region near a university teacher education program, this research aims to advance a conversation between PBE practitioners and teacher educators as to the strengths and merits of PBE and what is needed in teacher education to support its implementation.

Practitioners, researchers, and educators have theorized and documented the potential of PBE to link students' lives and their experiences to formal education for some time (Gruenewald, 2003a; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011; Smith, 2002; Sobel,2004; Smith & Sobel, 2010; The Centre for PBE, n.d.; Buck Institute for Education, n.d.). An evaluation of over 100 American schools with place-based education programs concludes that "place-based education fosters students' connections to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and communities. It boosts student achievement and improves environmental, social, and economic vitality" (PEEC, 2010, para. 5; see also, Powers, 2004; Skoutajan, 2012; Sobel, 2004; Smith & Sobel, 2010). Bishop (2004), for example, argues that when students are taught literature written by local authors and assisted to investigate the ecology of the area in which they live and the stories associated with their surroundings or locality, their conscious level of the place increases and they are helped to appreciate the value of their community and develop a sense of stewardship.

According to the Rural School and Community Trust (2005), PBE is learning that is rooted in what is local:

> The unique history, environment, culture, economy, literature, and art of a particular place. The community provides the context for learning, student work focuses on community needs and interests, and community members serve as resources and partners in every aspect of teaching and learning. (cited in Smith & Sobel, 2010, p. 23)

PBE is premised on experiential learning; that is, subject matter is taught in such a manner that it connects to students' experiences in their communities (Beard & Wilson, 2006; Knapp, 2005; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; Roberts, 2012). PBE resonates with progressive educator John Dewey's (1907) conception of an ideal school where the activities of survival and sustenance in daily life are conjoined with book learning to "throw light upon the practical work, [and] give it meaning and liberal value" (p. 94). As noted by Horton, people only learn from the experiences they learn from, not every experience (Horton & Freire, 1990). Intellectual engagement with and reflection upon an experience within community brings multiple perspectives to bear on its meaning and maximizes the potential for learning.

In pre-colonial Indigenous contexts, the community including its natural environment was the classroom (Kirkness, 1998). For thousands of years Indigenous peoples offered their children holistic, experiential education grounded in relationship with the land and community and focused on living well in their surroundings (Kirkness, 1998; Wilson & Battiste, 2011). The

relatively recent nomenclature of PBE stems from concern for rural revitalization (Theobald, 1997) and, in the field of environmental education, from a concern to expand children's experiences in nature as a way to build an ethic of care and respect for the planet (Sobel, 1996). PBE has developed to include the socio-ecological, the cultural, and civic action. (Gruenewald 2003a; see also, Clark, 2012; Smith, 2002; Sobel 1996; 2004). Place-based learning connects experience in the community to the content of the official curriculum, connecting students to the problems and resources of their own locality and promoting civic engagement in the here and now. Place-based educators often use project or problem-based learning with authentic tasks to involve students in the real world outside the classroom (see Buck Institute for Education, n.d; Clark, 2012; Demarest, 2015; McVittie, Lazecki, Loeffler, & Thompson, 2007; Place-Based Activities, n.d.; Smith, 2002; Smith & Sobel, 2010; Sobel 2004). By helping students to question what happened, how it happened, why it happened, and what could happen in relation to a place and its ecology, teachers build *place consciousness* (Gruenewald 2003b; Theobald, 1997) and a personalized understanding of a community's history and potential.

Understanding how local issues are interrelated with global concerns can be facilitated by PBE (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008). While social and ecological justice concerns are not inherent in PBE (i.e., one can teach from place without engaging political issues), the focus on local community naturally opens possibilities to examine critically the interconnected social, economic, and political forces underpinning oppression as it is manifested locally and globally. PBE is compatible with teaching methodologies that have an anti-racist, anti-oppressive, decolonizing, and eco-justice vision. Gruenewald (2003b) advances the social and ecological justice orientation of PBE with his articulation of a "critical pedagogy of place," which combines the tenets of critical pedagogy with PBE to focus on decolonization and reinhabitation against the backdrop of neoliberal global capitalism. Fleshing out what these concepts mean, Gruenewald (2003b) says:

> A critical pedagogy of place aims to (a) identify, recover, and create material spaces and places that teach us how to live well in our total environments (reinhabitation); and (b) identify and change ways of thinking that injure and exploit other people and places (decolonization). (p. 9)

Critical place-based educators encourage their students to inquire into local issues such as pollution and environmental degradation as well as racism and other systemic inequalities with a view to making visible and changing taken-for-granted patterns of thought that support practices of domination. As well, they involve students in action to improve the well-being of communities. Such study and action inform, and are informed by, global perspectives.

However, PBE is not taken up in concerted ways in teacher education literature. In order for K-12 students to develop knowledge and skills through educational activities rooted in place, their teachers need to gain the requisite knowledge and understanding of PBE. For PBE to be implemented effectively in schools, informed leadership and concerted effort in the educational field are needed (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Smith 2007). One impetus for the current study is to learn from teachers in the field who are in various ways practicing what we understand to be place-based pedagogies; that is, pedagogies which acknowledge that place itself is a teacher and which consider "the best place for the best learning" so that children and youth engage with their ecological and cultural contexts (Campbell, Campbell, & Klein, 2009, p.12; see also Archibald, 2002; Kirkness, 1998; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000).

We note that the language of PBE is not widely used in our region; practitioners are more familiar with language such as experiential education, problem-based learning, inquiry-based learning, outdoor education, and community education, all of which are facets but not the whole of PBE (see Furman & Gruenewald, 2004, p. 59). We also acknowledge that ambiguity exists in the theoretical conceptualizations of place, which in turn call into question pedagogies of place (Eijck & Roth, 2010; Gruenewald, 2003a; McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011; Tuck & Mckenzie, 2015). Still, in light of the opportunities that place-based pedagogies offer for integrated learning, student engagement, improved academic performance, environmental stewardship, and community revitalization (Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative, 2010), and its alignment with the philosophies of Indigenous education (see, for example, Stewart, 2011; also Kirkness, 1998), we contend that teacher experiences with this way of teaching and learning will point to foundational and practical ways that teacher educators might begin to integrate the theories and methodologies of place-based learning in their practice.

## Methods

As described by Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000), purposive sampling was used to select participants for this study to satisfy our desire to learn from the insights and experiences of teachers practicing PBE. We drew from the limited pool of teachers in the region who are known professionally as teachers whose practice is aligned with the philosophy and pedagogies of PBE and who engage community resources in meeting curricular outcomes through authentic tasks and projects. Most teachers interviewed embrace the label of place-based educators; some see themselves as simply using good pedagogy. To gather a range of experiences across grade levels, eight letters of invitation were sent to two teachers from each grade level: kindergarten, elementary, secondary, and special programs with a place-based focus. Seven teachers responded to the letter of invitation including a teaching team of two (identified here as SAS 1 & 2) and one who added a rural perspective to an otherwise urban mix. Twum conducted the interviews using a guide to focus on key elements of PBE and active listening to engage participants in rich conversation (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The interviews were carefully transcribed and validated by participants. They were then coded and the data organized into themes following the guidance of Bryman (2004, p. 183). Participants are given pseudonyms.

The first section of the paper focuses on how these particular teachers understand and implement PBE; the next sections focus on challenges of implementation and the knowledge and skills these teachers believe are needed to teach PBE successfully. While the intent of this research was not to generalize from a small sample, our conversations with PBE teachers do point to ways that teacher educators might better prepare novice teachers to take up PBE.

## Findings and Discussion

Four main themes were identified in the discussion of teacher experiences in implementing PBE: promoting outdoor learning, promoting community engagement, building effective teaching and learning experiences, and addressing curriculum outcomes and assessment.

### PBE in Action

**Promoting outdoor learning.** Most of the respondents specifically address the value of promoting outdoor learning. In the words of one teacher (PSA):

> I am really connected with a garden idea and having some sort of nature close to my kindergarten. Because growing up I did a lot of playing outside. I grew up on the farm at [small town] and we played outside a lot. I see my own children and I see the children that I teach not doing that as often for many reasons. I did send home a survey with my families to ask families if they felt the same way I did. And they list the same reasons: families are too busy, our children are in many different activities, and our families are all working, and then electronics are also something that children put more value in than being in the outdoors. I think my children and my students are not as connected to the outdoors as we were as children. So that was where I started thinking I need to reconnect these children to the earth because if I don't, how can we ask them to take care of where they're from? How can we ask them to clean up and make good choices consumer-wise if they don't love the earth, if they don't love the prairies? That's where I started.

PSA realizes there is little continuity between activities she did when she was growing up and the activities being undertaken by her own children and the children she teaches. Changes in family structures and activities available to children in this computer age are understood as reasons why children are increasingly disconnected from the outdoors, a belief that is underscored and elaborated further by environmentalist Richard Louv (2008). Also, PSA realizes that children cannot be socialized to care for their environment and communities if they stay disconnected from the very environment and community that they are being asked to protect. Her thoughts echo Sobel's (1996) words: "If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it" (p. 39). She makes a conscious decision to connect the children she teaches to the earth through outdoor activity in the place they go to school. PSA explains that her students behave differently when learning outdoors:

> And afterwards I thought did they learn? Like did I cover my objectives? And yes! We talked about what we saw; they talked about what we heard, the leaves crunching under feet and in each other's hands. We talked about what we felt [when] the wind was whipping the leaves against their face. So they were [lying] down in the leaves making leaf angels. And I asked, so what did you smell? It smelt old, so they were exploring and using their senses and learning. So to me because of the garden, I've learned that we have to follow their lead outside and they behave differently out there. They are engaged, they want to find treasures. They are into, you know, finding a ladybug or finding a snowflake on a branch, rolling in the leaves.

PSA's students become enthusiastic when they are engaged in learning that takes them directly into their environment. Rather than lessons determined by the teacher to meet predetermined learning outcomes, the learning proceeds in a natural, organic way with everyone involved. The teacher follows the lead of the students. Curricular objectives are not forgotten but are met through exploration and play in the material environment (see also Hall, 2015; Lloyd & Gray, 2014).

> Another teacher, APJ, explains how he got into PBE:

> I've always been involved in my career by using place to stimulate students to be further engaged. So before creating this classroom [name], and before going for my Masters, while I was teaching Grade 3, 4, and 5, I'd bring my students to parks, we'd go on bike

rides, we'd go on camping trips. And I found that for those students to come together as a classroom and to have everyone the same, you know, coming together as a team, to take on the challenges that sometime education brings, brought a better learning atmosphere for the students.

These teachers indicate that PBE must be connected to the outdoors to counter the current trend of students spending most of their time in indoor activities, to encourage an ethos of care for the environment, and to build capacity to collaborate and problem solve. The local geographical environment and climate are significant for how people manage their lives and the ecological issues that arise. When students become connected to their local outdoor environment, they may be more likely to engage in activities that promote the well-being of communities. Skoutajan (2012) relates a number of studies that validate the efficacy of learning outdoors (pp. 35-36).

**Promoting community engagement:** The majority of respondents in this study indicate that PBE promotes community engagement. We note that teachers of younger children have less direct involvement with community organizations outside the classroom. Children in the middle years learn to appreciate their communities by exploring and helping to build them. In explaining how PBE helps youth to engage with their communities, APJ states:

We're not like an adventure program where we go to the best places in [province] to learn about a subject but we do emphasize that our students can make a difference in our community and we show them that by actually giving them projects that are happening in the community, and the end result is always a community presentation to open up to people beyond just the teachers in the program or the parents and [so the] public get to see their work. Actually, some kind of change will actually happen because of our project. We'll build something at the end of the project or sell something, there's a tangible result.

APJ believes that when students are introduced to real-world learning by exploring their communities they become motivated as a team to help find solutions to problems in the community. APJ incorporates community building into the weekly routines of the class:

Well, to build community we organize our Fridays to a variety of community jobs that our students are in charge of and these are all jobs that are meaningful to us curriculum-wise because they're parts of the curriculum, like in wellness and food studies and horticulture, like they're from those areas, but they also are meaningful in our program because the completion of these jobs helps our community thrive.

Another teacher discusses how students are engaged in the community with the help of collaborators:

I think our list is over 200 people that we connected with in our community…So I'd say like the first three years [of teaching in a place-based program] was just knocking on people's doors. And just asking, can we connect, can we do something together? And you know most people are really happy; they want to help. They want to have more of a cohesive community and…have an influence on education as well. (DAM)

These teachers confirm a high level of student engagement when students participate in meaningful, facilitated experiences in a wide range of community organizations and services. They work to promote high levels of civic responsibility and concern for others and their

environment and notice that students' motivation is strong to participate in learning experiences that have an impact on the community. As well, community organizations are excited to be part of students' education.

**Building effective teaching and learning experiences.** These teachers believe PBE helps to promote effective teaching and learning experiences, where students take charge of their own learning. Students feel empowered through taking responsibility for their studies and learning to work independently and be responsible for their part in collaborative work:

> That kind of real-world learning increases the motivation, by like tenfold, just to see that students acknowledge that there's a purpose to what they're doing and in order to solve problems like that and work on projects like that as a team. Everyone has a unique role in the class as we're completing these projects. So removing that—I don't know what the work is like in regular class—everyone has the same assignments usually and you don't feel like your work is really that important. If twenty other people are doing the same thing as you, you don't really feel like your work is going to contribute to the collective knowledge or understanding. But in our project-based work, where everyone in the class has a unique role, if you don't do it, the class in the end suffers. (APJ)

Another respondent offers insight into the importance of communication within the classroom:

> A lot of circle talks as you can see our classroom here is just like couches— there's no desks. So very often we'll sit in a circle setting and just discuss issues, then from there we ask the kids to participate, because it's that participation that feeds that consciousness. If they sit there very passively, then they're not going to get their brains engaged or you know even, build off each other's conversations. (DAM)

The idea that teachers need to trust that students will learn through PBE comes up often in the interviews as exemplified by this comment:

> Being able to ask questions, inquiring [and] probably to trust that they will gain something if you leave the building. To trust that the children are capable of coming up with their own theories and then testing those theories and then realizing that they are capable of coming up with their own knowledge when they are out [side the classroom]. (SUP)

Two other participants explain their view as to how PBE promotes effective learning experiences:

> SAS 1: Well it makes learning relevant, and I think it hopefully makes it stick a little bit better, beyond just those skills of collective work habits and study skills and pushing your boundaries. So we're really trying to mold independent, responsible, respectful, and capable citizens. And I think our programs do a really good job of helping kids see what their capabilities are. And I think we've pushed them pretty hard, you know— there's a hard, heavy academic load as well as adventure education and the physical education that happens. So that's a tricky balance and, I think it sets them up quite well for, you know, Grade 12 and beyond to see what they're capable of and where their passions lie.

> SEP: The whole philosophical part of it [place-based education] would be largely connected to the [fact that the] teacher does not hold the power. I mean the teacher has

the power—the teacher has the power anyway. So drop the power. [Let] each kid have their own power. And instead of the teacher standing in the front and saying— I have got the knowledge, let me give you the knowledge—the teacher stands back and introduces [students] to an atmosphere and environment where learning is just going to go wild. They stand back and they respect the fact that student could be expert. They could know a lot of different things and you want to give the students a chance to show all that they know.

These place-based teachers assert that when students are given power to direct their learning and when the teacher reduces the power she/he exerts, students can make choices influenced by both their interest and what the curriculum stipulates. When students are trusted to develop authentic tasks or projects, their motivation to effect changes in the community increases as they understand their efforts can lead to a positive outcome. Students create a deep connection between what they read, research, and their experiences in and out of the classroom.

**Addressing curriculum outcomes and assessment.** Meeting curriculum outcomes and assessing student progress is a large part of all teachers' work, and this is also the case for these place-based educators. Respondents in this study outline different methods they use to address curricular outcomes and assessment. One teacher states:

I don't have specific outcomes but I connect [the activities] to theory of child development and I connect it to the learning and kinda say what they're learning as we do it. Like even when we went out and collected sticks, just naturally the kids started … comparing them and talking about size. Well that's math. So then I can write about that and connect it to math. (SUP)

Another teacher explains an innovative way to ensure curricular outcomes are covered as well as building capacity to self-assess:

Our kids, they do something called curriculum connections. And so they take all their experiences and they have to find how they connect to an outcome in the curriculum, in a certain subject area. Say we go camping at [historical site], it's social studies based but it's also physical, it's also health related. You know history, and there are so many different subject areas that can be covered there. They have to seek out themselves what they've learnt, and then write a paragraph of how they've learned it. They have their report cards next week and they wrote about fifty pages of what they've learned, according to the curriculum. (DAM)

Other teachers discuss how their methods of meeting outcomes and assessment are increasingly trusted by administrators:

SAS 1: So we have biology, geology, wildlife management, English, and physical education and those things are much related. So it makes it very easy for us to touch numerous outcomes, on one excursion or in one project. I think for the first few years of any integrated program there would be a lot of oversight in terms of addressing curricular outcomes and a lot of administrators checking on that. But I think now the student learning speaks for itself in a way in the sense that we can show admin any project or any assignment we give them and say it hits this, this, and this.

APJ: So what we use is a portfolio-based system where students collect evidence of their learning and tie that to the curriculum outcomes. When we start a project I've got to give them a list of curriculum outcomes from the variety of classes that we give credit for in [subject areas]. And the outcomes that make the list are ones that I know should probably be, or they should probably come up throughout the project depending on what role they have in the project.

One teacher explores how spontaneous activities that arise from her garden project are connected to the curriculum and how she builds on that learning:

I do continually look through the outcomes and indicators and as I go through I highlight everything that we learned through the garden. And I was actually quite surprised in a good way at how much we did cover by building a garden by exploring, just by going outside, and asking … questions. Like I said we would go out and play. But now, I go out with the idea of I've got to ask a question to take their learning further. What did you find? Why did you find it there? Where did you find it? What should we do with it—all of those questions—as they explore. (PSA)

These statements show how these teachers approach meeting curricular outcomes and assessment through PBE. Generally speaking, students take a leading role in assessing what they have done. Whether it is by means of self-assessment, peer assessment, or the construction of a portfolio, the practice of students assessing themselves is developed. Learning how to demonstrate meeting curricular outcomes is an important area for teachers undertaking PBE to ensure that it is viewed as a legitimate pedagogical approach by administrators, parents, and the Ministry of Education. The wider PBE literature gives evidence that state (or provincial) standards can be met or exceeded through PBE (Demarest, 2015; PEEC, 2010; Powers, 2004; Skoutajan, 2012, Smith & Sobel, 2010; Theobald & Curtiss, 2000). Sharing the responsibility of assessment with students is a learning process for both teacher and student, requiring trust, truthfulness, and honesty, which is built through relationship and engagement in authentic tasks (see, for example, McVittie et al., 2007).

## PBE Challenges in Implementation

As expected with pedagogical innovation, teachers identify challenges in the implementation of PBE. Challenges include convincing administration and sometimes students of its benefits and helping students make the transition from a model of education where students are produced as passive consumers to one where students are active, creative learners. One teacher (DAM) referred to this process as *deschooling* (see Illich, 1971).

As well, the extreme cold of prairie winters is often a deterrent to planning learning activities in the outdoors or travelling to other locations.

**Convincing administrators and students.** Convincing school administrators that the benefits of such programs warrant the additional resources required is a particular challenge for special school programs with a place-based focus:

Getting connect[ed] with the school board, getting them on board to know that they are investing into a different type of classroom, that the start-up cost will be a little bit more having two teachers and getting the proper equipment: I know sometimes for legalities the school board likes you to be supervising all the time but we want to empower our

students, to say that they can handle taking the bus to go to a certain location; they don't need us to babysit them. So lots of startup conversation, like what would a classroom look like, what will be the benefit for our school division, how will we know that this program is working. (DAM)

In keeping with their mandates, school divisions are concerned with the safety of students, ensuring curricular outcomes are met, and fiscal stewardship. On the flip side of this challenge, a concern amongst some students, particularly those in high school, is that this type of program may not prepare them for university:

I think selling it to… the Grade 11 levels is a little bit different than Grade 8 level. And there are a lot of reasons for students going into Grade 11 to not think about place-based. Because there is a number of a Grade 11 programs available they have lot of options; they are getting ready for Grade 12 and university and there are credits and [students are] starting to think about marks and … that kind of detract students from it. (SAS 2)

**Deschooling.** Focusing on the difficulty overcoming the ingrained practices of schooling, one leader of a special PBE program spent several months deschooling the students:

For us the biggest challenge is that [the program] is always dynamic and transformative…you really want to be student-centered and take their ideas and then allow them to understand that they have the freedom to go to the places where they want to learn. And the hardest part for us is the deschooling process. Like some students, by the time they come to our program, they are already ingrained into sitting into desks and listening to the teacher. So for them to be free and to say I'm in charge of my education, [becomes a difficult process,] and presently we're going through that process…it takes four to five months of deschooling the students, [for them] to know…that they're in charge of their education. (DAM)

**The weather.** Another challenge identified by some participants was leading place-based activities in a region subject to extreme weather conditions, particularly in temperatures that are frequently below -20 degrees Celsius:

In Kindergarten…they're going to get dirty and it's going to be messy; this isn't going to be easy; it's not very warm outside; I don't really want to go outside. As teachers I think we come to school and we're dressed up [to stay indoors] and that makes us not want to go outside. I think that is something that we have to let go of. As teachers we have to come prepared to get out there. Because every day except maybe if it's minus 45 we might go outside. (PSA)

To undertake PBE, teachers, administrators, and students have to be convinced of its benefits in order to engage the work necessary to be successful and to overcome ingrained habits of schooling. While not mentioned by the participants, we believe that teacher educators have a role in bringing the research on PBE forward to convince administrators and students.

## PBE Implementation

**Knowledge and skills needed.** This research was undertaken in part to learn from practicing teachers how to prepare teacher candidates to implement PBE. Respondents outline knowledge and skills needed by teacher candidates to design and implement PBE in their own

practice successfully. With many learning activities taking place outside of a regular classroom, beginning teachers need a strong understanding of the local community, diverse teaching and learning methods, how to manage risk, and how to accommodate students with special needs.

**Understanding the local community.** In explaining the importance of teacher candidates understanding the local community where their school is situated, one teacher states:

> They [student teachers] have to know [the area] really well if they're going to love it. So there is the need to bring them out and experience these place-based education programs…if all you do is go out to different places and talk about the value of each place and how what activities you could do there—or better do the activities that the students would be doing there, and experience from a student's perspective. Then when university students finish their program, they'll have this huge repertoire of places that they can visit and know the activities that they can do there and what they're like and how to organize them, as opposed to just knowing about the idea of place-based education or having read some books or written some papers about it (APJ)

The teaching team offers the following suggestion:

> Maybe having each teacher candidate have to lead a class…in the community will give them little bit of an idea of what kind of planning might have to go into [implementing place-based program]…there are lots of things that you can learn about your community while you're in university that you can then take into the teaching world. And if you don't know about them you can't provide them as a teacher…That seems I guess basic to us but it take time to develop and they need to learn that and see the importance and the value to a student. (SAS 1 & 2)

**Integrated, inquiry-based learning.** These teachers focus on the inquiry-based, integrated, and interdisciplinary nature of PBE and the need for teacher candidates to become competent in this approach to teaching and learning including ways to assess student learning:

> Because if you are given the opportunity to teach in place-based education, you're probably also able to do the integrated learning inquiry where you go out and do all sorts of things. So teaching those types of assessments, like how to use exemplars, how to get students to self-assess properly, [and] how to do it enough so they … develop a stronger sense of what self-assessment is and how to self-reflect properly. (SAS 1 & 2)

One teacher suggests that the local teacher education program does not give instruction in the kinds of assessment needed for PBE: "I think place-based educators should sit down with the [name of program] and share what we use for our assessment tools. Because our assessments are different." (DAM)

**Safety concerns.** The practicing teachers note the importance of preparing novice teachers to address safety issues while encouraging independence and individual and collective responsibility:

> They [teacher educators] definitely need to address risk management. Risk management, I think, is making sure you have knowledge of the situations you're going to be in. And thinking about all the different scenarios that could possibly happen and how you could

minimize and manage risk. So an example might be, when you're out camping you don't run around, you walk carefully. (SAS 1 & 2)

Other teachers also shed light on their experiences concerning risk management and safety:

APJ: We teach them how to transport themselves. We've been getting better at that and we have certain guidelines about how to bike. Our concern with them biking around the city is they travel in giant mobs and when you do that you kind of think that you're invincible so we've got some limits on that and help them make that transition from someone whose been dependent on their parents to pick them up all the time to someone who is more independent.

DAM: Risk management? We do have a category for that…Like we probably do some of the riskiest things just by biking around the city. You know our division sees that as someone could get hurt every day. Well we've never had an incident. If you prepare the kids early enough, you teach them common sense, you teach them that they're vulnerable, not invincible and then you teach them how to be aware of the surroundings you know, to look more than six inches in front of you and to assess everything. For us those are just life skills that you need to have.

Although place-based education gives students more power to manage their own learning, how to guide them in terms of risk and safety is an important area for novice teachers to learn. Many place-based activities are held outside the confines of the classroom and teachers leading these activities should understand and foresee dangers that students might encounter and teach students how to manage such dangers.

**Accommodation of students with special needs.** These practicing teachers also speak of the importance of accommodating children and youth with special needs and the additional considerations required for activities regularly taking place outside the classroom. They draw on their instructional practice and experience in regular classrooms as they manage inclusion in a wider array of activities and venues than is usually the case:

We being teachers before in a traditional sense, we are really good at adapting the workload within the classroom. So it's just using those skills again…if you have a student with a physical disability or an intellectual disability….As any teacher you should always adapt if you need to, not force a curriculum on a child but make sure you get the curriculum that best fits the child on their terms. So we're always adapting like even this year we have some students…with some really hard learning disabilities. We don't shy away from that because we don't want our classroom to be… a perfect classroom, it should be a real classroom and it should have some real challenges. (DAM)

Other teachers share strategies for working with students with disabilities:

SAS 1 & 2: We do quite a bit of group work….I think probably like all the place-based programs. So that allows for students to shine in different areas as well and there's ways to modify a project within the group to meet the needs of each student. With two teachers it helps [because] you can address individual needs and really differentiate the programming if necessary.

> PSA:[Name of child] would be my example. She has [particular syndrome], which is all of her membranes inside her neck above her trachea have collapsed. And so when it's really cold and really windy she cannot go outside. So what we've done is we've brought the outdoors to her. We bring leaves inside and set them on the table so she could also crunch them and she always has a friend with her.

> APJ: And for those students [with disabilities] we just need to find a way for them to contribute to the projects….And when you work together as a team, and you find a role for everyone, you can make everyone feel important and scale the level of difficulty, so that they can all contribute in some way.

While novice teachers may be nervous about taking children with special needs outside the school classroom, these teachers draw on strategies of inclusion informed by adaptation, collaboration, teamwork, and shared responsibility, which mirror the strategies used in classroom teaching. While the accommodation of students with particular needs may present some additional challenges, the 'real world' problem-solving approach of PBE includes meeting these challenges with resourcefulness and a spirit of 'we are all in this together'.

## Implications for Teacher Education

Given the broad-based evidence supporting the benefits of PBE as demonstrated in the literature and affirmed by these teachers, it is incumbent on teacher education programs to take up this work programmatically and through research and knowledge mobilization. These practicing teachers' insights are instructive for teacher educators in assisting teacher candidates to develop proficiency in PBE. Their knowledge sharing raises a number of questions and possibilities with regard to teacher education programs.

Like PSA who understands that children cannot be socialized to care for their environment and communities if they are disconnected from the very environment and community they are being asked to protect, we wonder how teacher educators might connect teacher candidates with communities beyond the standard in-school experiences. Are there ways that teacher educators can make the community and its natural environment the classroom (Kirkness, 1998)? If we expect teacher candidates to take up PBE, then it only makes sense that teacher educators model ways to make community connections, whether it is knocking on doors asking to do something together like DAM does, or creating assignments and service opportunities that require learning about and engaging with the community and the environment beyond the university and school.

All the teachers interviewed point to the importance of integrated, inquiry-based, projects that enable learning across the subject areas. Would a systematic review of teacher education programs find the type of instructional and assessment practices that these teachers daily practice? Teacher education programs are typically organized around subject-specific methodologies and practical experiences, which may or may not cohere with university course work (Darling-Hammond, 2000; 2006; Zeichner, 2010). We surmise that if teacher candidates do not experience the authentic tasks and project-based learning associated with PBE, they will be unlikely to teach in this manner themselves. As APJ maintains, having preservice teachers actually experience PBE is more efficacious than reading books or writing papers about it.

If teacher educators shed the assumption that the classroom is the primary venue for learning, then teaching risk assessment and management as well as differentiated instruction to accommodate diverse student needs in a variety of contexts should follow. The disciplinary silos within teacher education, which are reinforced by certification bodies, do present real challenges to the delivery of PBE as do timetabling of classes and the high and often competing demands on professors' time. Nevertheless, these teachers in the field offer inspiration and practical ways of overcoming administrative and attitudinal barriers to offer innovative programming.

While teacher educators may well experience different challenges in implementing PBE than their colleagues in the field, the challenges associated with deschooling are likely to pertain to teacher candidates as well. The typical teacher candidate has been well schooled in the passive consumption of standardized knowledge associated with established disciplines, reliance on teachers as the main source of information, assessment procedures based on technical outcomes and ease of marking, and disciplinary practices aimed to control students (Smith, 2007, p.189). Preservice teachers have generally succeeded in school, and might not understand the need for nor readily accept pedagogical practices, which require them to take charge of their own learning, and to resist standardization. To support a broader implementation of PBE, teacher educators will need to deschool their own instructional practice, an uneasy and likely controversial business.

## Conclusion

In light of the overarching goal of learning from practicing teachers who teach from place in order to prepare preservice teachers to use this pedagogical approach, we are looking for success stories. The tenor of these teachers' conversations lead us to conclude that beginning teachers have to strongly believe in the importance of experiential learning and connecting students to the community and be highly motivated to implement these practices if they are to win the support of administrators and overcome the challenges posed by the weather, anxieties about student curricular achievement, fiscal restraint, and the instilled habits of instructional practice that keep students in desks confined by narrow views of learning.

While the benefits of PBE are demonstrated in the literature and affirmed by these teachers, teacher education programs are not leading the way in its implementation. These teachers' suggestions and recommendations point to important first steps for teacher educators. First, teacher educators need to convince themselves of the benefits of PBE and accept their role in research and knowledge mobilization. Their vision of the classroom needs to be extended to include the wider community and its natural environment, and their view of learning needs to be (re)imagined as an integrated, inter-disciplinary practice based in inquiry. Just how to do this is another conversation, but deschooling is a necessary and promising beginning. Let us as teacher educators begin to imagine how that would look in a teacher education context.

## References

Archibald, K. (2002). *Best place: Out-of-school education concept plan*. Retrieved from the
    Saskatoon Public School Division website:
    https://www.spsd.sk.ca/Schools/brightwater/about/vision/Documents/Best-Place-
    Education.pdf

Beard, C., & Wilson, J. P. (2006). *Experiential learning. A best practice handbook for educators and trainers.* London, UK: Kogan Page.

Bishop, S. (2004). The power of place. *The English Journal, 93*(6), 65-69.

Bryman, A. (2004). *Social research methods* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Buck Institute for Education. (n.d.).*What is project-based learning?* Retrieved from http://bie.org/about/what_pbl

Campbell, B., Campbell, S., & Klein, M. (2009). *Making connections through experiential education: Teachers and students in Science 10* (Project #159). Retrieved from http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/projects/research_rep/159_making_connections.pdf

Clark, D. (2012). *Learning to make choices for the future. Connecting public lands, schools and communities through place-based learning and civic engagement*. (Manual). The Center for Place-based Learning and Community Engagement and A Forest for Every Classroom. Retrieved from http://www.promiseofplace.org/assets/files/PBE_Manual_2012.pdf

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2000). *Research methods in education* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). How teacher education matters. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51*(3), 166-173.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). *Powerful teacher education: Lessons from exemplary programs.* San Francisco, CL: Jossey-Bass

Demarest, A. (2015). *Place-based curriculum design: Exceeding standards through local investigations.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Dewey, J. (1907). *The school and society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from https://www.brocku.ca/MeadProject/Dewey/Dewey_1907/Dewey_1907c.html

Eijck, V. M., & Roth, W.M. (2010). Towards a chronotopic theory of "place" in place-based education. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 5*, 869-898.

Furman, C. G., & Gruenewald, D. A. (2004). Expanding the landscape of social justice: A critical ecological analysis. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *40*(1), 47-76.

Gruenewald, D. (2003a). Foundations of place: A multidisciplinary framework for place-conscious education. *American Educational Research Journal*, *40*(3), 619-654.

Gruenewald, D. (2003b). The best of both worlds: A critical pedagogy of place. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(4), 3-12.

Gruenewald, D. A & Smith, G. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Place-based education in the global age.* New York, NY: Taylor and Francis.

Hall, R. (2015). *Implementing place-based education in the elementary classroom*. (Master's research paper). Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto,

Toronto, ON, Canada. Retrieved from https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68678/1/Hall_Rachel_C_201506_MT_MTRP.pdf

Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Horton, M., & Freire, P. (1990). *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, Philadelphia.

Illich, I. (1971). Deschooling society. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

Kirkness, V. (1998). Our peoples' education: Cut the shackles; cut the crap; cut the mustard. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22*(1), 10-15.

Knapp, C. E. (2005). The" I-Thou" relationship, place-based education, and Aldo Leopold. *Journal of Experiential Education, 27*(3), 277-285.

Kolb, A.Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning styles and learning spaces: Enhancing experiential learning in higher education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education, 4*(2), 193-212.

Lloyd, A., & Gray T. (2014). Place-based outdoor learning and environmental sustainability within Australian Primary School. *The Journal of Sustainability Education.* Retrieved from http://www.jsedimensions.org/wordpress/content/place-based-outdoor-learning-and-environmental-sustainability-within-australian-primary-school_2014_10/

Louv, R. (2008). *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder* (2nd ed.). Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin books.

McInerney, P., Smyth, J., & Down, B. (2011). 'Coming to a place near you?' The politics and possibilities of a critical pedagogy of place-based education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 39*(1), 3-16, doi: 10.1080/1359866X.2010.540894

McVittie, J., Lazecki, A., Loeffler, S., & Thompson, S. (2007). *Assessing the hard to assess: Student learning in a middle years outdoor environmental school*. Project #130. Saskatoon, SK: Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation. Retrieved from http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca/main_mcdowell/projects/research_rep/130_assessing_the_hard.pdf

Place-Based Activities: Engaging Educational Projects for Community and School. [Weebly online resource]. Retrieved 08 January 2016 from http://placebasedbasics.weebly.com/

Place-Based Education Evaluation Collaborative (PEEC). (2010). The benefits of place-based education: A report from the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative (2nd ed.). Retrieved January 08, 2016 from http://www.litzsinger.org/PEEC2010_web.pdf

Powers, A. (2004). An evaluation of four place-based education programs. *The Journal of Environmental Education, 35*(4), 17-32.

Roberts, J. W. (2012). *Beyond learning by doing. Theoretical currents in experiential education.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Skoutajan, S. (2012). Defending place-based education. *Green Teacher, 97*, 34-36**.**

Smith, G. (2002). Learning to be where we are. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *83*(8), 584-594.

Smith, G. A. (2007). Place-based education: Breaking through the constraining regularities of public school. *Environmental Education Research, 13*(2), 189-207.

Smith, G. A., & Sobel, D. (2010). *Place- and community-based education in schools.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Sobel, D. (1996). *Beyond ecophobia: Reclaiming the heart in nature education*. Great Barrington, MA: Orion Society.

Sobel, D. (2004). *Place-based education. Connecting classroom and communities*. The Orion Society.

Stewart, S. (24 February 2011). *Place-based learning in Aboriginal communities*. [You-tube video] Toronto: TVOparents. Retrieved 08 January 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0kRVhva0w4

The Center for Place-based Education. (n.d.). Retrieved from Antioch University website, http://www.antiochne.edu/acsr/cpbe/

Theobald, P. (1997). *Teaching the commons: Place, pride, and the renewal of community.* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Theobald, P., & Curtiss, J. (2000). Communities as curricula. *Forum for Applied Research and Public Policy, 15*(1), 106-111. Retrieved from http://go.galegroup.com.cyber.usask.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA64457787&v=2.1&u=us askmain&it=r&p=EAIM&sw=w&asid=8d08d22d8d4777ab26fb304fd69545c4

Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2015). *Place in research: Theory, methodology, and methods*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Twum, S. (2014). *Place-based education in transition: (Re)integrating place-based education into a teacher education program*. (Master's thesis). University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. Available from https://ecommons.usask.ca/handle/10388/ETD-2014-08-1677

Wilson, A., & Battiste, M. (November 30, 2011). *Environmental scan of educational models supporting Aboriginal post-secondary education.* Report prepared for the Commonwealth of Australia as represented by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Saskatoon, SK, Canada.

Zeichner, K. (2010). Rethinking connections between campus courses and field experiences in college- and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1-2), 89-99.

# Making Sense of Divides and Disconnects in a Preservice Teacher Education Program

Karen Goodnough
*Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Thomas Falkenberg
*University of Manitoba*

Ronald Macdonald
*University of Prince Edward Island*

Elizabeth Murphy
*Memorial University of Newfoundland*

Authors' note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Karen Goodnough at kareng@mun.ca

## Abstract

This study's purpose was to make sense of divides and disconnects in a teacher education program that included university-based courses combined with school-based field experiences. The study took place in Québec, Canada, which has the longest practicum of all provinces and programs designed to develop professional autonomy and competency. Data collection relied on documents, interviews, surveys, and focus groups with 44 preservice teachers along with field supervisors and instructors. Analysis relied on cultural historical activity theory and its principle of contradictions. Findings revealed that contradictions resulted in unintended and unfavourable outcomes such as teacher candidates feeling unprepared and untouched by the program. Resolution of contradictions may be realized through expansion of the division of labour to include more peer and self-assessment and through expansion of tools to support boundary crossing between theory, practice, schools, and university.

*Keywords*: Preservice teacher education; cultural historical activity theory; contradictions; school-university partnerships; divides and disconnects

### Making Sense of Divides and Disconnects in a Preservice Teacher Education Program

A central feature of preservice teacher education programs in Canada is "they all have a practicum component that is distinct from the university-based course work" (Falkenberg, 2010, p. 10). Practicum experiences represent a "central and relevant component of teacher preparation" (Broad & Tessaro, 2009, p. 79). Numerous benefits have been associated with such field experiences including "the development of pre-service teachers' efficacy levels and teaching skills" (Gurvitch & Metzler, 2009, p. 438). A combination of school- and university-based learning, sometimes referred to as school-university partnerships, can potentially contribute to teacher education reform (Burton & Greher, 2007) and can benefit both the school and the university (Walsh & Backe, 2013).

In spite of their benefits, however, programs that include both university and school-based experiences may be characterised by divides (Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007) and disconnects (Bullough, Draper, Smith, & Birrell, 2004; Valencia, Martin, Place, & Grossman, 2009; Zeichner, 2010). These may occur between teacher education programs and "the daily lives of schools" (Caillier & Riordan, 2009, p. 495) or between schools as places "for practical elements of training" and universities as the "site of theory" (Aldridge, 2015, p. 111).

Divides and disconnects may manifest themselves as "gap[s] between preparation and practice" (Russell, McPherson, & Martin, 2001, p. 40) or as "dissonance between knowledge developed in the academic program and candidates' experiences in the field placements" (Gambhir, Broad, Evans, & Gaskell, 2008, p. 200). Regardless of how they manifest themselves, they may result in negative outcomes. An example of a negative outcome is teacher candidates (TCs) not being able to address the ambiguities that arise in integrating theory and practice and beginning teachers facing "problematic situations for which they were not sufficiently prepared" (Korthagen & Wubbels, 2001, p. 32). Identification and potential resolution of the divides and disconnects can minimize the negative outcomes. However, given the complexity associated with supporting TCs in learning to teach, identification and resolution of the divides and disconnects may be difficult to achieve.

### Using CHAT to Make Sense of Divides and Disconnects

One approach to the identification and resolution of divides and disconnects is to adopt a framework that brings order and coherence to otherwise complex phenomena in teacher education programs. A framework can support and scaffold systematic and holistic analysis of the many complex components of these programs that combine, interact and potentially contradict each other. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) and its principle of contradictions provide such a framework. Few studies in teacher education have thus far relied on CHAT (Jahreie & Ottesen, 2010, p. 214) to understand the complexities of teacher education; however, interest in CHAT is growing in teacher education research (Anagnostopoulos, Smith, & Basmadjian, 2007; Wilson, 2014). It is beyond the scope of this article to describe CHAT's origins, principles, and frequent application in areas such as health care, social work, and human computer interaction. The work of Yamagata-Lynch (2010) provides a detailed overview and explanation of CHAT particularly in relation to teacher education.

**The Activity System as Unit of Analysis**

Using a CHAT framework to analyze disconnects and divides in a teacher education program involves conceptualizing the program as an *activity system*. As an activity system, the education program is viewed as a group of subjects that work towards an object using tools according to particular norms in a community and with a given division of labour. In a CHAT framework, the subject represents the point of view of the group or individual whose agency is the focus of the analysis. In a teacher education program, the subjects would be individuals such as TCs, instructors, or field supervisors. Activity systems exist for a purpose and are driven by an object, which constitutes the motive of activity (Leont'ev, 1981) and "the raw material or problem space at which the activity is directed" (Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research, 2003-2004). The object is the *sense maker* that makes evident the purpose of activity or the "ultimate reason behind various behaviors of individuals, groups, or organizations" (Kaptelinin, 2005, p. 5). For example, the object of a teacher education program might be, in general terms, to prepare individuals to teach in the K-12 system.

The subject's pursuit of the object is mediated by tools. Tools may be psychological and symbolic such as theories and strategies or they may take physical forms such as computers or textbooks. Practice is a tool and means of enacting particular behaviours in a given context to achieve a particular object. The subject shares pursuit of the object within a community. For example, TCs as subjects in a teacher education program participate in activity along with individuals such as instructors and supervisors. Subjects within communities must conform to the norms of the activity. In the context of teacher education, these norms may require that TCs participate in university-based courses along with field-based experiences. The subjects participate within a particular division of labor or hierarchy of roles, responsibilities and power. For example, TCs will be expected to follow policies and regulations set by schools and the university. As the subjects pursue the object, there may be intended outcomes (e.g., TCs develop strong teacher identities) or unintended outcomes (e.g., TCs struggle in their field experiences).

Activity systems are typically depicted using a triangle (see Engeström, 1987) that illustrates the subject working towards the object using tools within a community according to a division of labour and norms with intended and/or unintended outcomes.
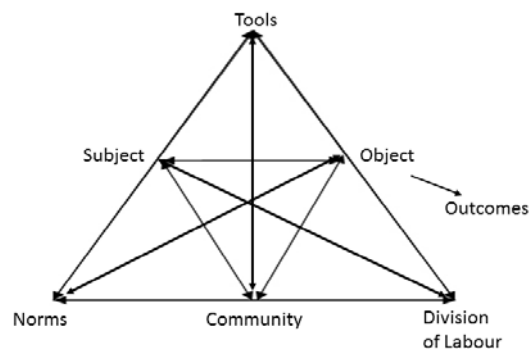
Figure 1. Activity System



*Figure 1. A depiction of the activity system with its interrelated and interacting components. (Engeström, 1987, p. 78)*

**Contradictions**

According to CHAT, the outcomes in an activity system result from interactions within and between components in the activity system. Unintended outcomes and failure to realize the object result from contradictions. Contradictions are manifestations of disconnects, divides, disturbances (Engeström, 2001, p. 137), conflicts (Dippe, 2006), or misfits, ruptures, breakdowns and clashes (Kuutti, 1996, p. 34). They represent "deviations in the observable flow of interaction" in the activity system (Engeström, Brown, Christopher, & Gregory, 1991, p. 91). Contradictions are more than merely tensions or challenges; they cannot be observed directly but can be identified through their manifestations (Engeström & Sannino, 2011). They represent "a situation which permits the satisfaction of one end or result at the expense of the other" (Hartwig, 2007, p. 81). Contradictions play a vital role as "the motive force of change and development" (Engeström & Miettinen, 1999, p. 9) and can result in "deliberate collective change effort[s]" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) and "innovative attempts to change the activity" (p. 134). Resolution of contradictions can lead to expansive transformations, which represent "a radically wider horizon of possibilities than in the previous mode of activity" (Engeström, 2001, p. 137) and a more developed state (Engeström, 2009).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this article is to make sense of the divides and disconnects in one teacher education program in Canada. Our analysis relies on a CHAT framework to (a) portray the activity system of a teacher education program from the perspective of the TCs, (b) identify contradictions, and (c) determine possible means of resolution of the contradictions.

The focus on divides and disconnects is not like an evaluation program. Evaluations are concerned with establishing "the merit, worth, quality, or value of programs… at the request of some client or clients, and for the benefits of some audience" (Scriven, 1994, p.75). The specific focus on contradictions is not meant to suggest a deficit perspective of the teacher education program in this study or of other teacher education programs. Rather, it is meant to provide another lens, through CHAT and its principle of contradictions, to make sense of the divides and disconnects that may arise in teacher education. In this framework, contradictions are viewed as normal in all activity systems, as a potential source of innovation, and as a means to transform the system to a more culturally and socially advanced mode

**Studies Using Contradictions to Analyse TCs' Activity**

Some studies have relied on CHAT to analyze teacher education programs, reporting primarily on the perspectives of teacher educators and mentors rather than TCs (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Smith, Basmadjian, 2007; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013; Williams, 2014). Some, such as Valencia et al. (2009), have focused on TCs in post-graduate master degree programs as opposed to undergraduate degree programs, as in this study. Others have referred to "tensions" without grounding them in the principle of contradictions (e.g., Smagorinsky, Cook, Moore, Jackson, & Fry, 2004). Still others (e.g., Stillman & Anderson, 2011) have interpreted contradictions merely as tensions or conflicts, that is, manifestations of contradictions but not contradictions themselves. In our review of the literature conducted for this article, we identified two studies with TCs as subjects in an undergraduate preservice teacher education program, which analysed the activity system in terms of contradictions.

One of these, a study conducted by Tsui and Law (2007), took place in China with two mentors, two instructors, and two TCs. The study investigated how a lesson study tool enhanced TCs' learning, how it generated contradictions, and how these were resolved. A contradiction arose between the need to simultaneously support the TCs and enhance learning. Lesson study was adopted by the supervisors and cooperating teachers to resolve this contradiction and was designed to shift evaluation from the individual TC to the lesson itself. However, contradictions emerged in the division of labour with an "unequal power relationship" between TCs on one hand and the "assessors" on the other (p. 1298).

Additional contradictions emerged within the lesson study tool itself that was "collectively prepared" but "individually enacted" (Tsui & Law, 2007, p. 1298). Although the new tool was meant to resolve contradictions, it also created new contradictions. Resolution of the new contradictions was achieved by evolving a new object: the "professional development of both novices and experts" (Tsui & Law, 2007, p. 1300). As Tsui and Law (2007) concluded, "The new mediating tool transformed the learning experience: the participants came to a new understanding of their roles in the activity system, established a new relationship, and participated in the discourse in a different way" (p. 1300).

Dang's (2013) study focused on the development of professional identity of two TCs of English in Vietnam in a context of a paired placement. Dang investigated the "collective journey" of the TCs by mapping the trajectory of their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) "in terms of contradictions and their resolution in their joint activity system" (p. 49). Dang categorized data in terms of the components of the activity system prior to identifying contradictions, a process also followed in this study. Dang identified contradictions between subject and object as a conflict between perceptions of student teaching in terms of student learning versus following the lesson plan. Another contradiction between the subject and division of labour involved an "unequal power relationship" whereas the final contradiction involved "different levels of appropriation of pedagogical tools" (p. 53). The study revealed that, as the subjects' awareness increased, "contradictions were recognised and fully or partially resolved" (Dang, 2013, p. 57).

Our study differs from these two in its more deliberate and dedicated focus on contradictions themselves and in its attention to divides and disconnects in preservice teacher education. Dang's (2013) purpose was similar to ours in that she was interested in identifying the contradictions as well as their potential for resolution. Compared to these studies, our study provides a detailed portrait of the activity system in terms of the various components in order to identify the origins of all contradictions in the system. Unlike these other studies, ours was the only study uncovered in the review that was conducted in a North American context.

## Research Design

### Context

This article reports on one case that was part of a larger, multi-year, pan-Canadian study conducted in undergraduate teacher education programs in five universities in western, central and eastern areas of the country. The purpose of the larger study was to identify how teacher education programs, structures, practices, and pedagogy support teacher candidates in connecting and integrating practical knowledge, theory, and experience. This study moves beyond a focus

on only theory and practice to identify divides and disconnects, including those between theory and practice, in an interrelated complex context of object-oriented activity.

This article focuses on one case of a teacher education program in the province of Québec. This was a relevant context in which to make sense of divides and disconnects since Québec's practicum is the longest in Canada with a minimum 700 hours or 125 days of practice (Crocker & Dibbon, 2008). The practicum makes up 30% of the program time with 70% devoted to university-based courses (Russell, Martin, O'Connor, Bullock, & Dillon, 2013). Québec's teacher education programs also provide a unique context in which to consider issues pertaining to divides and disconnects because of the required emphasis on professionalism and competency. Martinet, Raymond, and Gauthier (2001) explained that Quebec's teacher education programs focus "not only on a better integration between theoretical and practical courses, but also between practical courses and the actual conditions in which future teachers will practise their profession" (p. 24). This integration is fostered by a focus on professionalization that "breaks away from traditional university training" (p. 17), presenting, in Martinet et al.'s (2001) words, a "departure in the field of education" (p. 28).

TCs are expected to work towards increasingly high levels of professional autonomy by using 12 competencies. These competencies are a "codified practical knowledge that can be transmitted by training" (Martinet et al., 2001, p. 18), that is, knowledge applied "in a real-life classroom context, during placements" (Martinet et al., 2001 p. 24). Competencies are concerned with "how to do things" (p. 302) and "the technicalities of teaching" (Thomas & Desjardin, 2013, p. 316). A competency-based approach in teacher education "calls for a revolution" because universities remain "structured for traditional knowledge transmission," yet competencies cannot be transmitted but "must be constructed by teacher candidates in contextualised, realistic learning contexts" (Thomas & Desjardin, 2013, pp. 303-304) such as the practicum.

## Data Collection

**Overview.** The analysis of the activity system adopted the TCs as subject. The data collected from supervisors, instructors and the program director helped corroborate and triangulate the portrait of TCs' activity system. While data from cooperating teachers would have enriched the data set, it was not possible to collect this data. The study relied on multiple sources of data, including individual and paired interviews, focus groups, a survey, and document analysis. All data collected from interviews and focus groups were transcribed. Table 1 provides a summary of the data collection along with an overview of the quantity collected in terms of word counts.

Table 1

*Summary of Data Collection*

| Data sources | Participants | Transcribed word counts |
|---|---|---|
| Individual interviews | 7 course/seminar instructors | Lowest: 2498<br><br>Highest: 6830<br><br>Total: 35,514<br><br>Average: 5073 |
|  | Program director | 7585 |
|  | 1/44 TC | 8198 |
|  | 1/44 TC | 4687 |
|  | 1/44 TC | 6806 |
| Paired interview | 2/44 TCs | 5728 |
| Written survey | 44 TCs (including those interviewed) | 7678 |
| Focus groups | 12 field supervisors | 11,625 |
|  | 5/44 TCs | 12,238 |
| Document analysis | Sample courses<br>Program description<br>Practicum description<br>Ministry documents<br>Program website |  |

**Interviews.** The interviews relied on what Gall, Gall, and Borg (2003) refer to as the informal conversational interview. This approach involves "the spontaneous generation of questions in a natural interaction" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003, p. 239). The informal conversation supports building rapport between interviewer and interviewee. Such rapport may allow the interviewees to speak more openly, particularly in a context where they may have concerns that their comments will be read by colleagues. Each interview began with the interviewer gathering information about the interviewee, such as her name and role in their program. Early in the interview, the interviewer asked the interviewee to talk generally about the role of theory and practice in teacher education programs. The remainder of the interview focused on the program at the university, the courses, practicum experiences, and individual experiences, as well as relationships between groups such as faculty and cooperating teachers and field supervisors. There were 11 individual instructor interviews and one interview with two individuals (paired interview).

**Focus groups.** There were two focus groups, each lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. One focus group was held with field supervisors and the other with two TCs. The focus group facilitator questioned supervisors about their experiences of the program and the

practicum, about the types of support they provide and their perceptions of what might ideally benefit the TCs in terms of their development during the practicum. The facilitator also led a discussion about the role of theory. During the focus group, participants could question each other, change topics, and add additional ideas. The facilitator's role was to keep the discussion focused, to probe, to ask for clarification, and to ensure participation by all participants.

**Survey**. A paper-format survey administered by a research assistant after class was completed by 44 TCs. Topics for the survey included participant perceptions of the role of theory and practice in their program, how they experienced each of these in their program, examples of how their program integrates theory and practice, and how the program might strengthen theory-practice relationships. The 10 TCs who participated in the interviews or focus group were a voluntary subset of the group of 44 who completed the survey.

**Document analysis.** Document analysis included review of the content for one course and the syllabi of other courses. Analysis also included the detailed content in the program website that featured information about the program design, the mechanisms for practicum placement, and the roles of personnel such as field supervisors. Additional documents included the province's ministerial documents regarding the requirements for and direction of teacher education programs.

### Data Analysis

The analysis relied on a CHAT framework that **"**provides a means for observing the emergence of patterns in human activity" (Hashim & Jones, 2007, p.14). The CHAT analysis, therefore, relied on deductive and inductive approaches. In relation to the former, and, using the activity system as the unit of analysis, there were seven predetermined components into which the data were categorized. Within each category (e.g., tools), analysis, then, involved inductive identification of patterns using related keywords and concepts. A CHAT analysis was conducted from the perspective of a subject whose agency is selected as the point of view in the activity system, in this case, the TCs. Table 2 presents the coding scheme.

Table 2

*Activity System Components and Defining Questions for Coding*

| Component | Defining question |
| --- | --- |
| Subject | Whose agency is selected for the analysis? |
| Object | What is the problem or motivator of activity? |
| Tools | What instruments do the subjects rely on to realise the object? |
| Norms | How do the subjects use the tools to achieve the object? |
| Community | What other individuals share in realisation of the object? |
| Division of Labour | How are tasks and power divided for subjects in the activity? |

Outcomes                    What results from trying to realise the object?

---

**Data Reporting**

Participants' comments are labeled using the acronyms TC, FS (field supervisor), IN (instructor and/or program director) combined with a number (e.g., FS1). The 10 TCs who participated in the interviews and focus groups are labelled as TCa, TCb and so on, whereas responses to the survey are labelled as TC1-44. To promote confidentiality, references to the participants are made using the feminine pronoun.

<p align="center"><strong>Findings</strong></p>

**Portrait of the TCs' Activity System**

The portrait reveals subjects working towards an object (purpose) by using tools according to certain norms within a community and according to a division of labour. The portrait also reveals the outcomes of the subjects' attempts to realize the object. The portrait of the TCs' activity system reflects a generalised portrayal of the case based on the data available for analysis by the researchers. As is the case with any qualitative sampling from a larger population, the portrait may not be representative of all TCs, instructors, or field supervisors participating in the program.

**Object.** TCs are enrolled in a program that aims to "train" teachers to become competent, autonomous teaching professionals who "apply and validate theoretical knowledge" (Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport, 2008, p. 12). TCd articulated what being a competent teacher meant for her: "Teach me to be a good teacher. I want to get up there and be absolutely comfortable, and not just teaching the material…. I just want to know how to make it fun, make it interactive for the kids." IN6 argued that TCs were focused on "classroom management." She added, "Without a doubt that's what they all want to know." The TCs' "want to get into the classroom….[As a result,] the theory part is sometimes problematic for them" (IN3). Likewise, TCj argued, "There's so much to learn that people don't want to waste time. People want to be in the classroom. They want it so bad that all this academic focus sometimes may be a little bit heavy." At the same time, that practical experience adds a pressure of evaluation. Not surprisingly, as IN8 argued, "All they want is to pass. So, they'll do anything to please the supervisor."

**Subject.** The TCs enter the program with varying abilities, backgrounds, and experiences. With regard to theory, some TCs "come in very suspicious" (IN4) and "very raw" (IN7). IN7 commented that they "just aren't at a stage where they're ready to learn it yet." TCh added that "some are just very young…. [and] don't have the maturity … because [they're] coming in straight from school." If they have not had an opportunity to observe children, "they can have a very naïve understanding" (TCh). TCi described TCs as "really, really shy" and "not even comfortable" teaching in front of their peers.

**Tools.** For TC15, practice occurred through "field experiences mostly." However, TC41 perceived that "there isn't really much practice [because] courses are theory based." Particularly, in the case of general and foundation courses, according to TC24, there may be "too much theory

[and] not enough practice." Theory may be perceived as "not always relevant," "extremely redundant," (TC3) or "over-emphasized" (TC24). IN2 commented that theory "without being in the role of a teacher—it's in one ear and out the other almost." TC38 observed that same theories are  taught in multiple classes resulting in repetition. TC20 experienced theory using readings, literature, PowerPoint presentations, lectures, textbooks, term papers, assignments and "a lot of material…that they may never use." IN1 described the methods and professional seminar courses as "much more directly tied to the practice in the field." IN1 added that other foundational and general courses such as Philosophy of Education "are a little bit more removed and also tend to be taught by people who aren't familiar with the school system."

The seminar courses accompany the field experiences and provide an opportunity to focus on the competencies that, according to TCi, make "really concrete what we have to be as teachers." The competencies are something they "really work on a lot" and cover "everything that they need to know more, or to develop to go into teaching" (IN8). One TC's comments highlighted the importance of the competencies as follows: "Do I think of theory? I think of the competencies. I'm really aware of them. I read them a lot because that's what I'm evaluated on" (TCi). The seminar courses also focus on the development of a portfolio. The portfolio is "based on the twelve professional competencies …. [and includes] "a recent philosophy statement… diplomas, certificates and CVs, …extremely good lesson plans or good units,…feedback from students, feedback from CTs [cooperating teachers], [and] PowerPoints that they created" (IN8). Assessment of the TCs is carried out by supervisors and cooperating teachers using models of professional competency along with a competency rubric.

**Norms.** In Years 1 and 2, TCs are primarily attending university courses. TCg perceived that, in their foundational and general courses, students are often "dealing with . . . theory." TCc described her experiences as follows: "Most of our classes are pure theory, pure lecture format. We're just sitting mindless[ly] listening to the teacher, taking notes..." In the first two years, they experience observation periods in the schools during which time they are "exposed to all the aspects of the school" (FS1) and "observe different teaching styles" (IN8). In Years 3 and 4, they teach up to 100% of their time in the school. In conjunction with each practicum period, they have one professional seminar in which they "prepare good lesson plans" (IN8). They can "practice it [the lesson plan] in the methods class and actually go out and enact it with the students in their class" (IN5). Besides working on their portfolio in this seminar course, they do "a lot of discussion, based on … what they went through during the week" in their practicum (IN8). In the seminar courses they "do a lot of group work" (TCh) and some peer teaching.

**Community.** FS1 observed that, "It could happen that there's only one student teacher in that whole school. It's a lonely place to be." IN8 noted a similar isolation: "We never meet the supervisors, so I don't know who the field supervisors are." Likewise, the field supervisors may not always "know what goes on in the seminars" (FS2). IN1 commented that there is a need and intent to create the connections between the cooperating teacher, supervisor, TCs, and course instructors, but "due to time, resources, and getting people together, that's really difficult to do." IN1 concluded, as a result, there are "a lot of the theory-to-practice gaps—that's why they're happening. Because the people teaching the courses are . . . disconnected from what's going on in the schools"
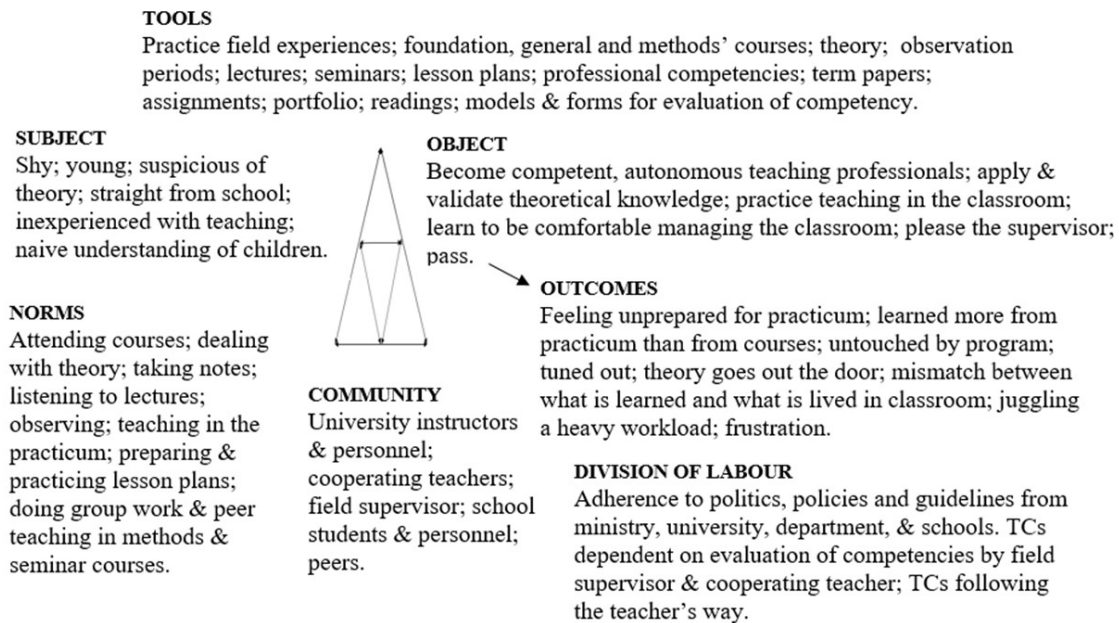
**Division of labor.** IN1 explained that faculty cannot always design programs to best meet TCs' needs because of "all these politics." TCs and faculty personnel must adhere to the program

guidelines and policies articulated by the Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport. Likewise, IN3 argued that instructors are "constrained by the rules of the university," which can limit TCs' classroom activity. FS1 argued that TCs can "be really lucky and get a real[ly] good cooperating teacher or they could get a terrible cooperating teacher. It's the luck of the draw." IN5 noted that, if the TC is unlucky, she may be with a cooperating teacher who teaches "in a very traditional way." For example, IN7 described a "student who is enamored with this kind of teaching and learning [constructivist]…and they have a teacher who is very, 'This is how it's done...'" TCe described the practicum as "a luck game, a crapshoot." She related the experiences of peers who "taught the way that their teacher wanted them to teach."

**Outcomes.** IN2 argued that some TCs are "almost untouched by this program by the time they finish." This perspective is corroborated in particular by TCc who described her reaction after looking at her transcript, seeing a particular course and realizing she "couldn't remember anything." She added, "I could not tell you anything—not one thing that I learned or even what happened in that class. It's a complete blank. So it had no effect on me at all." IN2 commented that TCs "dismiss lots of the coursework because it's too idealistic and doesn't deal with the realities of classrooms." As a result, in the words of TCb, "you definitely tune out. The first few classes, if I feel it's repetitive, I don't listen at all." Tuning out can result in experiences like those of TCg who argued that "nothing actually sort of sinks in. You get out into the field and it's like whoa, all of a sudden, all the theory goes out the door." TCd echoed this experience regarding her upcoming final field experience: "I just feel…. I'm going to be lost a little…. I just don't feel ready…I'm going to have a job next September and I feel like I'm going to be left on my own." TCb described how, during her practicum, she was taught about what "happens" in a classroom, yet "that didn't really happen. I was there for four months and I have seen nothing like that. It doesn't necessarily match." In the words of TC26, "There is a disconnect between what is taught, the theory aspect that is, and what is occurring in actual classrooms."

Referring to the practicum, IN8 argued, "That's probably where they learn the most." TC1 articulated this perspective as follows: "It is through my field experience that I learned the most….Practice gives us a chance to experiment [with] it for ourselves and determine our strengths and weaknesses." However, as IN7 observed, during their practicum, some TCs may be "very frustrated, and … scared because they have to succumb to following their teacher's way." FS6 commented that the workload may be "very heavy for them." FS4 explained that the TCs are "trying to juggle everything else and often not given a lot of leeway—No dispensations because they're doing their practice teaching."

Figure 2. Summary of TCs' Activity System

**TOOLS**
Practice field experiences; foundation, general and methods' courses; theory; observation periods; lectures; seminars; lesson plans; professional competencies; term papers; assignments; portfolio; readings; models & forms for evaluation of competency.

**SUBJECT**
Shy; young; suspicious of theory; straight from school; inexperienced with teaching; naive understanding of children.

**OBJECT**
Become competent, autonomous teaching professionals; apply & validate theoretical knowledge; practice teaching in the classroom; learn to be comfortable managing the classroom; please the supervisor; pass.

**NORMS**
Attending courses; dealing with theory; taking notes; listening to lectures; observing; teaching in the practicum; preparing & practicing lesson plans; doing group work & peer teaching in methods & seminar courses.

**COMMUNITY**
University instructors & personnel; cooperating teachers; field supervisor; school students & personnel; peers.

**OUTCOMES**
Feeling unprepared for practicum; learned more from practicum than from courses; untouched by program; tuned out; theory goes out the door; mismatch between what is learned and what is lived in classroom; juggling a heavy workload; frustration.

**DIVISION OF LABOUR**
Adherence to politics, policies and guidelines from ministry, university, department, & schools. TCs dependent on evaluation of competencies by field supervisor & cooperating teacher; TCs following the teacher's way.

## Contradictions

The contradictions that emerged in this study were within the object as well as between the object and the subject and between the object and the tools, the norms, the community, and the division of labour. One of "most basic concepts" (Kaptelinin, 2005, p. 4) of CHAT is that of the object. Activity systems are object oriented, working towards predetermined desirable outcomes. First, the historically developed, generalized object serves as "the institutional answer to societal needs ... and institutional structures" (Jahreie & Ottensen, 2010, p. 216). In the context of the teacher education program in this study, this generalized object was to become competent, autonomous, teaching professionals who can apply and validate theoretical knowledge. Second, the "situational, constructed object" is a "partial manifestation of the generalized object" and reflects the subjects' "individual motives and interests for being involved in the activity" (Jahreie & Ottensen, 2010, p. 216).

**Object and object: Autonomous, competent professionals versus pleasing the supervisor.** There is a contradiction between the generalized versus the situational object. Acting to please the supervisor is at odds with acting autonomously according to a framework of professional competencies. Competency involves knowing how to act in a given context (Jonnaert, 2002; Roegiers, 2004). Autonomy, in a context of teaching, involves teachers actively engaged in making decisions "by doing their own thinking, by setting their own goals, and by doing their own plans" (DeVries & Zan, 1994). Acting to please others has been identified in other studies. For example, Moore (2003) found that "preservice teachers often adopted the style and method expressed by the mentor teacher regardless of whether they were in conflict with theory or practice suggested in the university classroom....rather than risk disapproval of the mentor teacher" (p. 40).

**Subject and object: Young, inexperienced, and naive versus comfortable managing of the classroom.** TCs want to learn to be comfortable managing the classroom. However,

particularly for those in the early years of the program, their young, naive, and inexperienced nature may interfere with or prevent them from being comfortable managing the classroom. Classroom management may be challenging for TCs who have had little experience with children and who themselves may be young. Powell (1992) finds that TCs with "fewer life experiences" and "limited work experience" (p. 236) were more likely to be influenced by former learning experiences and by former role models. If, as Powell (1992) argues, the complexity of teaching is "grounded in prior schooling experiences, personal features, and life experiences" (p. 235), then, young and inexperienced TCs may lack the prerequisites for achieving the object of being comfortable managing the classroom.

**Tools and object: Theory versus competence.** As required by the ministry, "for all supervisors, the framework of competencies should constitute an indispensable tool for supervising and evaluating student teachers" (Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport, 2008). The framework serves as a tool for the evaluation of the competencies. Although application and validation of theory was an object for the program, there was no tool provided for its evaluation in the practicum such as a model, principles, or a rubric. Thomas and Desjardins (2013) argued, "The focus on competency-building can be seen as a response to the frequent criticisms that teacher education was far too theoretical and did not prepare teachers to act professionally" (p. 298). Thomas and Desjardin (2013) posited, "It is also possible for this strong focus on the development of competencies and the knowledge of how to act in context can have the effect of diminishing the importance of theoretical and content knowledge in teacher education programmes" (p. 301). In this case, participants' perspectives suggest that the overt focus on competencies in the practicum overshadowed a focus on the application and validation of theory.

**Division of labour and object: Dependence versus professional autonomy.** The object of professional autonomy means that teachers must learn "to assemble and combine knowledge, attitudes, techniques and strategies (tactics) to perform specific tasks....within a network of constraints, and must design realistic solutions to deal with the problems they encounter" (Martinet et al., 2001, p. 18). This type of spontaneous and self-driven action is at odds with a division of labour in which TCs are dependent on the supervisor's and cooperating teacher's evaluation. The exercise of autonomy is also compromised in situations where TCs may be practicing in a classroom that belongs to someone who is partly responsible for their evaluation. Bullock and Russell (2010) described TCs being evaluated on the "ability to mimic" certain behaviours expected by the cooperating teacher. Dang (2013) also observed an "unequal power relationship" (p. 98). This "power differential" between the TC and cooperating teacher (Gambhir et al., 2008) can interfere with TCs' exercise of autonomy and agency. Not surprisingly, Rodgers and Chaillé (1998) concluded that "most preservice teachers have not experienced classrooms where they were encouraged to solve their own problems, develop their own questions and search for answers, or use critical analysis and reflection to develop their own ideas about issues" (p. 2).

**Community and object: Isolation versus professional partnerships.** Martinet et al. (2001) argued that professionalization requires partnerships, shared visions, and collaborative structures (p. 18). Some TCs in our study perceived that they did not experience a community that allowed for strong partnerships or shared visions. In the university setting, some TCs reported feeling isolated from school professionals. In the schools, some reported feeling isolated from their peers. Instructors and supervisors did not always meet and were always not aware of

what was happening in each other's context. This isolation is also identified in the literature. As Zeichner (2010) argued:

> It is very common for cooperating teachers with whom students work during their field placements to know very little about the specifics of the methods and foundations courses that their student teachers have completed on campus, and the people teaching the campus courses often know very little about the specific practices used in the P-12 classrooms where their students are placed. (p. 91)

**Norms and object: Courses versus application and validation of theory.** TCs are expected to apply and validate theory, yet some TCs described spending time in university-based coursework where examples of theory-practice connections were not strong. Zeichner (2010) described this as "a perennial problem" in terms of a "lack of connection between campus-based, university-based teacher education courses and field experiences" (p. 91). Martinet et al. (2001) noted a need for "better integration between theoretical and practical courses, but also between practical courses and the actual conditions in which future teachers will practise their profession" (p. 24).

### From Contradictions to Boundary Crossing and Expansion

Divides and disconnects in preservice teacher education programs are a manifestation of contradictions in an activity system deeply rooted in history and tradition. They derive from "taken for granted … cultural assumptions about how things are done and how relationships are managed" (Capper & Williams, 2004, pp. 9-10). The fact that contradictions are based on assumptions and are taken for granted makes them that much more resistant to potential resolution. However, CHAT sees recognition and resolution of contradictions as an opportunity to promote a more culturally and socially advanced form of practice. One approach to the resolution of contradictions involves *boundary crossing* and *expansion* of components in the activity system, namely, tools and the division of labour.

**Boundary crossing and expansion of tools.** Boundary crossing refers to "ongoing, two-sided actions and interactions between contexts" and offers "a potential process of transformation [of] ... current practices ... motivated by and directed toward the problem space that binds the intersecting practices together" (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 148). Boundary crossing between campuses and schools may be represented by hybrid or third spaces that serve as alternatives to "traditional ways of organizing" (Zeichner, 2010, p. 92). These spaces or tools may include teachers-in-residence programs, hybrid teacher educator positions, clinical laboratories, community-based field experiences, campus-based laboratory schools, and school-based methods courses. The creation of these spaces, Zeichner (2010) argued, involves rejecting binaries as "competing discourses" and bringing "practitioner and academic knowledge together in less hierarchical ways to create new learning opportunities for prospective teachers" in relationships that are "equal and more dialectical" (p. 92). The teacher education program in this study included third spaces in addition to the practicum in the form of the seminar, methods courses, observation, and portfolio. An expanded role for these tools in teacher education programs could potentially support more boundary crossing.

**Representations of teachers' practices.** Other tools that may support boundary crossing include representations of teachers' practices (Zeichner, 2010). The representations can be brought into courses and may be particularly relevant for inexperienced TCs or those not familiar

with children or the classroom. Representations can scaffold analysis of practice, problem-solving and critical thinking. They serve a similar purpose as observation but offer additional affordances. For example, TCs watching a video of authentic teaching can stop to discuss or to reflect at any time during the observation. They can also replay segments and go at an individual pace. One advantage of representations is that teacher educators can do as Zeichner (2010) recommended, which is to "create representations of their own teaching of elementary or secondary students" (p. 93) for use in campus-based courses.

Simulations of classroom situations (Zeichner, 2010) are another means of representing practice. Forms of simulation of practice include role-play, unrehearsed dramatization, immersion in scenarios and case studies (Goldenberg, Andrusyszyn, & Iwasiw, 2005). The latter involve "actual problems encountered by practitioners. Learners analyze and discuss cases, retrace and critique steps taken by the characters, try to deduce outcomes, and apply didactic content and theory to the case" (Goldenberg, Andrusyszyn, & Iwasiw, p. 310). Digital simulations are now possible because of opportunities provided by information and communication technologies (ICTs). Interactive video, YouTube[TM], virtual worlds and games represent some approaches to reliance on ICTs to simulate practice and the world of teaching. Simulations can be tailored to the characteristics of TCs in order to take into account their level of experience and age. Zeichner (2010) also recommended modeling by K-12 teacher educators as a form of boundary crossing. Modeling can support representation of classroom practice.

Boundary crossing can be supported by tools described by Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000), which foster movement "from intellectual understanding to enactment in practice" (p. 525). Such tools may take a form similar to the competencies and include models and rubrics to monitor, scaffold, and assess application and validation of theory. Darling-Hammond and Snyder (2000) advocated authentic forms of assessment that integrate "multiple kinds of knowledge and skill," and collect "multiple sources of evidence" (p. 527). These might take the form of "case reports" that add "context to theory" (p. 529), exhibitions of performance that evaluate abilities "in relation to articulated standards of practice" (p. 534), or "problem-based inquiries into concerns arising from work with children and families" (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000, p. 540).

**Expansion of the division of labour.** Another tool that can support boundary crossing is video. For example, Baecher, Kung, Jewkes, and Rosalia (2013) relied on digital video records of teaching along with rubrics to help TCs better understand evaluation of classroom practice and to "build readiness for self-evaluation" (p. 196). Baecher et al. (2013) found that reliance on video with peer evaluation could "enhance and scaffold the path from supervisor to self-evaluation" so that "...supervisors may be able to be utilized to a greater extent in a mentoring or coaching role" (p. 196). In the teacher education program studied in this context, peer and self-assessment would require expansion of the division of labour. Baecher et al. (2013) outlined the benefits of this approach: "By incorporating self, as well as supervisor, evaluation early in their professional preparation programs, candidates gain practice in applying standards to their teaching that encourages an active stance in the evaluation process" (p. 189).

## Conclusion

Drawing on data from a program in the Canadian province of Québec, this article illustrated that, rather than merely a disconnect between university and school or between theory and practice,

divides and disconnects were manifestations of more complex underlying contradictions. These contradictions made evident the role that the object or purpose played in the divides and disconnects. In this study, the contradictions were identified within the object and between the object and each of the other components within the system. The divides and disconnects resulted in unintended and unfavourable outcomes such as TCs feeling unprepared and untouched by the program and learning more from the practicum than from the courses.

The analysis pointed to expansion of the tools to support boundary crossing as a means of resolving the contradictions. Expansion involved incorporating tools for evaluation of application and validation of theory, for representing and simulating practice, and tools for demonstrating and practicing. Expansion of tools can include reliance on modeling, role-play, dramatization, and case studies as additional university-based classroom strategies and on concrete measures for assessment such as video and rubrics. Expansion of the division of labor might involve reliance on tools for peer and self-assessment.

## Limitations

As with any study in a real context of learning, there are limitations that readers should keep in mind when interpreting the findings of the study. We did not conduct observations. The data, therefore, represent participants' perspectives and perceptions of their experiences. In terms of validity, the perspectives presented may not necessarily be representative of all TCs, instructors, and field supervisors involved with the program. It was beyond the scope of the study to collect data from cooperating teachers. Their perspectives may have provided a further opportunity to triangulate data from other sources. Regarding the issue of generalizability, the study involved only one program that cannot be considered representative of all programs in Québec or in Canada. However, readers can compare the study's findings with their particular context to determine whether they may be relevant to their own teacher education programs.

## Implications

In terms of implications for research, this study has demonstrated the value of focusing on the object or purpose in order to understand divides and disconnects in teacher education programs. The study has also highlighted the value of thinking of teacher education programs as activity systems with components that interact and potentially contradict each other. Future studies may focus on the field supervisors, instructors, or cooperating teachers as subjects. Such studies may approach divides and disconnects as two separate activity systems that share boundaries and that benefit from boundary crossing. More research into tools for representing practice may support boundary crossing in university-school partnerships. In terms of practice, instructors and field supervisors can experiment with expansion of tools to include more opportunities for boundary crossing. In relation to policy, the findings point to the potential role of assessment in bridging divides and disconnects related to the division of labour. Departmental policies may offer a means to promote opportunities for TCs' self- and peer assessment, as well as assessment of the application and validation of theory during the practicum.

## References

Akkerman, S., & Bakker, A. (2011). Boundary crossing and boundary objects. *Review of Educational Research, 81*(2), 132-169. doi:10.3102/0034654311404435

Aldridge, D. (2015). The role of higher education in teacher education: A reorientation towards ontology. In R. Heilbronn & L. Foreman-Peck (Eds.), *Philosophical perspectives on teacher education.* Journal of Philosophy of Education Book Series (pp. 111-131). Wiley.

Anagnostopoulos, D., Smith, E., & Basmadjian, K. (2007). Bridging the university-school divide: Horizontal expertise and the "two worlds pitfall." *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(2), 138-152. doi: 10.1177/0022487106297841

Baecher, L., Kung, S., Jewkes, A., & Rosalia, C. (2013). The role of video for self-evaluation in early field experiences. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 36,* 189-197. doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2013.08.001

Broad, K., & Tessaro, M. (2009). Voices from the field: Associate teachers and teacher candidates in learning conversations. In T. Falkenberg & H. Smits (Eds.), *Field experiences in the context of reform of Canadian teacher education programs* (pp. 67-78). Winnipeg, MB: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Bullock, S., & Russell, T. (2010). Does teacher education expect too much from field experience? In T. Falkenberg & H. Smits (Eds.), *Field experiences in the context of reform of Canadian teacher education programs* (pp. 91-100). Winnipeg, MB: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Bullough, R., Draper, R., Smith, L., & Birrell, J. (2004). Moving beyond collusion: Clinical faculty and university/public school partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 20*(5), 505-521. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2004.04.007

Burton, S., & Greher, G. (2007). School-university partnerships: What do we know and why do they matter? *Arts Education Policy Review, 109*(1), 13-24. http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/AEPR.109.1.13-24

Caillier, S., & Riordan, R. (2009). Teacher education for the schools we need. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(5), 489–496. doi: 10.1177/0022487109348596

Capper, P., & Williams, B. (2004). *Cultural-historical activity theory: Enhancing evaluation using systems concepts*. Washington, DC: American Evaluation. Retrieved from http://users.actrix.co.nz/bobwill/activity.doc

Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research. (2003-2004). *The activity system.* Retrieved from http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/pages/chatanddwr/activitysystem/

Crocker, R., & Dibbon, D. (2008). *Teacher education in Canada: A baseline study.* Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.

Dang, A. (2013). Identity in activity: Examining teacher professional identity formation in the paired-placement of student teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 30*(1), 47-59. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.10.006

Darling-Hammond, L., & Snyder, J. (2000). Authentic assessment of teaching in context. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 16*(5-6), 523-545. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(00)00015-9

DeVries, R., & Zan, B. (1994). *Moral classroom, Moral children: Creating a constructivist atmosphere in early education*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Dippe, G. (2006). *The missing teacher: Contradictions and conflicts in the experience of online learners*. Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Networked Learning. Lancaster: Lancaster University. Retrieved from http://www.networked learningconference.org.uk/past/nlc2006/abstracts/pdfs/P38%20Dippe.PDF

Engeström, Y. (1987). *Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research*. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit.

Engeström, Y. (2001). Expansive learning at work: Toward an activity theoretical reconceptualization. *Journal of Education and Work, 14*(1), 133-56. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13639080020028747

Engeström, Y. (2009). The future of activity theory: A rough draft. In A. Sannino, H. Daniels, & K. D. Gutiérrez (Eds.), *Learning and expanding with activity theory* (pp. 303-329). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Engeström, Y., Brown, C., Christopher, L., & Gregory, J. (1991). Coordination, cooperation and communication in the courts: Expansive transitions in legal work. *The Quarterly Newsletter of the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition*, *13*(4), 88-97.

Engeström, Y., & Miettinen, R. (1999). Activity theory and individual and social transformation. In Y. Engeström, R. Miettinen, & R. Punamäki (Eds.), *Perspectives on activity theory* (pp. 19-38). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Engeström, Y., & Sannino, A. (2011). Discursive manifestations of contradictions in organizational change efforts: A methodological framework. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 24*(3), 368–387. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09534811111132758

Falkenberg, T. (2010). Introduction: Central issues of field experiences in Canadian teacher education programs. In T. Falkenberg & H. Smits (Eds.), *Field experiences in the context of reform of Canadian teacher education programs* (pp.1-50). Winnipeg, MB: Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Gall, M., Gall, J., & Borg, W. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: A & B Publications.

Gambhir, M., Broad, K., Evans, M., & Gaskell, J. (2008). *Characterizing initial teacher education in Canada: Themes and issues*. Prepared for the International Alliance of Leading Education Institutes. Retrieved from https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/ite/UserFiles/File/CharacterizingITE.pdf

Goldenberg, D., Andrusyszyn, M-A., & Iwasiw, C. (2005). The effect of classroom simulation on nursing students' self-efficacy related to health teaching. *Journal of Nursing Education, 44*(7), 310-314. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/openview/bee9ca7d164f2e4e5b93ea93cb9ecdeb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar

Gurvitch, R., & Metzler, M. (2009). The effects of laboratory-based and field-based practicum experience on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 25*(3), 437-443. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2008.08.006

Hartwig, M. (Ed.). (2007). *Dictionary of critical realism.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Hashim, N., & Jones, M. (2007). *Activity theory: A framework for qualitative analysis.*In the 4th International Qualitative Research Convention (QRC), PJ Hilton, Malaysia.

Jahreie, C., & Ottesen, E. (2010). Construction of boundaries in teacher education: Analyzing student teachers' accounts. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 17*(3), 212-234. doi: 10.1080/10749030903314195

Jonnaert, P. (2002). *Compétences et socioconstructivisme. Un cadre théorique.* Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.

Kaptelinin, V. (2005). The object of activity: Making sense of the sense-maker. *Mind, Culture, and Activity, 12*(1), 4–18. Retrieved from https://people.ucsc.edu/~gwells/Files/Courses_Folder/documents/Kaptelinin.ObjofActivity.pdf

Korthagen, F., & Wubbels, T. (2001). Learning from practice. In F. Korthagen, J. Kessels, D. Koster, B. Lagerwerf, & T. Wubbels (Eds.), *Linking practice and theory: The pedagogy of realistic teacher education* (pp. 32–50). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kuutti, K. (1996). Activity theory as a potential framework for human-computer interaction research. In B. Nardi (Ed.), *Context and consciousness: Activity theory and human-computer interaction* (pp. 9-22, online version). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Leont'ev, A. (1981). The problem of activity in psychology. In J. Wertsch (Ed.), *The concept of activity in Soviet psychology* (pp. 37–71). Armonk NY. Routledge

Martinet, M., Raymond, D., & Gauthier, C. (2001). *Teacher training: Orientations, professional competencies.* Government of Québec. Retrieved from http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/formation_ens_a.pdf

Ministère de l'Education, du Loisir et du Sport. (2008). *Teacher training: Orientations for practicums in a school setting.* Government of Québec. Retrieved from http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/reseau/formation_titularisation/FormationEnsFormMilieuPratique_a.pdf

Moore, R. (2003). Reexamining the field experiences of pre-service teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education, 54*(1), 31-42. doi:10.1177/0022487102238656

Powell, R. (1992). The influence of prior experiences on pedagogical constructs of traditional and non-traditional pre-service teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 8*(3), 225-238. doi:10.1016/0742-051X(92)90022-U

Rodgers, D., & Chaillé, C. (1998). Being a constructivist teacher educator: An invitation for dialogue. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 19*(3), 203-211. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0163638980190303

Roegiers, X. (2004). L'école et l'évaluation: Des situations pour évaluer les compétences des élèves. Bruxelles: De Boeck Université.

Russell, T., McPherson, S., & Martin, A. (2001). Coherence and collaboration in teacher education reform. *Canadian Journal of Education*, *26*(1), 37-56. doi: 10.2307/1602144

Russell, T., Martin, A., O'Connor, K., Bullock, S., & Dillon, D. (2013). Comparing fundamental conceptual frameworks for teacher education in Canada. In L. Thomas, (Ed.), *What is Canadian about teacher education in Canada? Multiple perspectives on Canadian teacher education in the 21st century* (pp. 10-37). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association for Teacher Education.

Scriven, M. (1994). The fine line between evaluation and explanation. *American Journal of Evaluation, 15,* 75-77. doi:10.1177/109821409401500108

Smagorinsky, P., Cook, L. Moore, C., Jackson, A., & Fry, P. (2004). Tensions in learning to teach accommodation and the development of a teaching identity. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*(1), 8-24. doi: 10.1177/0022487103260067

Stillman, J., & Anderson, L. (2011). To follow, reject, or flip the script: Managing instructional tension in an era of high-stakes accountability. *Language Arts, 89*(1), 22-37. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/LA/0891-sep2011/LA0891Follow.pdf

Thomas, L., & Desjardins, J. (2013). Teacher education in Quebec: A critical examination of a competency-based programme. In L. Thomas (Ed.), *What is Canadian about Teacher Education in Canada? Multiple perspectives on Canadian Teacher Education in the 21st century*. (pp. 295-319). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Association for Teacher Education.

Tsui, A., & Law, D. (2007). Learning as boundary-crossing in school–university partnership. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 23(8)*, 1289-1301. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2006.06.003

Valencia, S., Martin, S., Place, N., & Grossman, P. (2009). Complex interactions in student teaching: Lost opportunities for learning. *Journal of Teacher Education, 60*(3), 304-322.Retrieved from https://cset.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/files/documents/publications/Valencia-StudentTeachingLostOpportunitiesLearning.pdf

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* In M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman (Eds.), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Waitoller, F., & Kozleski, E. (2013). Understanding and dismantling barriers for partnerships for inclusive education: A cultural historical activity theory perspective. *International Journal of Whole Schooling, 9*(1), 23-42. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1016797.pdf

Walsh, M., & Backe, S. (2013). School–university partnerships: Reflections and opportunities. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *88(*5), 594-607. doi: 10.1080/0161956X.2013.835158

Williams, J. (2014). Teacher educator professional learning in the third space: Implications for identity and practice. *Journal of Teacher Education, 65*(4), 315–326. doi: 10.1177/0022487114533128

Wilson, V. (2014). Examining teacher education through cultural historical activity theory. *Teacher Education Advancement Network Journal, 6*(1), 20-29. Retrieved from http://194.81.189.19/ojs/index.php/TEAN/article/viewFile/180/294

Yamagata-Lynch, L. (2010). *Activity systems analysis methods for understanding complex learning environments*. New York, NY: Springer.

Zeichner, K., (2010). Rethinking the connections between campus courses and field experiences in college and university-based teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 61*(1), 89-99. doi: 10.1177/0022487109347671

**The Relevance of Prior Learning in Teacher Education Admissions Processes**

Mark Hirschkorn, Alan Sears, Elizabeth Sloat, *University of New Brunswick*

Theodore Michael Christou, *Queen's University*

Paula Kristmanson, *University of New Brunswick*

Lynn Lemisko, *University of Saskatchewan*

**Abstract**

In this paper, we argue that teacher education admissions processes would benefit from attending more to prospective teacher candidates' cognitive frames. We begin with the introduction of a three-stage heuristic for describing teacher education. We then review the literature about constructivist notions of prior learning and teacher education program admissions processes. These processes, we argue, fail to adequately account for candidates' preconceptions about teaching and learning, which affect their beliefs and understanding. Virtually none of the admissions processes we examined explicitly attempts to map the cognitive frames of applicants to uncover the structure of their ideas about teaching and learning. Teacher education institutions might best concentrate upon candidates' cognitive frames within two core areas: subject area content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. These two areas have the greatest potential to influence candidates' future cognitive frameworks, understandings, and points of reference.

*Keywords*: teacher education admissions processes; identifying cognitive frames; subject area content knowledge; pedagogical knowledge

## The Relevance of Prior Learning in Teacher Education Admissions Processes

What is the starting point in the education of a prospective teacher? Is it when candidates first walk through the doors of an education faculty, or perhaps the moment when they decide to become a teacher? One thing seems certain: Beginning teachers are not *tabula rasa*; they have preconceptions of teaching and learning that filter and shape the information and experiences they encounter in their formal teacher education. Teacher educators rely on teacher candidates' prior learning to shape and to individualize program delivery; but this paper inquires into what role candidates' prior learning might serve in admissions processes in advance of a teacher education program.

An emerging, although limited, scholarship has focused on institutional practices for admitting candidates to their teacher education programs (Kosnik, Brown, & Beck, 2005; Miller-Levy, Taylor, & Hawke, 2014; Valli & Johnson, 2007). The literature generally reflects the following two areas of interest: (a) the limitations of current admissions processes (e.g., Falkenberg, 2010) and (b) research on the effects of updated admissions models and new initiatives (e.g., Valli & Johnson, 2007). We believe that teacher education programs, and ultimately schools, would benefit from attending more carefully to prospective teacher candidates' cognitive frames during the admissions process. We maintain that, in neglecting candidates' preconceptions about teaching and learning, one can easily overlook identifying candidates highly suited (and even unsuited) to any particular teacher education program and, more broadly, to professional teaching contexts. As researchers Miller-Levy, Taylor & Hawke. (2014) contend, "High GPAs cannot predict responsive teaching strategies," though such data do "a reasonable job of screening for academics" (pp. 6-7).

To situate our argument, we begin by setting out a three-stage heuristic for describing the ongoing, evolutionary way that teachers begin and evolve in their professional learning, a process that begins long before entry to teacher education programs. We then review in brief constructivist notions of prior learning relative to teacher education program admissions processes. These processes, we maintain, fail to account adequately for candidates' preconceptions about teaching and learning, which affect their beliefs and understanding. We further contextualize our claim by arguing that teacher education institutions might best concentrate on candidates' cognitive frames within two core areas: subject area content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. These two areas have the greatest potential to influence candidates' future cognitive frameworks, understandings, and points of reference.

### Becoming a Teacher

There are a growing number of teacher education agencies, such as those in the European Union, that situate teacher education as a multi-stage process. Recent policies from the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (2014) and Ireland's *Report on The Continuum of Teacher Education* (An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta/The Teaching Council, 2011) conceive of teacher development as a process occurring along a continuum that begins with initial teacher education and proceeds to "induction, early and continuing professional development and, indeed, late career support, with each stage merging seamlessly into the next and interconnecting in a dynamic way with each of the others" (An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta/The Teaching Council, 2011, p. 8). This conceptualization aptly reflects a sequencing of developmental, evolutionary stages in which educators hone their professional

knowledge, skills, and abilities. A growing number of teacher education programs are striving to achieve a level of seamless and dynamic learning by offering post-program initiatives aimed at supporting teachers during their first few years as teaching professionals (e.g., Kitchen, Cherubini, Smith, Goldblatt, & Engemann, 2008).

We also conceptualize the evolution of becoming a teacher as a continuum occurring along three interconnected, developmental stages; however, in keeping with current theoretical perspectives (Dulude Lay et al., 2005; Falkenberg, 2010; Lortie, 1975; Richardson, 2003; Russell, 2009), we maintain that the evolutionary process begins long before entry to formal teacher education programs. Our three-stage model, therefore, includes (a) prior learning, which encompasses all of the learning, influences and experiences that occur prior to entry into a professional teacher education program; (b) the professional teacher education program learning itself; and (c) in-service professional learning, which entails all of the ongoing in-service teaching and professional development educators experience as members of the teaching profession. In conceptualizing teacher education as a continuum that is inclusive of teacher candidates' experiences prior to formal teacher education, we contend that models that exclude candidates' prior knowledge are insufficient. Further, we maintain that teacher education program admissions committees would be well served to "begin at the beginning" to ensure that "high-quality" program candidates are not overlooked in the admissions process. We discuss these issues more fully below by examining the relevance of prior learning in shaping teachers' dispositions and understandings about what it means to teach, and to learn.

## Prior Learning and Constructivist Theory

Our argument for uncovering preservice teachers' embedded understandings and their re-experiencing of school is situated within contemporary constructivist theoretical frameworks of prior learning that have evolved from influential socio-cognitive conflict theorists (Dewey, 1933; Piaget, 1985; Vygotsky, 1978). Though social constructionist theories of learning are an equally significant though more recent influence (Lave & Wenger, 1991), it was initially the cognitive and psychological literature that motivated education's shift from behaviouristic *tabula rasa* and *empty vessel* conceptions of learners to positioning knowledge as cumulative, evolutionary, and actively acquired phenomena. There is a well-established body of research demonstrating the ways in which beginning teachers' background knowledge and experiences significantly influence their conceptions of teaching and learning during their teacher education program studies and throughout their professional practice (e.g., Dulude Lay et al., 2005; Falkenberg, 2010; Lortie, 1975; Richardson, 2003; Russell, 2009). At the same time, however, there is a remarkable lack of research on how these prior understandings are used in the design and application of teacher education *admissions* processes (Tenore, Dunn, Laughter, & Milner, 2010). We consider here, then, how that prior knowledge might be used to inform program candidate selection toward ensuring the best potential educators are chosen for our education systems. Taken from this vantage, we believe it is possible to create contexts for determining applicants' potential and willingness to think and to reflect critically, and to assume the teaching profession's central, constructivist practices and ways of knowing.

Much of the literature in this area explores the ways and means by which prior knowledge and epistemological beliefs can be used effectively to enhance the teacher education program learning experience. Lave and Wenger (1991) demonstrate that early, embedded, and entrenched cognitive frames fit with the philosophical tenets of constructivism, which define

knowledge as co-created, socially situated, and context dependent. Central to constructivism is the understanding that prior knowledge matters to teaching and learning (Sears, 2009; Sloat et al., 2014). People come to any learning situation with a set of cognitive structures that filter and shape new information in powerful ways. As such, the process of becoming a teacher does not simply begin at entry to teacher education degree study. Through their own experiences as school and university students, beginning teachers have observed thousands of hours of teaching such that they have already acquired powerful and deeply embedded beliefs and dispositions about teaching and learning (Clark, 1988; Munby & Russell, 1994). Lortie (1975) called this learning process the "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 62) to describe students' engagement in a wide array of classroom learning experiences that coalesce to perpetuate and reinforce an historical, well developed, and comfortably familiar perception of knowing how to teach.

Gardner (2006a) calls these influential cognitive structures "mental representations" and argues they underlie the fact that "individuals do not just react to or perform in the world; they possess minds, and these minds contain images, schemes, pictures, frames, languages, ideas, and the like" (p. 76). Research demonstrates that learners bring mental representations with them to learning situations, and that they use existing schemata to filter and shape new learning (Sears, 2009). These mental representations, or cognitive frameworks, are often incomplete, "naïve" (Byrnes & Torney-Purta, 1995), or "simply wrong" (Gardner 2006b, p. 54). The deeply embedded beliefs about teaching acquired during the apprenticeship of observation are formed based primarily on the public, performance-related aspects of teaching and as such, initial cognitive teaching and learning frames are incomplete (Clark, 1988; Lortie, 1975). Though beginning teachers may have observed teachers and teaching in action, they do not necessarily have any tangible knowledge of the planning and activities that occur prior to the teaching "performance" they observe, and nor do they have any of the ideological and theoretical frameworks motivating teachers and the teaching they see in action. Beginning teachers have yet to become fully aware of all that is required and occurs in preparation for actual teaching.

Research on prior knowledge consistently shows that cognitive schemata are both persistent and resistant to change (Russell, 2009). When presented with information that does not fit existing structures, learners often distort or discard it completely rather than doing the difficult work necessary to restructure their frameworks. Candidates' conceptions of teaching and learning may complicate future learning and challenge their ability to change their cognitive frames. "Minds," Gardner (2006b) argues, "of course, are hard to change" (p. 1). If Gardner is correct, it may be most prudent for teacher education institutions to select candidates with the most potential to see teaching and learning in ways consistent with institutional conceptions of teaching and learning that are grounded in constructivist principles and ideals (e.g., DeLuca, 2012). This is particularly pressing when taking into consideration that formal teacher education programs are relatively short, at least in most jurisdictions (Sloat et al., 2014).

## Admissions Models and Accounting for Prior Learning

As DeLuca (2012) asserts, "Admission policy plays a dominant role in the systematic selection of teacher candidates and serves as the primary gatekeeping structure for entry into the teaching profession in jurisdictions where teacher education is a university-based program of study" (p. 8). Multiple factors including lack of success in teacher education programs, high attrition rates in the early years of teaching, low student test scores, and persistent reports of poor teaching have led teacher educators in North America and Europe to examine their admissions policies

and criteria for vetting program applicants (Brown, Brown, & Brown, 2008; Casey & Childs, 2007; Haberman, 2010; Turner & Turner, 2000; Valli & Johnson, 2007). While particular concerns may vary across jurisdictions, the basic empirical question is the same: "What initial qualities in applicants make it more likely for those admitted into a program to be successful in it relative to the desirable outcomes?" (Falkenberg, 2010, p. 2).

In response to these concerns, teacher education institutions have developed an array of admissions assessment criteria along with a plethora of mechanisms for determining the degree to which applicants meet those criteria (see, for example, Thomson et al, 2011). In addition to admissions processes described in the literature, we examined the publicly available admissions information at 12 initial teacher education (ITE) programs in Atlantic Canada (Hirschkorn, Ireland, & Sears, 2014). The admissions procedures indicate that program administrators recognize key ways in which teacher formation begins long before admission to an initial teacher education program based on the request for information on indicators such as prior experience working with children and youth, prior teaching experience, and a rationale for why the applicant wants to be a teacher. These indicators do not, however, delve into the preconceived perceptions and knowledge constructs potential educators hold, and instead seek to identify candidates who are, or have the potential to be, academic experts, caring counsellors, skilled practitioners, and effective and collaborative colleagues. This knowledge is sought in admissions packages through a range of mechanisms, primarily academic credentials, personal statements of intent, and references from colleagues and academics.

While basic selection criteria are similar across contexts, added approaches to assessing applicants range from what we term minimal to maximal (see Figure 1). Those we considered to be minimal rely exclusively on written packages consisting of transcripts, references, and various statements or essays about becoming a teacher; maximal approaches augment written materials with performance assessments such as interviews and sample lessons as well as standardized tests and pre-admission experiential courses. The institutions in which we work, for example, take a minimal approach to assessing applicants via written application packages alone. These contain a fairly standard set of documents including university transcripts of previous degrees, a short statement outlining why the applicant wants to be a teacher, at least three letters of reference, and a record of previous experience working with children and young people.

The University of Jyväskylä, in Finland, moves further along the continuum toward a maximal approach by relying on a two-stage admissions process aimed at identifying potential candidates who possess the qualities and characteristics best suited for a demanding teaching career (Valli & Johnson, 2007). Initially, at Stage 1, applicants are selected based on information provided in a written application package that addresses their prior academic studies and teaching-related experience. The selection process is then refined at Stage 2 with potential program candidates required to complete an "entrance examination" including a "demonstration lesson, interview, and group task" (Valli & Johnson, 2007, p. 495). Demonstration lessons are unique because they require candidates to develop a curriculum-based, 10-15 minute lesson plan that they are then evaluated on in a classroom setting by trained observers.

The Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada, embraces a maximal approach insofar as requiring applicants to take a full course as part of their university work prior to their application. The course includes both university seminars and school placements:

[The course] has four purposes: to explore contemporary education, to help each student to assess the personal suitability of teaching as a career, to assist the Faculty of Education, in partnership with the teaching profession, to evaluate students' potential for teaching and for admission to the B.Ed. program, and to assist the student in beginning to make the transition from student to professional educator. (Butt, Grigg, & McConahy, 2010, p. 2)

Following course completion, students meet individually with an instructor to discuss their suitability for the teaching profession and, in addition to a grade, receive an assessment ranging from Highly Recommended to Not Recommended. This particular pre-admission model has the potential to focus intentionally on discerning students' ways of knowing and thinking about teaching and learning, and the degree to which the views they hold align with effective constructivist ideology.

Table 1: Minimal-to-Maximal Continuum of Program Admission Procedures

| **Minimal** ⬅       ➡ **Maximal** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Written Application Package Including:<br><br>- University Transcripts<br>- Sample Essay and/or Statement of Intent<br>- Letters of Reference | Written Application Package Including:<br><br>- University Transcripts<br>- Sample Essay and/or Statement of Intent<br>- Letters of Reference | Written Application Package Including:<br><br>- University Transcripts<br>- Sample Essay and/or Statement of Intent<br>- Letters of Reference |
| | Performance Assessments such as:<br><br>- Interviews<br>- Sample Lessons<br>- Individual/Group Activities<br>- Assessment Centres | Performance Assessments such as:<br><br>- Interviews<br>- Sample Lessons<br>- Individual/Group Activities<br>- Assessment Centres |
| | Standardized Tests such as PRAXIS Series, common in the U.S. | Standardized Tests such as PRAXIS Series, common in the U.S. |
| | | Pre-Admission, Experiential Course Containing:<br><br>- Practicum<br>- Exposure to Educational Pedagogy, Thinkers, & Theories<br>- Concluding Interview with Recommendation for Admissions |

As Casey and Childs (2007) point out, whatever the approach teacher education programs use, there are enduring problems in the area of assessing the suitability of candidates for program admission. First, "the relationship of admissions criteria to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes beginning teachers need and to the preparation provided by the programs are rarely made explicit" (p. 2). Haberman (2010) concurs with Casey and Childs, and similarly argues that not only do faculties and teacher educators in general lack both definition and agreement on the knowledge, learning theories, and ideologies teaching candidates should possess, but also that the latter, ideologies of effective teaching, are impossible to teach to others anyway (p. 142). Second, what counts as successful teaching is difficult to define absolutely. Success could be correlated with significant accomplishments as a teacher, but accomplishments are measured differently in diverse jurisdictions and there is a paucity of longitudinal scholarship that follows graduates from different contexts into their careers. Consequently, Casey and Childs (2007) argue, "Most studies of teacher education program admission criteria have used success in the program itself as indicators of the probability of future success" (p. 10). Here again, in critiquing the predominant selection process for teacher education program admission, Haberman (2010) maintains that simply "practicing the behaviours of effective teachers…would still not constitute adequate teacher preparation"(p. 141). Behaviours, he continues, can only be effective when program candidates demonstrate through their actions that they possess a specific ideology about the nature of students, teaching, and learning, while also recognizing societal influences on curriculum.

Virtually none of the admissions processes we examined explicitly attempts to map the cognitive frames of applicants to uncover the structure of their ideas about teaching and learning. Even in more complex approaches, emphasis is placed on more tangible elements such as a candidate's level of comfort working with children and peers, or technical aspects of lesson delivery such as organization of material, pacing, and voice modulation. Candidates are sometimes asked about their conceptions of teachers and teaching, but this evidence seems to be treated anecdotally and not analysed systematically for what it might reveal about the cognitive schemata of applicants. This is particularly curious given the widespread consensus among academics in education internationally about the appropriateness of constructivist approaches to teaching and learning, including attention to prior knowledge (Brownlee, Purdue, & Boulton-Lewis, 2001; Tanase & Wang, 2010).

If, as we contend, teacher candidates come to programs with well-entrenched conceptions about what a teacher is, what it means to teach, and the nature of the subjects they plan to teach, and if these mental representations or cognitive frames are highly difficult to change, it follows that selection processes should make some attempt at assessing existing frames and give preference to applicants who are more consistent with contemporary approaches to teaching and learning. Teacher education programs are of limited duration and, as Russell (2009) argues, their relatively short length barely scratches the surface of prospective teachers' conceptions of teaching derived over a lifetime of learning in different venues. Selecting candidates most disposed to thinking about and reflecting on teaching in ways consistent with contemporary views has the potential to enhance successful transition into the profession.

We posit that there are three possible reasons for the marginal attention that is paid to the cognitive frames of teacher education program applicants. First, there is little consensus about what good teaching is and how it should be conceived. Second, cognitive frames are extremely difficult to assess. Third, there is the threat of a lack of diversity within the teaching profession

when institutions only accept candidates who conform to a narrowly defined set of criteria. We do not believe these obstacles are insurmountable and, consequently, we turn now to offering suggestions for how they might be addressed.

## Areas of Consensus

First, we maintain that there is a fair degree of consensus about the nature of effective teaching that program admissions committees might use for screening potential applicants. Casey and Childs (2007) argue: "Although researchers have focused on different aspects of what it means to be a good teacher, four qualities related to teachers' needs appear repeatedly in the literature: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical skills, and attitudes" (p. 4). There is a fair degree of agreement amongst teacher educators and faculties about how these qualities are defined. An examination of literature and curricula from democratic countries around the world reveals significant consensus about content, pedagogy, and the nature of learners (see, for example, Hughes, Print, & Sears, 2008; Hughes & Sears, 2010). Major national reports on teacher education in Canada, Ireland, and the U.S. argue that good teachers require a solid grounding in both pedagogy and subject-matter content knowledge and, in particular, a well-developed sense of how these two areas come together as *pedagogical content knowledge* in teaching and learning. (e.g., An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta/The Teaching Council, 2011; Crocker & Dibbon, 2008; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Shulman, 1986; Waldron et al., 2009). Below, in Figure 2, we delineate core elements of constructivist views of "effective teaching" by setting these elements against traditional conceptions of teaching and learning. Though our list is far from exhaustive, it does capture the premise that there is a consensual understanding of what effective teaching is and looks like.

Table 2: Constructivist Consensus on Effective Teaching

| *Traditional Conception* ⟶ | *Constructivist Conception* |
|---|---|
| **Knowledge/Understanding:** Fixed and universal conceptions of knowledge and understanding with a focus on "right" answers | **Knowledge/Understanding:** Fluid, contextual, and cultural focus on diverse perspectives that involve disciplinary concepts and processes |
| **Curriculum Relevancy:** Fragmented, lower-order thinking, teacher-centred curriculum that students tend to regard as irrelevant | **Curriculum Relevancy:** Integrated, interdisciplinary, student-centred curriculum that students tend to regard as connected to their own interests, talents, experiences, and the real world |
| **Students:** Based on a deficit 'empty vessel' model where students are merely passive, compliant knowledge recipients | **Students:** Based on an active, engaged, hands-on, performance-based model Where students actively create knowledge and understanding to become agents of change |

**Teaching and Learning:** Prevailing approaches are authoritarian, rote, text-book driven, and didactic for delivering a singular perspective on curricular content and learning outcomes

**Teaching and Learning:** Prevailing approaches are authoritative and constructivist emphasizing attention to prior learning, culture, multiple perspectives, dissonance and variation in learning outcomes

**Society, Institutions, and Disciplinary Communities:** Regarded as Static, stable, enduring and "right," with students expected to accept and adapt to traditional values and norms

**Society, Institutions, and Disciplinary Communities:** Regarded as non-static, changing, context-dependent, and always in need of re-examination and reformation with students expected to understand and participate in institutional reshaping

## Content Knowledge Frames

In addition to considerable consensus about the nature of effective teaching, there is growing accord about the understandings of specific subject matter that teachers should foster. Figure 2 indicates that a constructivist approach to subject matter construes knowledge as constructed, fluid, and contextual rather than fixed and universal. Increasingly, policy and curricula around the world are mandating that schools foster students' understanding, ways of knowing, and facility with the key concepts, activities, and communicative competencies germane to each of the academic disciplines they study. Disciplinary inquiry, then, teaches learners to think like and to use the knowledge held by members of the science community, the history community, the literary arts community, and so on. Howe (2009), for example, argues that contemporary science curricula call for students to develop an understanding of the nature of science as a discipline. This is important because it helps "students develop their understanding so they will become critical consumers of the very scientific knowledge that increasingly impacts their daily lives" (p. 397). He contends that teaching the history of science is the key way to achieve this as it fosters an understanding that "there are historical, cultural, and social influences on the practice of science." Howe (2009) suggests that students study critical episodes in the history of science engaging with questions such as: "How was the scientist's work influenced by the culture in which he/she operated? What ramifications may his/her conclusions have on sociological or political policy? Did any issues of ethics or values come into play with the historical episode?" (p. 397).

Similarly, but with respect to mathematics, Jankvist (2009) contends that students should come to understand mathematics as a socially constructed system with a long and complex evolutionary history, to see it as:

> A discipline that has undergone an evolution and is not something that has arisen out of thin air; that human beings have taken part in its evolution; that mathematics has evolved through many different cultures throughout its history and that these cultures have had an influence on the shaping of mathematics and vice-versa; or that the evolution is driven by internal and external forces. (p. 239)

Likewise, history educators around the world emphasize a disciplinary approach to teaching this subject. There is some variation on precise elements of what is most often called "historical thinking" across jurisdictions but the core components are the same (see, for example, Barton & Levstik, 2004; Seixas & Morton, 2013; Stearns, Seixas, & Wineburg, 2000). Levesque (2008) states, "Disciplines such as history have their own modes of inquiry, networks of concepts and principles, theoretical frameworks, symbolic systems, vocabularies, and modes of self-regulation"(p. 7). The purpose of school history is to introduce students to these disciplinary understandings and processes. Levesque asserts that, for this to happen, teachers need sophisticated understanding of the discipline.

Currently, teacher candidates' subject matter knowledge is assessed almost exclusively based on the number of university courses they have in a particular discipline. The one exception to this is the U.S. where, in addition to post-secondary academic history, applicants to many teacher education programs are required to take a standardized test, parts of which assess basic content knowledge (Brown et al., 2008). Both of these approaches are inadequate for assessing teacher candidates' understandings of and facility with important disciplinary concepts and processes. What is more, transcript analysis alone poses a far greater risk of fostering professional conformity according to a narrow set of criteria compared with admissions procedures that would seek to uncover and explicate existing cognitive frameworks. Candidates might address a variety of ways to define and relate their learning to disciplinary understanding and to pedagogical content knowledge. These approaches, which we describe in detail below, may broaden institutional conceptions about candidates understanding, prior learning, and cognitive frames. Course names and grades listed on transcripts, independently of any further data, reveal only limited information about what candidates may know about education's instructional disciplines.

Gardner (2006a) points out that "disciplines represent the most advanced ways to think about issues consequential to human beings. Yet from a disciplinary point of view, the ways in which most of us think about these issues are fundamentally flawed" (p. 138). Further, he notes that "both disciplinary content and disciplinary habits of mind may be *deeply* counterintuitive" (Gardner, 2006a, p. 138,). If disciplinary understanding is both fundamental to quality teaching and hard to acquire, perhaps teacher education institutions should select candidates that demonstrate how they are predisposed to thinking about their subject areas in disciplinary terms.

We argue that the qualities described in Figure 2 apply generally across teaching areas. Further, we suggest that they can serve as descriptors of quality teachers who regard learners as active builders of knowledge and understanding. A number of studies have used concept mapping as a means for describing how teachers think about their profession (see Seezink, Poell, & Kirschner, 2009; Vincente, Bermejo, Blanco, & Ruiz, 2008), and this technique can be used in admissions processes. In spite of years of emphasizing more constructivist and critical approaches to teaching in academic literature and teacher education programs, there is considerable evidence that fairly traditional, transmissive practices continue to dominate school classrooms (Goodlad, 1984; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Tyack & Cubin, 1995). A considerable part of the resistance to change may be attributable to deeply held conceptions of teachers and teaching that are inconsistent with constructivist and critical approaches to teaching and learning. Selecting candidates for the profession who are disposed to thinking about education in constructivist or critical ways may help in the process of teacher

identity formation, and has the potential to move more classrooms to constructivist ways of learning.

We note several caveats to contextualize the argument. Assessing the cognitive frames of teacher education candidates for compatibility with contemporary conceptions of subject matter, teaching, and learning is not tantamount to believing that all teacher candidates should think the same way. Prospective teacher candidates will inevitably have diverse experiences prior to those that a teacher education program engages them with and still be willing to challenge their own cognitive frames and conceptions of teaching and learning. The contention that assessing prospective teacher candidates' cognitive frames would unjustly narrow the range of individuals accepted into teaching fails on two counts. First, it implies that current practices do not already limit the range of candidates based on set characteristics including views about aspects of the educational enterprise. Second, a wide diversity of perspectives can exist within the two areas of consensus outlined.

Are current practices exclusionary? In Canada, for example, the Association of Canadian Deans of Education (ACDE) has signed an Accord on Initial Teacher Education (2005), which, amongst other matters, makes explicit a concern for social justice. The Accord states: "An effective initial teacher education program promotes diversity, inclusion, understanding, acceptance, and social responsibility in continuing dialogue with local, national, and global communities" (ACDE, 2005, p. 4). This statement, one of several of like spirit in the Accord, privileges a particular kind of candidate as appropriate to teacher education. It is difficult to believe that teacher candidates who question the positive nature of ethnic and cultural diversity in Canada in an application essay would be selected for admission to any teacher education program in the country. However, if we do not ask the question, then we cannot know what perceptions potential candidates hold. It is appropriate that the ACDE has set out some parameters for teacher education that include potential filters to help in the selection of appropriate candidates for the profession. Assessing teacher candidates' preconceptions of the teaching and learning process and the academic disciplines they intend to teach is equally appropriate, particularly when there is transparency regarding assessment criteria, and that these align with widely accepted conceptions of quality teaching and learning.

What is more, diversity of perspectives can exist even in areas of consensus. There is wide agreement, for example, that students should understand history as discipline but as a discipline that is contested (e.g. Lee & Ashby, 2000; Lévesque, 2008; Taylor, 2004; Wineburg, 2001). As an indicative example, recent debates regarding the nature of history as a discipline and its practice in universities, museums, historic sites, and schools have been termed the "history wars" (see, for example, Linenthal & Engelhardt, 1996; Macintyre & Clark, 2004; MacMillan, 2008; Taylor & Guyver, 2012). To ask that prospective teacher candidates have an understanding of a discipline is not to require them to take a particular position on its nature and purpose; it is, rather, an expectation that they are involved in the ongoing discussion and debate regarding what constitutes that discipline. We argue that no one can understand, or seek to understand, a discipline without understanding it as a contested and socially constructed means of engaging with the world and with ourselves.

In his seminal work on communities of practice, Etienne Wenger (1998) argues that professional communities function best as sites of learning when there is the right degree of creative tension between reification and participation. Reification, or the setting out of explicit

policies and procedures, is necessary because it gives shape and consistency to professional practice, but an emphasis on it alone can squelch growth and contribute to the stagnation of practice. Wenger argues that members of a community of practice must be able to participate in shaping and reshaping policies and practices if the community is to be a dynamic site of professional learning and growth. Constructivist approaches to teaching and learning have reached the status of reification across most Western education systems. Consequently, they form a basis for judging both conceptions of teaching and teaching practice. We recognize and affirm the fact that participants in the profession will participate in challenging and reshaping these conceptions and practices over time.

### Suggested Modifications to Teacher Education Admission Models

Any particular model used by teacher education institutions to assess applications will inevitably require compromise. Factors such as cost of delivering program, time of year, availability of candidates and faculty to serve as readers, and number of applicants all shape the assessment practices of an institution. It would, for instance, be difficult for a large institution that admits many hundreds of applicants each year to use a model requiring a significant amount of time devoted to the consideration of each application. There are relatively simple steps teacher education institutions can do to bring to the fore candidates' cognitive frames for assessing their potential fit with the program. Here, we consider three components relative to the core, or minimal, program application materials common to many institutions' admissions packages: (a) sample essays or statements of intent; (b) university transcripts; and, (c) reference letters. Further, we set out example modifications that can be applied to teacher education application materials.

For prospective candidates to complete their admissions materials, however, they will require contextual information about the foundational cognitive frames institutions themselves value. Teacher education program faculty, therefore, need to identify and delineate clearly for applicants and application review committees their own cognitive frames in three interconnected areas: (a) the cognitive frames underpinning their various program stream offerings; (b) their disciplinary and curricular content knowledge frames; and, (c) their pedagogical orientations and frames. Most institutions offer a range of program stream offerings such as those of school systems from early childhood through the primary, elementary, middle, and high school years, and many offer an array of adult education program streams as well. What, then, are the underlying philosophies, orientations, and perceptions about teaching and learning in, for example, the early years and primary grades that a faculty values? This question, while it may initially seem relatively straight forward, is further complicated by the particular concentrations that many teacher education programs include in their offerings. These include educational foundations, counselling, special education, social justice, second language education, technological education, and First Nations education. These concentrations may have their own foundational conceptions that fit within the programs' larger frames and beliefs.

The picture is further complicated at the intermediate and secondary levels given the distinct cognitive frames underlying the various curriculum disciplines such as mathematics, science, language arts, history, and so on. Each discipline is grounded in a particular set of philosophical, ideological, and conceptual understandings, both as a discipline in and of itself, and in terms of how that discipline should be framed for teaching and learning. The complete picture, both at the macro and micro levels should be made known to potential program

candidates. Similarly, applicants and application review committees need to know the institutional conceptions about issues particularly relevant to the early, primary, and elementary school grades, such as beliefs about children's cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development; approaches to language, literacy, reading, and writing development; and whether the institution adheres to a theme-based, integrated curriculum approach. At the same time, an institution's pedagogical frames for all programs need to be clearly articulated so applicants can address these elements in their application materials. There must, therefore, be a clear articulation of, for instance, whether an institution places emphasis on teacher-centered versus student-centred approaches to teaching and learning; whether, and how, program emphasis is placed on active versus passive learning; whether, and how, program emphasis is given to test- and print-based or performance-based assessments; whether institutions favor a time-based versus an outcome-based curriculum organization orientation, and so on.

Table 3: Example Modifications to Teacher Education Application Materials

| Core Application Components | Application Modifications that Facilitate Disciplinary, Content, and Pedagogical Cognitive Frames Articulation |
|---|---|
| Essay or Statement of Intent | • Explain their own conceptions about teaching and learning in their chosen grades and, where relevant, their chosen disciplines; <br><br> • Describe the content knowledge learning they value; <br><br> • Recall critical learnings experienced as a student and explain both the conditions surrounding that learning and why it was effective; <br><br> • Outline relevant, applicable pedagogical understandings and orientations; and/or <br><br> • Address the measures you would take as an educator to ensure the learning needs and interests of First Nations, second language learners, or special needs learners are met. |
| University Transcripts | • Explain in writing the choices that drove prior program degree and course selections; <br><br> • Set out explanations for achievement levels; <br><br> • Describe what was learned from specific courses particularly relevant to the education curriculum; <br><br> • Articulate overall how academic background prepares them for teaching; and/or <br><br> • Describe the strengths and limitations of the pedagogical approaches you experienced as a student and learner in your degree courses and program |

| Letters of Reference | • Provide at least one academic reference in which the referee speaks specifically to the applicant's disciplinary orientation and expertise; and/or<br><br>• Provide at least one workplace reference in which the referee speaks specifically to the applicant's pedagogical knowledge, skills, and orientation |
| --- | --- |

An institution's clearly articulated ideological and conceptual orientations provide prospective candidates with foundational intelligence that can inform their application and make their cognitive frames more explicit. Applications are more focused rather than generic, since prospective candidates must address in their admissions materials the specific pedagogical, content, and age or grade-level streams to which they are applying. For instance, as Figure 3 above reflects, those applying to the secondary program, curriculum concentrations must be selected as teachable subjects, must explain their own conceptions about teaching and learning in their chosen grades and disciplines, and describe the content knowledge learning they value. Similarly, at least one referee could be asked to speak specifically to the applicant's disciplinary orientation and expertise, while another workplace colleague or administrator could be asked to speak to the candidate's pedagogical preferences. When written statements are combined with other application package materials such as degree transcript explanations and discipline-specific letters from qualified referees who can speak directly to candidates' subject-specific knowledge and skill, a more comprehensive conception of an applicant's cognitive frames can emerge.

We recommend three areas of the research literature for faculty and admissions committees to draw on to inform and support their work in assessing applicant's suitability for and fit in the program. First, they can draw on teacher education literature, which is rich with examples of assessing student and practicing teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning (i.e., Chen, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009; Minor et al., 2002). Second, they can consider research on students' disciplinary thinking in a range of fields, which facilitates their assessment of the degree to which applicants understand key concepts and processes related to particular disciplines (e.g., Gardner, 2006a). Third, they can engage with phenomenographic research, which seeks to map the ways in which people conceptualize important ideas (i.e. Carlsson, Fülöp, & Marton, 2001; Marton, 1981; Richardson, 1999;) and which can be used to foster understanding how applicants and teacher educators conceptualize aspects of teaching, education, and professional practice. These three areas of research feature various interview techniques and activities designed to elicit conceptual understandings that can be adapted for use in admissions procedures.

## Conclusion

As Casey and Childs (2011) aptly assert, "At a time when admission to initial teacher education programs is highly competitive, choices of admission criteria are particularly relevant" (p. 17). In this paper, we have argued that teacher education institutions may benefit from greater attention to candidates' prior learning and cognitive frames by understanding the tenets and principles underpinning a candidate's conceptions of learners and learning as well as of teachers and teaching. It is only by knowing potential candidates' embedded understandings that we can

gauge whether the values, beliefs, and judgments influencing the methods and strategies they choose for organizing, delivering, and assessing students' learning hold proper merit. Cognitive frames affect teacher candidates' decision-making, thinking, and action in educational contexts and within disciplines; they are, largely, in place before the beginning of a teacher education program. It is incumbent on teacher education institutions to seek information regarding applicants' cognitive frames, and to articulate their own more explicitly.

We recognize that by increasing the specificity of what institutions value in candidates and the ability of these institutions to determine what cognitive frameworks teacher candidates possess, they risk not admitting students who could become successful teachers over the course of a teacher education program. Nonetheless, we believe that knowing more about prospective teachers' underlying assumptions regarding teaching and learning is valuable. This knowledge, we argue, increases the likelihood that programs can develop understanding of these cognitive frameworks even as it increases the likelihood that candidates will flourish as professional teachers with beliefs and understandings that are more fully developed. However, a benefit of these suggested modifications to both application packages and screening activities is that they would provide an opportunity for faculty to discuss and to potentially reach consensus regarding the cognitive frames and disciplinary orientations they seek in their teacher candidates. This would permit teacher education programs to make these more explicit to present and potential candidates.

An increasing number of U.S. states require a pre-professional skills test (PPST) in order to be admitted to teacher education programs and a PRAXIS series at graduation (Cochran-Smith, Feinman-Nemser, McIntyre, & Demers, 2008). These tests are not the only assessment devices used, although there are required minimum scores before being admitted to a teacher education program. Thus, the tacit agreement described above is seemingly not as sacrosanct as it once was (Goodwin & Oyler, 2008). Even without questioning the validity of using tests to measure the potential of prospective teachers, such assessments undermine the flexibility of teacher education programs to admit students who are exemplary in categories other than their state-mandated test scores. In the end, we believe that teacher education admissions processes should seek to assess the cognitive frames of applicants, which they presently fail to do, in a systematic manner. By concentrating on applicants' frames with respect to disciplinary knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, they may best develop and influence candidates' belief systems, understanding, and philosophies of practice.

## References

An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta/The Teaching Council. (2011). *Policy on the Continuum of Teacher Education*. Maynooth: An Chomhairle Mhúinteoireachta/The Teaching Council. Retrieved from http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Publications/Teacher-Education/Policy-on-the-Continuum-of-Teacher-Education.pdf.

Association of Canadian Deans of Education(ACDE). (2005). *Accord on Initial Teacher Education*. Retrieved from http://www.csse-scee.ca/docs/acde/acde_teachereducationaccord_en.pdf.

Barton, K. C., & Levstik, L. S. (2004). *Teaching history for the common good.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Brown, J. R., Brown, L. J., & Brown, C. L. (2008). Signs, signs, everywhere there's signs . . . and the sign says": You got to have a PRAXIS II membership card to get inside. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 35*(1), 29-42.

Brownlee, J., Purdie, N., & Boulton-Lewis, G. (2001). Changing epistemological beliefs in pre-service teacher education students. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *6*(2), 247-268.

Butt, R., Grigg, N., & McConaghy, G. (2010). *Predicting success in teacher education through a workplace learning selection process*. Paper presented at the 2nd Paris International Conference on Education, Economy and Society, Paris, France.

Byrnes, J., & Torney-Purta, J. (1995). Naive theories and decision making as part of higher order thinking in social studies. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 23*(3), 260-277.

Carlsson, M. A., Fülöp, M., & Marton, F. (2001). Peeling the Onion: Student Teachers' Conceptions of Literary Understanding. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 45*(1), 5-18.

Casey, C. F., & Childs, R. A. (2007). Teacher education program admission criteria and what beginning teachers need to know to be successful teachers. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 67*, 1-24.

Casey, C., & Childs, R. (2011). Teacher education admission criteria as measure of preparedness for teaching. *Canadian Journal of Education, 34*(2), 3-20.

Chen, M., Chan, K., Tang, S., & Cheng, A. (2009). Pre-service teacher education students' epistemological beliefs and their conceptions of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*, 319-327.

Clark, C. (1988). Teacher preparation: Contributions of research on teacher thinking. *Educational Researcher, 17*(2), 5-12.

Cochran-Smith, M., Feiman-Nemser, S., McIntyre, D., & Demers, K. (2008). *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge/Taylor and Francis and the Association of Teacher Educators.

Crocker, R., & Dibbon, D. (2008). *Teacher education in Canada: A baseline study*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (Eds.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

DeLuca, C. (2012). Selecting Inclusive Teacher Candidates: Validity and Reliability Issues in Admission Policy and Practice. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *39*(4), 7-32.

Dewey, J. (1933). *How we think*. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus.

Dulude Lay, C., Pinnegar, S., Reed, M., Young Wheeler, E., & Wilkes, C. (2005). The positioning of preservice teacher candidates entering teacher education. In J. Brophy & S. Pinnegar (Eds.), *Learning from research on teaching: Perspective, methodology, and representation* (pp. 235-252). Netherlands: Elsevier.

European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture (July 2014). *Initial Teacher Education in Europe: An Overview of Policy Issues. ET2020 Working Group on Schools Policy 2014.* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/expert-groups/documents/initial-teacher-education_en.pdf.

Falkenberg, T. (2010). Admission to teacher education programs: The problem and two approaches to addressing it. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 107,* 1-35.

Gardner, H. (2006a). *Changing minds: The art and science of changing our own and other people's minds*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Gardner, H. (2006b). *The development and education of the mind: The selected works of Howard Gardner*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Goodlad, J. (1984). *A place called school: Prospects for the future*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Goodwin, A, & Oyler, C. (2008). Teacher educators as gatekeepers: Deciding who is ready to teach. In M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, and D. J. McIntyre (Eds.), *Handbook of research on teacher education: Enduring questions in changing contexts* (pp. 468-489). New York, NY: Routledge.

Haberman, M. (2010). How to make university-controlled teacher education and alternative certification programs accountable for the quality of teachers in schools serving children and youth in poverty. In V. Hill-Jackson & C. Lewis (Eds.), *Transforming teacher education* (pp. 121-152). Sterling, VI: Stylus.

Howe, E. (2009). Henry David Thoreau, forest succession and the nature of science: A method for curriculum development. *American Biology Teacher, 71*(7), 397-404.

Hirschkorn, M., Ireland, K., & Sears, A. (2014). Becoming teacher: Sites for development of Canadian teacher education. In L. Thomas, (Ed.), *Disrupting teacher development: The role of teacher education* (pp. 209-234). Retrieved from https://sites.google.com/site/cssecate/fall-working-conference.

Hughes, A., Print, M., & Sears, A. (2010). Curriculum capacity and citizenship education: A comparative analysis. *Compare, 40*(3), 293-309.

Hughes, A., & Sears, A. (2008). The struggle for citizenship education in Canada: The centre cannot hold. In J. Arthur, I. Davies, & C. Hahn (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of education for citizenship and democracy* (pp. 124-138). London, UK: Sage.

Jankvist, U. (2009). A categorization of the "whys" and "hows" of using history in mathematics education. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 71*(3), 235-261.

Kitchen, J., Cherubini, L., Smith, D., Goldblatt, P., & Engemann, J., (2008). *Learning from experience: Supporting beginning teachers and mentors* (Ontario College of Teachers and Brock University Report). Retrieved from https://www.oct.ca/-/media/PDF/Learning%20from%20Experience%20Book%205%20Research%20Summary/EN/induction_booklet5_e.pdf.

Kosnik, C., Brown, R., & Beck, C. (2005) The preservice admissions process: What qualities do future teachers need and how can they be identified in applicants? *The New Educator*, *1*(2), 101-123.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* New York: NY: Cambridge University Press.

Lee, P., & Ashby, R. (2000). Progression in historical understanding Ages 7-14. In P. Stearns, P. Seixas, & S. S. Wineburg (Eds.), *Knowing, teaching, and learning history: National and international perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.

Lévesque, S. (2008). *Thinking historically: Educating students for the twenty-first century*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Linenthal, E., & Engelhardt, T. (Eds.). (1996). *History wars: The Enola Gay and other battles for the American past*. New York, NY: Metropolitan.

Lortie, D. (1975). *Schoolteacher: A sociological study.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Macintyre, S., & Clark, A. (2004). *The history wars*. Melbourne, AU: Melbourne University Press.

MacMillan, M. (2008). *The uses and abuses of history*. Toronto, ON: Viking.

Marton, F. (1981). Phenomenography: Describing conceptions of the world around us. *Instructional Science, 10*, 177-200.

Miller-Levy, R., Taylor, D., & Hawke, L. (2014). Maintaining the boundaries: Teacher preparation program admission criteria for screening quality candidates. *Administrative Issues Journal: Education, Practice, and Research*, *4*(1), 40-50. doi: 10.5929/2014.4.1.8. Retrieved from http://www.swosu.edu/academics/aij/2014/v4i1/miller-taylor-hawke.pdf

Minor, L., Onwuegbuzie, A., Witcher, A., & James, T. (2002). Preservice teachers' educational beliefs and their perceptions of characteristics of effective teachers. *Journal of Educational Research*, *96*(2), 116-127.

Munby, H., & Russell, T., (1994). The authority of experience in learning to teach: Messages from a physics methods class. *Journal of Teacher Education, 45*(2), 86-95.

Piaget, J. (1985). *The equilibration of cognitive structures: The central problem of intellectual development*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Richardson, J. (1999). The concepts and methods of phenomenographic research. *Review of Educational Research, 69*(1), 53-82.

Richardson, V. (2003). Preservice teachers' beliefs. In J. Raths & A. McAninch (Eds.), *Teacher beliefs and teacher education. Advances in teacher education* (pp. 1-22.). Greenwich, CT: Information Age.

Russell, T. (2009, October). *Is innovation in teacher education possible, and can self-study help?* Paper presented at the Inspiration and Innovation in Teaching and Teacher Education (EDGE) Conference, St. John's, NFLD, Canada.

Sears, A. (2009). Children's understandings of democratic participation: Lessons for civic education. In M. Print & H. Milner (Eds.), *Civic education and youth political participation* (pp. 143-158). Rotterdam, NL: Sense.

Seezink, A., Poell, R., & Kirschner, P. (2009). Teachers' individual action theories about competence-based education: The value of the cognitive apprenticeship model. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training, 61*(2), 203-215.

Seixas, P., & Morton, T. (2013). *The big six historical thinking concepts*. Toronto, ON: Nelson.

Shulman, L. (1986). Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching. *Educational Researcher, 15*(4), 4-14.

Sloat, E., Sherman, A., Christou, T., Hirschkorn, M., Kristmanson, P., Lemisko, L., & Sears, A. (2014). Restoring higher education's mission in teacher education: A global challenge from a Canadian perspective. In V. Ellis & J. Orchard (Eds.), *Learning teaching from experience: Multiple perspectives and international contexts* (pp. 143-159). London, UK: Bloomsbury.

Stearns, P., Seixas, P., & Wineburg, S. (Eds.). (2000). *Knowing, teaching, and learning history: National and international perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.

Tanase, M., & Wang, J. (2010). Initial epistemological beliefs transformation in one teacher education classroom: Case study of four preservice teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 26*, 1238-1248.

Taylor, T. (2004). Disputed territory: Some political contexts for the development of Australian historical consciousness. In P. Seixas (Ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness* (pp. 217-239). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Taylor, T., & Guyver, R. (Eds.). (2012). *History wars and the classroom: Global perspectives*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

Tenore, F., Dunn, A., Laughter, J., & Milner, H. (2010). Teacher candidate selection, recruitment, and induction: A critical analysis with implications for transformation. In V. Hill-Jackson & C. Lewis (Eds.), *Transforming teacher education* (pp. 93-118). Virginia: Stylus.

Thomson, D., Cummings, E., Ferguson, A., Moizumi, E., Sher, Y., Wang, X., Broad, K., & Childs, R. (2011). A role for research in initial teacher education admissions: A case study from one Canadian university. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy, 121*, 1-23.

Turner, S., & Turner, T. (2000). Who succeeds? A case study of science graduates following postgraduate certificate in education (secondary) courses. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 23*(2), 159-174.

Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia: A century of public school reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Valli, R., & Johnson, P. (2007). Entrance examinations as gatekeepers. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, 51*(5), 493-510.

Vincente, M., Bermejo, M., Blanco, L., & Ruiz, C. (2008). The classroom practice of a prospective secondary biology teacher and his conceptions of the nature of science and of teaching and learning science. *International Journal of Science and Mathematics Education, 6*(1), 37-62.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in society*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Waldron, F., Pike, S., Greenwood, R., Murphy, C. M., O'Connor, G., & Dolan, A., (2009). *Becoming a teacher: Primary student teachers as learners and teachers of history, geography and science: An all-Ireland study*. Armagh: The Centre for Cross Boarder Studies.

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wineburg, S. (2001). *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

**Examining the Organization of a Second Grade Classroom: An Action Research Analysis Using Human Resource and Structural Frames**

Karen Capraro

*Rhode Island College*

**Abstract**

This paper presents an examination and analysis of the restructuring of the organization of a second grade classroom housed in a laboratory school setting. During the 2014-2015 academic year, the traditional power structure of teacher as ultimate authority with students positioned as subordinates was explored. Using action research and the application of frame theory the organizational structure of the second grade classroom is considered using human resource and structural frames.

*Keywords:* organization; power, elementary; structure; human resource

## Examining the Organization of a Second Grade Classroom: An Action Research Analysis Using Human Resource and Structural Frames

I invite you, the reader, to think of a usual classroom—it can be one in which you were a member, or one derived from your imagination. Where is the teacher? What are the students doing? What does the room look and sound like? It is likely that the classroom you have roused in your mind is still. Students are working independently at their desks. The teacher is situated toward the front of the room, chalk in hand. Her head is slightly tilted, with one ear raised to capture any sound, as her eyes scan the space for disruptions—disruptions in behaviors, disruptions in understanding, disruptions to her lesson. Her aim is to teach the students something.

But what is she teaching? Let's pretend she is teaching a mathematics lesson. Numbers are scrawled across the board as she instructs her students on the standard algorithm for addition. The students diligently copy the equations, "carrying the one" when necessary. Suddenly, the bell sounds, books are gathered, metal chairs scrape against the linoleum floor as students prepare for lunch, and the room becomes empty. Satisfied that she has taught what she intended to teach, the teacher moves toward the board and erases her examples, readying herself for the following lesson. What will she teach her students next? Indeed, what will they learn?

Darling-Hammond (2006) states, "In the United States, education must [among other things] serve the purposes of a democracy. This…means that teachers assume the purpose of enabling young people to participate fully in political, civic, and economic life in our society" ( p. 303). How does our imaginary "usual" classroom support this purpose? In what ways are the students being prepared?

Dewey (1916), when discussing aims in education, wrote:

> To talk about an educational aim when approximately each act of a pupil is dictated by the teacher, when the only order in the sequence of his acts is that which comes from the assignment of lessons and the giving of directions by another, is to talk nonsense. (p. 102)

His words, if they are to be considered in relation to Darling-Hammond's, suggest that our "usual" classroom structures, with teachers positioned as authorities and students as passive learners, cannot support the development of political, civic, and economic participants. How, then, might our classrooms be restructured to support this development?

In this paper, I begin to examine the organization of my own second grade classroom in an effort to answer this question. Specifically, using action research, and the application of frame theory (Bolman & Deal, 2013), I will (a) detail the latest organizational structure of my classroom, (b) provide contrasting cases for analysis, and (c) utilize Bolman & Deal's (2013) central question, "What do we know about organizations and leadership that is genuinely relevant and useful to practitioners and scholars?" (p. viii), in an effort to lay the groundwork for creating classrooms that support the development of active participants within a democracy.

### Theoretical Framework

Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) is often accredited with inventing the term "action research" around 1934 (Mills 2003, p. 5; Tomal, 2003). For Lewin (as cited in Adelman, 1993), action research was characterized by (a) the discussion of problems by active participants, (b) group decisions on

how to move forward, (c) routine monitoring, and (d) regular reflection. Like Lewin, Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003), assert, "there are strong elements of action research in the work of John Dewey, both in his philosophical work and in his studies and experiments in education" (p. 2).

Action researchers, ascribing to the belief that knowledge is socially constructed, are committed to a form of research, "which challenges unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices" (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003, p. 3) in favor of "an explicitly political, socially engaged, and democratic practice" (Brydon-Miller et al, 2003, p. 5). Interestingly, before educators began using action research more regularly within their work, action research was employed "within the business world by organization development consultants...concerned with improving employee morale, productivity, profitability, teamwork, communication, and quality of work life" (Tomal, 2003, p. 9).

Bolman and Deal (2013) write that it is only within the last century that social scientists began to consider organizations in terms of how they work—or do not work. In fact, social scientists have developed multiple theories, each theory with its own set of assumptions and particular view. Bolman and Deal (2013) do not espouse any particular tradition, but instead use four perspectives, or frames, "to capture the subtlety and complexity of life in organizations" (p. 14). For the purposes of this study, I will utilize two of Bolman and Deal's frames—human resource and structural—while conducting action research, to analyze the reorganization of my second grade classroom.

## Review of Literature

Educators have long supported the idea that schools should strive to produce students who are responsible citizens, able to actively engage in a democracy (Cohen, 2006). Educational policies however, heavily influenced by neo-liberal and neoconservative politicians since the release of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (US, National Commission on Excellence in Education), have been restructured around the belief that the aim of schools is to prepare students for the global economy (Goodlad, 2000; Hursh, 2005). These educational reforms have given rise to a system that overly stresses "individualism, competition, markets, and auditing through standardized tests and other accountability measures" (Hursh, 2005, p. 13). This overemphasis on individual, standardized test scores is, "inadvertently retarding academic achievement and preventing future generations of young people from developing the ability to be active, engaged members of a democracy" (Cohen, 2006, p. 223).

Ironically, whether we are attempting to prepare our students for the global economy or for more active engagement within a democracy, we persistently hold on to an outdated organizational approach within our schools that was intended for a much simpler, stable world (Williams, Brien, & LeBlanc, 2012). This conventional approach, which continues to dictate the organization of schools today, is a relic, leftover from a bureaucracy attempting to meet the needs of an industrial society (Williams et al., 2012).

Interestingly, according to Lewin (1944), schools and industry are similarly concerned with "the rate of learning or production" (p. 197), and the standards for both are decided upon and vigorously maintained by the teacher or the manager, with the assumption that without forceful maintenance production will be decreased. Such a system is autocratic in nature, built on a hierarchy with the teacher or the manager assuming ultimate authority.

If we, as teachers, aim to prepare students to become active members within a democracy, we should consider moving away from these oppressive systems. While a productive democracy will still require an organizational structure, the structure and leadership cannot be based on the principles of autocracy. "Democratic behavior cannot be learned through autocratic methods" (Lewin, 1944, p. 199); for students (or workers), democratic learning can only be realized through democratic *living* [emphasis added] ( Lewin, 1944).

Goodlad (2000) reminds educators that schools, while exercising "custodial care" of children throughout the school day, have the opportunity to develop "the essence of each individual self in the context of justice, fairness, responsibility, and mutual caring to which the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution speak so eloquently" (p. 5). How to do so however, including what "skills, knowledge, and dispositions are needed for children to become engaged," has only recently become part of the larger conversation (Cohen, 2006, p. 203).

How can a teacher begin to move away from autocratic practices in an effort to help her students *live* within a democracy? What would reorganization look like? What obstacles might he or she face while attempting this shift within the confines of an outdated organizational structure? To explore these issues, this action-oriented, problem-solving research will be guided by the following two questions relative to school structures, democracy, and organizational theory:

1. Can a teacher and the students whom she teaches successfully, productively, and democratically share power within an individual classroom?
2. Can a teacher and the students whom she teaches successfully, productively, and democratically share power within an individual classroom, within an externally structured organization?

## Methodology

### My Role as Researcher

According to Lewin (1944), "autocratic as well as democratic leadership consists in playing a certain role" (p. 199). For researchers engaging in action research it is easy to slip into an autocratic role, imposing their viewpoints and programs upon others, regardless of the opinions of the others involved (Stringer, 2008). For the purposes of this research, I will attempt to lead democratically, acting as a "change agent...[and] catalyst in collecting data and then working with the group in a collaborative effort to develop actions to address the issues" (Tomal, 2003, p. 9). In keeping with the characteristics of action researchers as described by Brydon-Miller et al. (2003), I will assume the role of "scholar/activist," aspiring to realize actual change with actual people, while remaining "patient,...optimistic, and [open to] a certain degree of chaos, uncertainty, and messiness" (p. 12).

### Participants

The role of the leader cannot be carried through without the followers playing certain complementary roles...the democratic follower has to play a role which implies, among other points, a fair share of responsibility toward the group and a sensitivity to other peoples' feelings. (Lewin, 1944, p. 199).

Participants playing a complementary role in this research include 22, second graders ranging from 7- to 8-years of age, enrolled in a small laboratory school located on a mid-sized

New England college campus. Of the 22 students, 11 are male and 11 female; three males are African-American and three females are Asian. The remaining children are White.

## Data Sources and Collection Procedures

Patton (2002) writes, "In action research...design and data collection tend to be more informal, the people in the situation are often directly involved in gathering the information and then studying themselves, and the results are used internally to attack specific problems" (p. 221). For the purposes of this research, three primary fieldwork strategies were utilized to collect data including observations, interviews, and journals.

Observation is a popular method for data collection in research studies when the researcher aims to collect "first-hand information regarding subjects" (Tomal, 2003, p. 28). For this particular research, the researcher assumed the role of active participant observer (Mills, 2003) while simultaneously recording field notes. Informal ethnographic interviews (Mills, 2003) were conducted with participants throughout the school year, two to three times per week, within the classroom setting. These interviews were more akin to conversations between the researcher and participants, related to the reorganization of the classroom, which included opportunities for reflection and problem solving. The researcher recorded anecdotal notes during the interview sessions, which were often utilized to scaffold subsequent conversations. Finally, I maintained an informal journal, related to my course requirements, while reading Bolman and Deal's (2013) book, *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, & leadership* (5th ed.) as part of my doctoral coursework.

## Data Analysis

Researchers conducting action research understand that data collected can be used as both formative data, to improve the conditions of the group, and as summative data, to formally report findings to a larger community (Mills, 2003). When analyzing data gathered as the result of action research, researchers can utilize a variety of approaches. For the purposes of this research, "significant experiences and events" (Stringer, 2008, p. 87) were used as the basis for analysis. Significant, or key experiences are selected based on their importance to the people involved (Stringer, 2008). I first identified key experiences, then utilized Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource and structural frames to deconstruct the experiences, and finally selected one key experience as a summative case.

## Reconsidering Mental Models

Bolman and Deal's (2013) statement, "When we don't know what to do, we do more of what we know" (p. 7), can often be applied to classroom teachers who organize their classrooms in ways that closely resemble their "mental models" of what a classroom should be—the classrooms of their childhoods—with teachers holding ultimate authority. "Mental models are deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting. Very often, we are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behavior" (Senge, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 37).

Traditionally, I have structured my classroom in a way that closely resembled my own mental model of a classroom. I utilized a vertical coordination structure within my classroom with me positioned as the authority figure controlling the work and the behaviors of my students while enforcing the rules and policies. Bolman and Deal (2013) write, "Vertical coordination

rests on top-down command and control…and is generally [a] superior [structure] if an environment is stable and tasks are well understood and predictable" (pp. 57-58), which is often the case in classrooms. In the imaginary "usual" classroom, for example, vertical coordination is utilized.

This year, however, I started reconsidering my mental model as well as the organizational design of my classroom in response to two stimuli: First, I began reading Bolman & Deal's *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, & leadership* (5th ed.) as part of my doctoral coursework entitled "Organizational theory, leadership, and policy analysis" and second, I noticed an ability in my current students to self-regulate their behaviors. Students who are self-regulated learners are "generally characterized as being motivated and efficient managers of their own actions, environment, and behavior through monitoring and strategy use (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997, as cited in Regan & Martin, 2014, p. 164). Because of these two factors, as well as my belief in supporting the development of active political, civic, and economic participants, I endeavored to build a classroom in which authority was shared. Specifically, I wanted to put the power of the classroom into the hands of my second graders.

I told my students, "I want you to be able to run this classroom without me" and in that statement, I began establishing our classroom's "image of the future… illuminating new possibilities" for our classroom (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 250). In the subsequent sections of this paper, I will outline the steps I took, along with my students, toward reorganization, and will analyze two cases using Bolman and Deal's (2013) human resource and structural frames.

## Reorganization

On a particularly warm day, toward the end of September, I discussed my idea with my class of 7- and 8-year olds. "Second graders," I began, "I have been thinking about our year ahead together and I have been thinking that I don't want to be in charge of us anymore. I want you to be." Unsurprisingly, I was met with some very confused expressions. I continued, "I want you to be able to run this class without me. And to do that, we are all going to have to work together to figure out how we can make that happen."

Always eager to try something new, my second graders readily agreed. Over the next several weeks, we began to restructure our room. Classroom jobs such as gardener and computer expert were generated, applied for, and filled, and a classroom "economy" was created. We discussed what we wanted our room to look like and sound like and then we practiced and reflected. We came together for community meetings to discuss what was working and what was not and we attempted to find satisfactory solutions to problems. I truly *listened* to what the children said, and then, together, we tried to coordinate their needs with curricular requirements.

We talked about our classroom as "a home away from home," where we welcomed visitors including families, and kindergarten buddies, college students, and other teachers. And, finally, we established predictable rituals, such as Morning Meeting and Closing Circle. These rituals provided both an invitation and a closure to each day and became a forum for sharing our thoughts about school, our learning, our families, and each other. It is one of these rituals, the Morning Meeting routine, which will be used to provide contrasting snapshots of our classroom—a place where power is shared and children are active participants—as the basis for frame analysis.

## Shared Power: When it Works

Sunlight streams into the classroom. Attendance has been taken and lunch orders placed. I am seated behind my desk, laptop open, reading the daily announcements. While I read, Carol waters the large fern by the window. She carefully stands on the table in front of the fern; with watering can poised, she drips cold water over the tender foliage. Other students are reading or quietly working on little projects. Some are working in pairs, laughing at pictures in their books or sharing information about reptiles. Nathan is turning on our classroom computers. Kim and Eli are gathering up books that need to be returned to the school library. They motion to me that they will be leaving the room. I nod in assent. The classroom door opens and closes.

When Carol finishes her chore, she returns the watering can to its spot by the sink and tells Alyson, who is reading in the big, comfy chair, that it is time for Morning Meeting. Alyson closes her chapter book, heads to the compact disc player, and hits "play." The familiar strains of George Winston's (1982), *Rest Your Head,* fill the classroom. Kids stop their work, put their things away, push in their chairs, and head over to the carpet where they join together in a circle. I, too, put away my work and head to the carpet. Kim and Eli return from the library and join us. Many of the students hum along to the music as they make their way to the rug and find their spots.

Once we are all seated and the song is complete, Imani informs us how we will pass our morning greeting that day. "Today," she begins, "because we have been studying butterflies, we will do the butterfly greeting." The kids hook thumbs and begin waving their fingers to emulate wings as they quickly pass a "Good morning" greeting around the circle. Once finished, Isaiah stands and reads the morning message that I wrote the afternoon before. "Good morning, everyone! Today is Tuesday. We will have art today. Today's number is 56. Who can write a number sentence, which will equal 56?" he asks. Isaiah chooses a student to come to the easel to write a number sentence. We stop to discuss what is written: $10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 6$. I speak for the first time to the group. "Why does that number sentence make sense?" I ask. Several students volunteer to discuss their thinking. Isaiah then turns to the class schedule, announces what we will be doing throughout the day and the day's line leader. He returns to his spot in the circle as we all turn our attention to Isabel who announces who the first "sharer" will be that morning. It is Josiah.

Josiah stands, goes to the sharing chair, and tells us that he has just joined karate. The other students give him their full attention. Josiah tells us that he can bring friends to his next class to see if they would like to join too. "Would anyone like to come?" he asks. Several hands shoot up in the air. "Okay, okay," he says grinning, "I don't think I can remember everybody. I am going to make a sign-up sheet and put it by the mailboxes."

Isabel says, "Our next sharer is Lucy." Lucy exchanges places with Josiah. She shows us a coin her grandmother brought back from Russia. The class is interested. Michael shouts out, "How much is it worth?" Isabel interrupts. "Shhh…," she reminds him gently, "Remember, Michael, no shouting out. Wait to be called on."

"We have done it," I think. "We have put the kids in charge. They could run this room without me."

## A Human Resource Analysis

> The human resource frame centers on what organizations and people do to and for
> one another. (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 113)

If we as teachers consider what the people in our imaginary "usual" classroom do to and for one another, we would likely agree that, because of how we have been taught, the teacher teaches and the students are expected to learn. The students do not "do to" or "do for"—they are "done to" and "done for." In our reorganized second grade classroom, however, students have an active role. The reorganization allowed the students to become "doers" and, as a result, the classroom organization has benefited.

How has it benefited? As an example, prior to the reorganization the students were expected to, upon arrival, enter the room and read independently until Morning Meeting. After my announcement that I wanted the students to "be in charge," several students approached me about doing alternative activities. Some wanted to write, some preferred drawing, and others wanted to interact with classroom materials such as puzzles and games. Our class held a meeting and discussed their requests; we decided to try alternative activities the next day. Although I felt the students had the ability to self-regulate, I was still apprehensive.

The following day the students rose to the occasion, entering into activities that I found surprising. One student, for example, designed miniature cutouts representing the lifecycle of a butterfly. She carefully labeled each piece—egg, larva, pupa, adult—and shared her project with other members at her table. Another student became engrossed in a tangram puzzle book and asked if he could add other puzzles to the book that he designed. Two other students, deeply interested in history, pored over a book about the Civil War and began to make a timeline of historical figures and events. Our room had become a buzz of focused, meaningful activity.

According to Bolman and Deal (2013), one of the key assumptions of the human resource frame is that "people and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities" (p. 117). Our reorganization gave the students what they needed—the opportunity to showcase their talents and ideas. And, as a result, our classroom became richer for it.

Douglas McGregor (1960, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2013), building on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), suggested that a manager's (or in this case, a teacher's) "assumptions about people tend to become self-fulfilling prophecies" (p. 123). "McGregor argued that most managers harbor 'Theory X' assumptions, believing that subordinates are passive and lazy, have little ambition, prefer to be led, and resist change" (Bolman & Deal, p. 123). McGregor (1960, as cited in Bolman & Deal, 2013) believed that an alternative assumption, named "Theory Y," would increase an individual's self-direction. My willingness to change our classroom arrival routine demonstrated trust—I was going to trust the students to try something new, and, in turn, they were trustworthy.

Creating opportunities for creative ventures was relatively easy to do. But I wanted more for our classroom. A basic human resource principle specifies that managers *empower* employees (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 140). How, then, could I use "Theory Y" to empower the students? How could I demonstrate my belief that they truly could run the classroom without me? The first thing I did was to discuss classroom jobs with the students. Classroom jobs are not

unusual in elementary schools. Normally there are students who sharpen pencils, erase the board, or wash tables. This year, however, we discussed jobs that I would normally do—for example, noise monitoring. We then made up new jobs and discussed the responsibilities the jobs entailed. Students applied for the jobs and described why they thought the job was right for them. I then matched applications to job vacancies.

Traditionally, I controlled Morning Meeting. I would pass the greeting. I would announce who was sharing, and I would monitor behaviors. In our reorganized classroom, however, the students are firmly in charge. Our head of sharing, for example, will remind students who are not actively paying attention to the sharer to look forward. She will also correct someone if they speak over the sharer by gently reminding the offending student that "in our classroom, we don't interrupt." Bolman and Deal (2013) write, "Progressive organizations give power to employees as well as invest in their development" (p. 147). The head of sharing, as well as all other "employees" within our classroom, were extensively trained in relation to their job responsibilities. Our computer expert, for example, arrived in second grade with little understanding of how to turn on a computer. Over several days, I met with him to support him as he learned how to use a touchpad, how to enter a password, and how to navigate to our classroom website. Similarly, our gardener learned how to carefully water the highest plants without falling, and how to tell when a plant was thirsty.

"Investing in people requires time and persistence to yield a payoff" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 139). In a classroom, where time is of the essence and there is much to teach and learn, one might argue that to spend so much time "training" students is educationally irresponsible. Organizations that attend to human needs, however, ultimately "benefit from a talented, motivated, loyal, and free-spirited workforce" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 140).

How has our investment in "job training" paid off? One example is Alyson, our class musician. The class musician's job is a difficult one because we use music throughout the day to transition from one activity to another. I use many different compact discs and songs, so the musician needs to know which compact disc to use, and which song, and when. Alyson's music is our signal that it is time to meet for Morning Meeting. Recently, Alyson was absent from school for six days due to illness. Until her absence, I had not realized how much we depended on her and her music to move us through our day. I kept forgetting to play our songs because it was no longer my responsibility. Our classroom organization suffered as a result. When Alyson returned, her classmates were genuinely relieved. Not surprisingly, one week after Alyson returned, I woke up ill. I telephoned my principal and, after hanging up, set about writing substitute plans. This year however, after the restructuring of our classroom organization, I noticed that I did not have much to write. Aside from the specific academic lessons, I was able to write, "The kids will lead Morning Meeting" and "The kids know what to do" and "The kids will show you where to find our emergency folder." Upon my return, my principal approached me to say the substitute teacher was impressed by the responsibility my students had shown. The substitute teacher said that the students told her what to do throughout the day. The day was smooth and problem free. The principal then praised me when she said, "That is one well-run classroom." The thing is, they did it without me.

## Shared Power: When it is a Challenge

Sunlight streams into the classroom. The students have not yet arrived. I get my laptop and sign on to our school's attendance system. I hear a commotion in the hallway. The kids have entered the building and are waiting to come into our room. I open the door and the kids surge in advising me as to their lunch plans. Are they hot lunch? Sandwich? Salad? Isaiah enters seemingly upset about something. As I am about to ask him what has happened, a parent pokes her head into the room to inquire about a lost water bottle. It's blue, with dolphins on it. Could I please make sure it is found and brought home? "No problem," I reply. Meanwhile, there is noise coming from the closet area as kids, doubled in size due to their winter coats and oversized backpacks, charge toward the Sharing Sign-Up sheet. "You shared yesterday," Andy admonishes as Trudy grabs the sheet. "That's not fair!" Trudy simply grins and grabs a pencil.

I am about to intervene when I see that Carol has flooded our counter with water. According to Carol, the plant "overflowed." I grab some paper towel to help her clean up the mess. As I am cleaning, I notice some activity on the rug. There is a large group of students arguing over a trading card dispute. "I didn't mean to trade that card! It was my brother's! Now I am going to get in trouble!" I head over to see if I can help the students work out a compromise. I tell Carol I will return.

On my way to the rug, Nathan informs me that he is having trouble logging on to one of our older computers. "I will be right there," I tell him. The classroom phone rings. Norah answers, "Hello?" She listens and then hands me the phone. The office is still waiting for the attendance and lunch count. "Just a second," I reply. The familiar strains of *Rest Your Head* fill the classroom. Is it Morning Meeting time already?

I quickly finish the attendance and take my place in the circle. We have a busy day ahead and not much time. Imani begins, "Today we will do the alphabetical order greeting. I have everyone's names here on cards. I will hang them and then we will rearrange them and then say good morning—except today I am going to throw in a twist." She winks and then proceeds to tape 22 names to the chart on the easel. Inwardly I groan. This greeting takes F-O-R-E-V-E-R. I will never get to what I need to do! I had meant to discuss the greeting with Imani in advance but now it's too late! As we wait, Kim and Eli return from returning the books to the school library. I hadn't even noticed they had left the room! They stand on the outer edge of the circle, unsure of where to sit. I intervene and suggest they say, "excuse me," to some of the members of the circle. They eventually find two spots but now some of the other students are complaining about being "squished."

"Look! Look! A spider!" the kids shout. "Let me see! Let me see!" Our circle has become a sprawl of children and one very frightened spider. "Let's get him outside," I suggest, moving to pick the arachnid up with my bare hands. As I am shooing the spider out our window, our classroom door opens. A college student enters and informs me that she is there to observe our classroom. "Oh! I am so sorry!" I respond. "I completely forgot! Make yourself comfortable!" Meanwhile, Imani is still taping names to the chart. Some of the kids in the circle are starting to get restless. The clock ticks on.

The greeting is finally passed. Isaiah stands to read the morning message. "Good morning, everyone," he mumbles incoherently. "Today is Wednesday. We will have gym." Several of the students complain, "We can't hear you!" "Could you please speak up, Isaiah?" I

ask. He continues to mumble as we make our way through "Today's number." Isaiah then turns to the class schedule, announcing what we will be doing throughout the day and naming the day's line leader. Our line leader is Harry. "Harry is absent! Harry is absent!" the children begin to chant. "I'll lead the line! No, I will! I will!" We work out a substitute line leader.

Isaiah returns to his spot in the circle and everyone turns their attention to Isabel who is poised to announce who the first "sharer" will be that morning. My stomach is churning. There are three students signed up to share, one of whom is especially—to put it kindly—descriptive. *When* will I get to my reading lesson? In 10 minutes, the Interventionist will arrive to work with a small group of students! We will never be ready! Harry enters the room. "Harry is here! Harry is here! Now who will lead the line?" the children shout. Just then, the fire alarm sounds…

## A Structural Analysis

Bolman and Deal (2013) ask:

> If someone asked you to describe your organization—your workplace, your school, or even your family—what image would come to mind? A likely possibility is a traditional organization chart: a series of boxes and lines depicting job responsibilities and levels. The chart might be shaped roughly like a pyramid, with a small number of bosses at the top and a much larger number of employees at the bottom. (p. 41)

Where is the teacher from our imaginary "usual" classroom in relation to the pyramid? Where are her students? It is likely that the teacher is positioned just above the students—somewhere in the lower third of the pyramid. The school administration, responsible for the school's schedule, is above the teacher. At the top, perhaps, is the Superintendent, responsible for the overall structure of the school.

Pretend that the teacher in our imaginary "usual" classroom wants to change the schedule or the structure of the classroom. Would either be easily accomplished? I am fortunate to teach in a laboratory school where innovation is encouraged and celebrated but I am still in the bottom third of the pyramid, and, thus, there is a tension between the reorganization of my classroom and the structural design of my school. Specifically, I am bound to the school's schedule, which was not crafted to serve human needs, but to "achieve established goals and objectives"—one of the six assumptions that undergirds the structural frame (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45).

Schools are organized to maximize efficiency. Busses arrive and doors open promptly. The Pledge of Allegiance (or some other type of morning announcement) is broadcast over the intercom as a reminder that the day is to officially begin. Reading specialists and special education teachers and occupational therapists visit children in need, in accordance with Individual Education Plans. Art, music, and physical education are offered on specified days of the week. Lunch begins promptly and ends promptly, 30 minutes later. Visits to the bathroom are even completed according to schedule. These "rules, standards, and standard operating procedures limit individual discretion and help ensure that behavior is predictable and consistent" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 52).

Children, however, do not necessarily behave according to schedule. "Teaching objectives are knotty and amorphous… students are active agents. Which teaching strategies best yield desired results is more a matter of faith than fact" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 62). Isaiah's

unhappiness needed to be addressed and, although I recognized his need and wanted to speak with him, it was "arrival time," and I was unable. My failure to address his needs led to further complications during Morning Meeting. Likewise, my inattention to Carol and the arguing "traders" may have been perceived as disinterest.

My anxiety increased as the clock continued to tick. The greeting, organized by Imani, was academically appropriate and, had we had more time, would have been worthwhile to many of the students in my classroom who struggle with alphabetizing words. Likewise, the opportunity to closely observe the spider over time would have connected to our study of insects (and non-insects) and would have been potentially educative. But I knew we didn't have time.

"Like an animal's skeleton or a building's framework, structural form both enhances and constrains what an organization can accomplish" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 47). Without a division of labor and specializations and a predictable schedule how could one ensure all students had the same experiences? How could the structure "ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh"? (Bolman & Deal, p. 45). On the other hand, without division of labor and a predictable schedule, what different experiences might be available? "Troubles arise and performance suffers from structural deficits" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45). In the case of the current structure of many, if not most, schools, a rigid adherence to historic structural frameworks has led to what Bolman and Deal might term a "stagnant bureaucracy…an older, tradition-dominated organization with an obsolete product line" (p. 87). What might a new structure look like?

Darling-Hammond & Bransford (2005) write, "Many analysts have noted that there is very little relationship between the organization of the typical American school and the demands of serious teaching and learning" (p. 4). And yet, I am not sure if anyone has come up with a viable alternative. Indeed, we avoid the possibilities, which seem too overwhelming to contemplate, and revert to our mental models. Dewey (1938) himself said that "it is, accordingly, a much more difficult task to work out the kinds of materials, of methods, and of social relationships that are appropriate to the new education than is the case with traditional education" (p. 29). Bolman and Deal (2013), however, console and inspire us when they state, "structure…need not be machinelike or inflexible…recent years have witnessed remarkable inventiveness in designing structures emphasizing flexibility" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 48). How, then, might our educational structure be reinvented to ensure flexibility?

## Conclusion

Bolman and Deal (2013) ask, "What do we know about organizations and leadership that is genuinely relevant and useful to practitioners and scholars?" (p. viii). In an attempt to answer that question, I shared the power of my classroom with 22, 7- and 8-year olds and then analyzed two contrasting cases using human resource and structural frames. The structural frame, although intended to "reflect confidence in rationality and a faith that a suitable array of formal roles and responsibilities will minimize distracting personal static and maximize people's performance" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 45) is no longer (if it ever was) an appropriate framework for schools. Instead, because of my analysis, I advocate for a human resource approach as the more appropriate organizing structure, with the intention of enabling our students to participate more fully in our society. "The human resource frame highlights the relationship between people and organizations. Organizations need people (for their energy, effort, and talent), and people need

organizations (for the many intrinsic and extrinsic rewards they offer), but their respective needs are not always well aligned" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 135). It is important, then, that alignment be considered in relation to both classrooms and the schools in which they are housed, and both schools and the societies in which they are held.

Until this point in this discussion, the "organization" has been limited to my classroom and the "people" as the members within it. But, if we, as teachers, begin to think of the "organization" as society, and of the "people" as including *students* in classrooms, we begin to see the necessity of sharing power. In other words, if, as Darling-Hammond (2006) states, "education must serve the purposes of a democracy… [with] the purpose of enabling young people to participate fully in political, civic, and economic life in our society" (p. 303), then we need to recognize our students as being able to participate.

One of the key assumptions of the human resource frame highlights the "fit" between the organization and the individual. "When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization" (Bolman & Deal, 2013, p. 117). In our imaginary "usual" classroom, who is suffering? Who is exploited? And, more tragically, when we weigh our "usual" classroom as the "individual" and our society as the "organization," we are forced to ask, how many will ultimately suffer or be exploited?

*Numbers are scrawled across the board as she instructs her students on the standard algorithm for addition. The students diligently copy the equations, "carrying the one" when necessary. Suddenly, the bell sounds, books are gathered, metal chairs scrape against the linoleum floor as students prepare for lunch, and the room becomes empty. Satisfied that she has taught what she intended to teach, the teacher moves toward the board and erases her examples, readying herself for the following lesson. What will she teach her students next? Indeed, what will they learn?*

Dewey (1916) said:

One of the weightiest problems with which the philosophy of education has to cope is the method of keeping a proper balance between…the incidental and the intentional modes of education…to avoid a split between what men consciously know because they are aware of having learned it by a specific job of learning, and what they unconsciously know because they have absorbed it in the formation of their characters by intercourse with others. (p. 9)

I believe, through the sharing of power, and the recognition of the talents and ideas my students can bring to our classroom, I am allowing my students to partake in the incidental and intentional, as "doers" rather than the "done to," as they take their first steps towards becoming active political, economic, and civic participants—capable of serving our democracy.

### References

Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (2013). *Artistry, choice, and leadership: Reframing organizations* (5th ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., & Maguire, P. (2003). Why action research?. *Action Research, 1*(1), 1-19.

Cohen, J. (2006). Social, emotional, ethical, and academic education: Creating a climate for

learning, participation in democracy, and well-being. *Harvard Educational Review*, *76*(2), 201-237.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Bransford, J. (with LePage, P., Hammerness, K., & Duffy, H.). (2005). *Preparing teachers for a changing world: What teachers should learn and be able to do*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006). Constructing 21ˢᵗ century teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 57*(3), 300-314. doi: 10.1177/0022487105285962

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education.* New York, NY: The Free Press.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York, NY: Touchstone.

Goodlad, J. I. (2000). Education and democracy: Advancing the agenda. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *82*(1), 86-89.

Hursh, D. (2005). Neo-liberalism, markets and accountability: Transforming education and undermining democracy in the United States and England. *Policy Futures in Education*, *3*(1), 3-15.

Lewin, K. (1944). The dynamics of group action. *Educational leadership*, *1*(4), 195-200.

Mills, G. E. (2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Regan, K. S., & Martin, P. J. (2014). Cultivating self-regulation for students with mild disabilities: What's up? *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *49*(3), 164-173.

Stringer , E. (2008). *Action research in education* (2ⁿᵈ ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Tomal, D. R. (2003). *Action research for educators.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

United States. National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983*). A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform: A report to the Nation and the Secretary of Education, United States Department of Education.* Washington, D.C.: National Commission on Excellence in Education.

Williams, R. B., Brien, K., & LeBlanc, J. (2012). Transforming schools into learning organizations: Supports and barriers to educational reform. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, *134*, 1-32.

Winston, G. (1982). Rest your head. [Recorded by Different Fur Recording]. On *December* [CD]. San Francisco, CA: Windham Hill Records.

Zimmerman B. J., Risemberg R. (1997). Becoming a self-regulated writer: A social cognitive perspective. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 22, 73–101. doi:10.1006/ceps.1997.0919

# Changing Our Practices: Resisting Habits as an Approach to Self-Study

Craig Jollymore, Sherry Rose, and Ann Sherman

*University of New Brunswick*

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ann Sherman.
Email: shermana@unb.ca

## Abstract

Since 2011, we have been working at an independent high school with a small group of teachers interested in studying their own teaching practices in ways that support both their individual and collective learning. The participating educators are engaged and challenged by their personal interests in deepening formative assessment practices while creating pedagogic practices that create classroom relevance for their students and themselves. For this paper, we have chosen to explore the self-study of one teacher's journey, in which he engages in the process of examining his own practices, biases, beliefs, and his changing relationships with students. We set the stage for the individual study by discussing the complexity of the interactions between the university faculty and the independent school educators.

*Keywords:* Self-study; professional development; teacher learning

**Changing Our Practices: Resisting Habits as an Approach to Self-Study**

**Becoming Partners in a Self-Study—Sherry and Ann**

Since 2011, we have been working at an independent high school with a small group of teachers interested in studying their own teaching practices in ways that support both their individual and collective learning. The participating educators are engaged and challenged by their personal interests in deepening formative assessment practices while creating pedagogic practices that create classroom relevance for their students and themselves.

We first met when we were invited to visit the school to support a new professional development strategy the school was implementing. As outside "critical friends" from a nearby university, we were asked to support the evolving focus on professional growth strategies by designing workshops, inviting guest speakers, team teaching in classrooms, providing readings, and engaging with individuals who wanted to delve deeply into their professional practices through self-study. In addition, the School and our Faculty have now co-sponsored three conferences that incorporated both the work done by our Faculty–independent School partnership and the work of many teacher/researchers from regional public school districts.

**Informing Our Understanding**

Britzman (2012) reminds us, as teachers, we are often moulded by our own learning experiences in school and if we are to break free of this, we need to find the ways and means to deepen our own ability to think through how habits of practice in the classroom and institutional structures truncate our teaching and students' learning. This team of high school educators have now been involved in four years of cross-institutional collaborations, meetings, conferences, workshops, readings, discussions, and acting as mentors and facilitators. Participants have recorded questions and thoughts in journals and they share regularly with their colleagues and us when we come together. At times, as the "partnering professors," we have "workshop-ed" ideas with the teachers and urged them to challenge themselves in their own classroom practices. Co-constructed workshops were used to create spaces for the voices, stories, and artifacts of students and educators to demythologize the theory/practice divide (Lenz Taguchi, 2007). Several larger group workshops have taken place as well as smaller meetings with the groups of teachers interested in self-study practices.

**Using a Framework of Practical Inquiry Through Self-Study**

Self-study is more than an exploration of one's self: "The heart of self-study is the application of the knowledge one gains through this process to one's teaching practices (Samaras, 2002, p. xiv). Some have argued that self-study holds the promise to provide educators with tools that best support teaching and learning. For instance, Pinnegar, et.al. (2010) suggests practical self-inquiry values and challenges teachers in their exploration of contradictory situations, experiences, and stories. As well, Schon's (1983) early notions about reflection-on-practice, or the power of personal theorizing in the development of knowledge about teaching and learning, suggest this reflection is essential as teachers attempt to study their own practices and pedagogies.

Several teachers working with us in this project have taken a particular interest in their own personal growth and are seriously studying their own classroom practices, reading about and attempting real and relevant shifts in their pedagogy. Self-study research engages teachers in this

investigation of their own practice (Loughran, 2004). The notion of tensions encountered in practice becomes a conceptual frame for doing and understanding one's own practice through self-study (Berry, 2007). A range of critical tensions have continuously occurred in our collective conversations. For example, there are tensions between process and product, summative and formative assessment, student and teachers, assessments and accountability, and the cultivation of critical creativity across all curriculum areas.

We have purposefully constructed our work together to avoid what happens frequently in other forms of professional development. Day (1999) says that too often the lack of change resulting from professional development for teachers  is because of large single day conferences. He suggests that there is little evidence to support single day conferences or workshops as a relevant way of making change possible. Instead, Day suggests that there is much that can be done to create the conditions where teacher development and professional growth may be enhanced through conversation and the creation of safe spaces for self-reflection. Wiliam (2011) also calls for authentic professional development that occurs on the floor inside classrooms where our habits of practice can go through significant but modest changes in the interest of learning.

Questioning our habits of personal practice can be difficult. Meaningful inquiry is supported by rich and courageous conversations that engage differences and dissent as productive forces. It was important that these conversations be rooted in a climate of support, collaboration, and respect. Prior to any changes being initiated in this independent school, several formal and informal conversations were held with the educators to develop trust and a commitment to the self-study of their own pedagogy and practices. These teachers are involved in a process of continually re-imagining themselves in the classroom. By asking "what if" questions, change deepens the learning conversations.

Many of our conversations about self-study incorporated ideas around the purpose of self-studies. Craig has participated in discussions and because he is teaching at in an independent school has some flexibility in what curriculum he uses. Therefore, it was important to recognize how both purpose and context can play an important role in his decisions and selections. Loughran (2004) suggests that purpose, participants, and context are all important considerations in self-study and must be examined as any self-study moves forward. Pinar (2006) asserts that often, when we are "distracted by curriculum guides, we risk not seeing what-who is in our midst, and in whose midst we are" (p. xiii); Craig had freedom from such distractions and couldhave an enhanced exploration of context and process within the flexibility of his situation.

In addition, Bullough and Pinnegar (2004) reminded us of the need to look beyond our selves in our self-study and find ways to gain alternative perspectives. The professional growth work we describe here alternates between working alone and whole group discussions around changing pedagogy. As university-based educators, we believe it is important to help educators find ways to look beyond themselves in the process of self-study to better situate themselves in their classroom and context. Looking beyond ourselves occurs when we enter into dialogue with one another, with articles or books, by visiting other schools, and by meeting with invited educators.

Though numerous teachers regularly shared their personal thoughts about professional growth and their own learning, describing what had helped them both initiate and deeply explore

pedagogical strategies, one of the teachers, Craig, had a particularly strong sense of hesitation and an "It will never work in my classroom...the kids just won't go for it" stance until he made some modest changes that eventually led to greater changes. It is his story that we focus on in this paper

Craig has been teaching for 19 years and regularly teaches English Language Arts to Grades 9 to 12. All of his teaching has been at one independent high school. Out of the intentional collaborations and conversations over the past four years, Craig shares his reflections.

### A Problem Years in the Making—Craig's Reflections as Classroom Teacher

Self-study is the study of one's self, one's actions, one's ideas, as well as the "not self" or the self-becoming. It is autobiographical, historical, cultural, and political and it draws on one's life, but it is more than that. Self-study also involves a thoughtful look at texts read, experiences had, people known and ideas considered. These are investigated for their connections with and relationships to practice as a teacher-educator. (Hamilton, 1996, p. 236)

About five years ago, I (Craig) became aware for the need to change my practice as a teacher. I had been experiencing the way that standardized and externally evaluated curriculum offers the temptation to simply "teach to the test" (Au, 2009, p. 45). In addition, the International Baccalaureate Literature A1 curriculum, which I have been teaching since 2008, could allow teachers, parents and administrators to define learning simply through student performance on six tasks over two years, something that became a problem, as MacNeil (2005, as cited in Au, 2009, p. 53) pointed out. I had lived Pignatelli's (2005) warning that schooling in these kinds of environments can be "reduced to bottom-line marking and scripted, tightly managed performances on the part of the students" (p. 50).

I had also come to appreciate what a failure the transmission model of teaching was in the study of literature. My experience told me students who could think for themselves always generated better analysis than those who simply remembered what I thought. I was aware of Kellner's (2003) warning that we can "become fixed in mono-modal instruction with homogenized lesson plans, curricula and pedagogy" (p. 15), and Boyce's (1996) call to resist these "coma-like...domesticating uses of education" (p. 12). If I was not careful, student performance could come at the expense of student growth and empowerment. However, knowledge of the problem was not enough to effect change. Working alone made progress difficult. What was I to do about it, on a daily basis, in my practice?

Through our partnership with the university and particularly through my interaction with Ann and Sherry, I was able to develop the vocabulary to describe my concerns and specific strategies for meaningful change in my daily practice. Through this professional relationship, I was exposed to the power of protocols via the National School Reform Faculty and was encouraged to visit progressive schools in Canada and the United States, and, as a result, saw an explosion of social constructivist learning initiatives at our school and in my own practice. Looking back, I can see how carefully Ann and Sherry planned their interactions with us. They took into account exactly where we were as a school and as individual teachers. The progression is now clear: They taught me what it meant to document and collect evidence of my own learning. They made it possible for me to rethink the role of assessment in my practice and, by extension, reimagine the way class time could be used, particularly through personal interactions

with them and other experts such as Sandra Herbst and Dylan Wiliam. During the process, students' voices began to matter more than mine.

## A New Vision of Teaching

I now see my role as educator to be the creator of conditions for *student agency*, a direction I can directly attribute to an evening session with Sandra Herbst in the fall of 2013 that was arranged for our Faculty by Ann. Rather than results, I now seek to value the role of *process* and conceive of learning as creating safe spaces to hear student voices, to encounter each other's thinking, and to facilitate meaning making. I now view learning as a process of opening multiple avenues for growth for all. Davies, Herbst, and Parrot-Reynolds (2012) gave me practical ways to put into action the principle: That all students participate in their assessment and learning and that "classroom assessment strategies provide the means to accomplish…this as teachers and students co-construct criteria for classroom routines, quality work and getting along with one another" (Davies, 2012, p. 15). Herbst's (2014) distinction between assessment and evaluation, and her view that the former involves teachers and students operating side-by-side to exchange feedback and to co-construct criteria that describes quality work has provided me a means to interrupt the power dynamics often present in my classroom when I felt the need to follow standardized assessments.

This has meant that my role has changed; in my best moments, I am now a learning teacher working alongside students who are teaching me. Ann and Sherry have provided the human bridge between the literature and my practice that has made this journey of self-study and changing practice possible. I came to know that Black and Wiliam's (1997, as cited in Davies et al., 2012) research had "shown that involving students in classroom assessment results in considerable gains in achievement, amongst the largest ever reported for educational interventions" (p. ix). But it was the lived experience of Ann and Sherry, combined with the way they interacted with us, that made this promise seem possible in my practice. They modeled the process of self-study leading to changing practices with me.

## Student-Generated Novel Studies

My new approach to learning requires more preparation, more skill, and a concerted effort to abdicate the privileged position my teacher voice possesses. For example, the final four-novel unit in Grade 12 offers the temptation to "teach" the novels. Instead, the unit now consists of co-constructed learning activities that are almost always student-led. These include full class discussions that are mapped, small group discussions, individual choice on how to demonstrate knowledge and understanding, reflection activities, or online collaborative reader response journals. Classes are most often shaped by student-generated questions. My voice has been placed at the margins as students struggle together to construct meaning.

None of these activities mirrors a standardized evaluation but this change in process has led to demonstrably improved results on the externally evaluated International Baccalaureate Paper 2 examination because students are better able to independently express knowledge, understanding, and insight when analyzing complex texts. I am often stunned at what I learn in student-led discussions about complex texts that I have taught for many years. I also have to wait my turn to have my voice heard. Our classroom culture now demands this. What an important self-learning this has been for me.

## Feedback on Student Writing

Because of Ann and Sherry's specific encouragement, and my own self-study, my own practice has seen significant change. Now I routinely return drafts of student writing with personalized specific feedback, but without a grade. I follow this up with one-on-one meetings. At first, students resisted this because they had been conditioned to think about learning in terms of grades. But the process has yielded increased student growth because of the nature of the feedback. Students are always shown multiple samples of quality work and co-construct criteria for successful work prior to beginning any projects. They are now provided with clear, specific feedback from both peers and me about how to develop their own thinking and ways of documenting their learning. Ann championed the work of Dylan Wiliam to me in connection with the idea that "feedback has been shown to improve learning where it gives each pupils specific guidance on strengths and weaknesses, preferably without any overall marks" (Black & Wiliam, 1998, p. 144). Timed, in-class writing is also a required part of our course, but students now receive three individualized pieces of feedback in addition to a rubric score. The feedback is formative and I consider student progress in light of the application of specific feedback over time, not on improved rubric scores. These are the practices that I have now been able to incorporate into my classes after recognizing that I also thrive on this very kind of feedback about my own teaching. How much more I have learned by being able to discuss my practice with colleagues and others interested in my work. I now see how this same kind of opportunity benefits my students so much.

Evaluation has become an exercise in professional judgment for assessment rather than arithmetic. I think more broadly about what counts as evidence of learning, and I include student engagement in formative assessment processes alongside results on summative evaluations. I remember going through the report card process with a Grade 9 class. Because I had expanded my definition of what counts as learning (inspired by Ann, Sherry, Sandra Herbst and Dylan Wiliam), I suddenly had more evidence than ever before to consider, much of it captured in easily accessible digital formats. The mark was somehow a much more complete reflection of each student. Although generating those grades took longer, writing comments was a fluid process because I had too much evidence to include for each learner.

## Learning Interviews and Classroom Culture

Recently, after six weeks of classes, I held learning interviews with every student. The process of self-study set in motion by Ann and Sherry inspired this. Each student and I first dealt with the elephant in the room: What grade did they want to earn in the course? But we then moved on to issues actually relevant to learning and growth. What learning activities were most effective for them? Which were least effective? What did they think of the proposed syllabus? Did they have suggestions? How did they want to grow as readers? Writers? Learners? Why? What were their ideas about the ways that students could outwardly demonstrate knowledge and understanding? What new possibilities did they suggest?

The results often surprised me. The students also demanded that I introduce new classroom practices, many of which I would not have chosen left to my own devices. For example, many students preferred exchanging ideas about assigned readings in small groups before moving to full-group, student-led discussion. This made me uncomfortable because I could not possibly hear every conversation as I could in full-class activities. But I was reminded

that I do not need to personally witness or formally measure every instance of growth. I need to create the conditions that make this possible and then foster long-term individual patterns of change.

The interview process held both my students and me accountable. By listening and making changes to how learning happens, I valued student agency as integral to the learning process. As a result, we are all deeply invested in the value of these activities. One student opened up about her fears and concerns about reading and writing and her level of engagement in the course profoundly changed after her interview. She commented, "Before the learning interview, I was not confident enough to participate in class discussions to voice my opinions." We have moved as a group toward what Black and Wiliam (1998) call "a classroom culture of questioning and deep thinking in which pupils will learn from shared discussions with teachers and from one another" (p. 146) and the interviews supported this change.

## Concluding Thoughts From Craig

I have come to appreciate that almost all of the great learning I have witnessed or experience has occurred in the context of *relationship*. No longer do I aspire to be a witty, well-informed, and likeable teacher who can hold student attention for 85 minutes through "edutainment," as an enjoyable but nonetheless privileged voice at the front of the room. Instead, I struggle every day to solve the problem of creating the conditions for student agency. This has required hard work, risk-taking, and an abandonment of well-entrenched daily practices. It has meant new ways of *relating* to students. As I struggle to create the conditions for growth, students are invited into activities in which they seek to create meaning together out of the literature we study.

While much of my own professional growth came in the area of formative assessment and the need for greater student agency, it was the process of self-study that has led me to be aware of the need for these changes. And these changes could only have occurred in a supported environment. I am reminded of Black and Atkin's (1996, as cited in Black & Wiliam, 1998) idea that meaningful professional change can only happen relatively slowly, and through sustained programmes of professional development and support (p. 10). Ann and Sherry's role has not been limited to a *single* seminar, workshop, set of meetings, classroom observation, or a conference. It has included all of these elements over the course of several years as part of a *sustained relationship* between our organizations.

### Continuous Openness to Transformation—Sherry and Ann

How might an investment of time, space, and critical dialogue, what Moss (2014) and Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994) describe as "meeting places," invigorate localized professional growth and participation? How might such meeting places allow us to trouble dominating discourses that govern our local theories, beliefs, practices, and products? How might self-study or teachers' exploration of situations, experiences, and stories invite and/or support educators' efforts to construct and examine their own practices in conscientious, principled, and judicious ways. How might self-study bring together belief and action (Cole & Knowles, 1996)?

As the university partners, we (Sherry and Ann) gave a great deal of encouragement and feedback, but so did Craig's teaching colleagues. He writes that he feels the having responsibility and control of his own learning has expanded through this process of self-study. Craig's work

thoughtfully speaks to the effects of our collective attempts to organize ourselves with and amongst others, including the other that is our self, through critical, affirmative, conversations over a sustained period. Our conversations spiralled up and down, back and forth, through a range of unfolding practical inquiries about teaching and learning. As learners, we moved in and out of conversation with Craig, his colleagues, and the many researchers we met and read, and with whom we worked to examine ideas like formative assessment as a resource for learning about teaching and learning. Critical to this work is an open acceptance to go where both our collective conversations and individual learnings take us. We continue to reside in the transformative spaces as we reflect upon and analyze learning environments, relationships while troubling normed classroom procedures.

Through these actions, Craig has seen a distinct change in the ways the authority of the classroom has been shared. We drew on the notion of shared authority described by Frisch (1990) when he talks of the "authorship of a final narrative." The ownership of processes in the classroom become shared through this pedagogy of formative assessment, calling on students to become responsible, responsive, and autonomous. Sitzia (2003) describes her own work saying that she found the process of developing shared authority to be exciting, stimulating and resulting in a successful collaboration in much the same way Craig described his experiences. Although thinking about shared authority was not the initial intention in Craig's work, the learning communities in his classes became ones that exhibited the characteristics of what Basu and Calabrese-Barton (2010) described as opportunities for student voices being shared, joint decisions being made about what was taught and how it was taught, choices in assignments and assessment strategies being offered. They also describe the recognition of the students' funds of knowledge being brought into the curriculum in much the same way Craig described. This work also reminds us of the work of Giroux (1997) when he described the idea of what Thayer-Bacon (2006) later called "community-in-the-making" where authority always represents a terrain of struggle. Craig certainly found this to be the case initially and only later in the year did he find he was able to feel more confidence and less tension as the community of learners evolved.

As we reflected individually with Craig, a range of diverse questions unfolded. Craig's work addresses several of these. For example, the challenge of how to achieve student agency recognizes that agency is a necessary condition for learning, for self-study, and for community. As we travel in and out of each other's spaces, experiences and questions, we challenge ourselves, our pedagogies, and in the presence of others, call into question some of our pedagogic commitments and the distractions of curriculum guides, course syllabi and normed assessment practices. Increasingly we continue to be self-critical about imposing our understandings and learnings as a way to teach, opening up spaces for learners of all ages to call forward and reflect upon and question their experiences with one another. The act of self-study enhances this process and is focused in these practices.

As Craig discovered through his self-study, "We need to wait our turn." Resisting the temptation to teach is key in learning contexts as we move to create spaces for learners' experiences, voices, and meaning making. Resisting the temptation to dominate teaching and assessment opens up spaces where students and teachers can consciously examine their actions to align them with their beliefs and goals in the presence of each other's thinking (Pinnegar, Hamilton, & Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 235).

The processes in self-study have uncovered many things for Craig and the others he works with. The focus on self has highlighted that classes and meeting spaces shaped by learner generated questions or learner generated desires are not easily achieved, if ever achieved in a completed sense. There are relational and ethical tensions and complexities revealed through self-study, as well as temporal, curricular, and assessment pressures that need to be continually negotiated.

Through the processes evolving in this colleague supported self-study, we recognize that we need to continue to work to co-construct classroom environments that value dispositions of playfulness—to experiment as a form of problem solving; performance—to adopt alternative identities and perspectives, collective intelligence—to pool knowledge as we work towards common goals, negotiation—to travel across diverse communities, discerning and respecting multiple perspectives and grasping and following alternative norms. Jenkins (2009) describes these as some of the characteristics of participatory cultures, and suggests that creativity is also essential to self-study for both "students as teachers" and "teachers as students." As Craig critically reflects, it is difficult when working alone.

When educators become learners and students becomes educators, the autonomous hierarchical position of the individualized educator dissolves. It further dissolves when we, as educators, collectively commit time, space, and critical dialogue to theorizing about our teaching practices so that application and significance can be debated (Grumet, 2009). As active participants, we continue to openly unpack the naturalness of "doing" education realizing that pedagogy should "not to be the prisoner of too much certainty, but instead be aware of both the relativity of its power and the difficulties of translating its ideals into practice" (Malaguzzi, 1995, p. 52).

Pinar (2005) writes:

Educational experience that is subjectively meaningful and socially significant does not occur readily through curriculum connected to standardized examinations. Especially in the nightmare that is the present, "the 'sweaty fight for meaning and response-ability' is an always-new struggle…. It's difficult, challenging, exhilarating, discouraging, numbing, mandatory, and exciting work – daily work that's always in-the-making. (p. xxii)

Critical to the work we undertook together and individually were on-going attempts to reflect upon and analyze learning environments, learning relationships, and "normed" classroom procedures. Critical contradictory moments are encounters steeped in power inequities, moments that trouble educational common sense, moments where we can make our educational practices strange, where we step outside of them temporarily to imagine new possibilities. Mining these moments through self-study becomes a space for investigating the complexities and ambiguities of learning to teaching. As Lenz Taguchi (2007) states, "an ethic of 'resistance,' affirmation, and becoming starts by performing deconstructive processes on your everyday practice; not to correct it towards a visionary or universally good end state, but, to facilitate a process of becoming" (Lenz Taguchi, 2007, p. 288) only to become again and again and again.

# References

Au, W. (2009). Social studies, Social justice: W(h)ither the social studies in high-stakes testing? *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, 43-58.

Basu, S. J., & Calebrese Barton, A. (2010). A researcher-student-teacher model for democratic science pedagogy: Connections to community, shared authority, and critical science agency. *Equity and Excellence in Education, 43*(1), 72-87.

Berry, A. (2007) Reconceptualizing teacher educator knowledge as tensions: Exploring the tension between valuing and reconstructing experience. *Studying Teacher Education*, *3*(2), 117-134.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Inside the black box: Raising standards for classroom assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan, 80*(2), 139-148. Retrieved from http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Inside_the_Black_Box_184495_7.pdf

Boyce, M., (1996). Teaching critically as an act of praxis and resistance. *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory*, *2*(2). Retrieved from http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/Vol2_2/boyce.pdf

Britzman, D. P. (2012). *Practices makes practice: A critical study of learning to teach*, (Revised ed.). New York, NY: SUNY Press

Bullough Jr. R. & Pinnegar, S. E. (2004). Thinking about the thinking about self-studies: An analysis of the first eight chapters. *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices*. *Springer International Handbooks of Education, 12*, 313-342.

Cole, A., & Knowles, G. (1996). *The politics of epistemology and the self-study of teacher education practices, OISE*. Paper presented at the First International Conference on Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, Herstmonceux Castle, East Sussex, England.

Davies, A., Herbst, S., & Parrot-Reynolds, B. (2012). *Leading the way to assessment for learning: A practical guide*. Courtenay, BC: Connections.

Dahlberg, G., & Lenz Taguchi, H. (1994). *Preschool and school: Two different traditions and the vision of a meeting-place*. Stockholm, SE: HLS Förlag.

Day, C. (1999). *Developing teachers: The challenges of lifelong learning.* New York, NY: Psychology Press. Frisch

Frisch, M. (1990). *A shared authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Giroux, H. (1997). *Pedagogy and the politics of hope: Theory, culture and schooling,* Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Grumet, M. (2009). Curriculum inquiry, theory and politics. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *39*(1), 221-234.

Hamilton, M. L. (1996). Reconceptualizing teacher education: Self-study. *Teacher education*. New York, NY:Psychology Press.

Herbst, S. (2014, April). Where to from here? What's next for assessment for learning? *Notes from an Assessment for Learning: Canada in Conversation with the World lecture conducted at University of New Brunswick*., Fredericton, NB.

Jenkins, H. (2009). Confronting the challenges of participatory cultures: Media education for the 21st century. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press

Kellner, D., (2003). Toward a critical theory of education. *Democracy and Nature: The International Journal of Inclusive Democracy, 9*(1). Retrieved from http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/towardcriticaltheoryofed.pdf

Lenz Taguchi, H. (2007). Deconstructing and transgressing the theory-practice dichotomy in early childhood education. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 39*(3), 275-290.

Loughran. J. J. (2004). Learning through self-study: The influence of purpose, participants and context. *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices. Springer International Handbooks of Education, 12*, 151-192.

Malaguzzi, L. (1995). Your image of the child: Where teaching begins, *Child Care Exchange, 96*, 52-61.

Moss, P. (2014). *Early childhood and compulsory education: Reconceptualising the relationship*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Pignatelli, F (2005). Student Resistance and Standardization in Schools. *Rethinking Resistance in Schools: Power, Politics and Illicit Pleasures*. May, 50-61.

Pinar, W. F. (2005). Preface: What should be and what might be. In J. L. Miller, *Sounds of silence breaking: Women, autobiography, and curriculum*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Pinar, W. F. (2006). Foreword: The lure that pulls flowerheads to face the sun. In D. Jardine, S. Friesen, & P. Clifford, *Curriculum in abundance*. Mahwah, NJ: Laurence Erlbaum.

Pinnegar, S., Hamilton, M. L., & Fitzgerald, L. (2010) Guidance in being and becoming self-study of practice researchers. In. L. Erickson, J. Young, & S. Pinnegar. (2010). *Proceedings of the eighth international conference on self-studies of teacher education practices: Navigating the public and the private: Negotiating the diverse landscapes of teacher education* (pp.203-206). Herstmonceaux Castle UK: Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices SIG.

Samaras, A. P. (2002). *Self-study for teacher educators: Crafting a pedagogy for educational change,* New York, NY: Peter Lang Press.

Schon, D, (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How practitioners think in action.* New York, NY. Basic Books.

Sitzia, L. (2003). A shared authority: An impossible goal? *The Oral History Review, 30*(1), 87-101.

Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (2006). Shared authority in democratic classrooms: Communities-always-in-the-making. In K. Cooper & R. White (Eds.), *The practical critical education*(pp. 95-109). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.

Wiliam, D. (2011). *Embedded formative assessment.* Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

## A Review of *Teaching Adults: A Practical Guide for New Teachers*, by Ralph G. Brockett

Mohammad Omar Shiddike

*University of Regina*

*Teaching Adults: A Practical Guide for New Teachers* is an essential book for beginning teachers in adult education. In Part I, "Getting Started," Brockett presents a comprehensive discussion of the pedagogical themes related to teaching adult students. He emphasizes that adult teaching methods differ greatly from teaching other learners. A key tenet of adult education is that teachers must carefully consider the age and learning ability of their students. Adult learners have a lot of life experience, and they learn from the real world too, which helps them to progress more quickly than young learners. Because of this, Brockett indicates that adult education requires a combination of formal and informal class and training settings, and teachers need very strong pedagogical knowledge in order to educate adult students effectively. Brockett believes that "effective teaching leads to successful learning" (p. 9). He also defines "a teacher in seven words": trust, empathy, authenticity, confidence, humility, enthusiasm, and respect. Teachers should develop these qualities throughout their teaching practice. However, Brockett cautions that these qualities alone are not enough to ensure successful teaching for adult learners.

In Part II, Brockett explores four keys to effective teaching: know the content, know the adult learner, know teaching, and know yourself. Brockett focuses on the teacher as a learner who does not feel that he/she already knows everything. He does not believe that there is a time when learning ends and the educator is "just teaching." According to Brockett, teachers of adults need to maintain their relevance as teachers by continuing their learning through reading, writing, researching, professional engagements, attending professional conferences, and participating in a variety of social networking activities. Furthermore, they must then practice that knowledge in their own professional activities.

Next, Brockett offers many tips for understanding adult learners. He explains that most adults are actively involved in learning and undertake at least one learning project every year. Adults have the ability to learn successfully throughout their lives. Adult learners bring a wealth of experience to the teaching/learning setting and this experience can be a valuable resource. It is important to recognize that decisions teachers make about how they will teach are based on whether they are trying to change attitudes and values, build skills and performance, or impart knowledge and information. Most adult learning is self-directed. The need for adult learning is often triggered by some kind of developmental transition or crisis. Adults choose to learn for many different reasons, and teachers need to know what these are. It is important to understand how to use motivation strategies to help learners get excited about content and, in some cases, to help break down learner resistance. Teachers of adults need to understand the many kinds of barriers that can limit whether adults choose a learning activity, or stay with the activity. Most successful adult learning takes place in a collaborative or cooperative setting where sharing and synergy are crucial. The ultimate purpose of adult education is to help learners think for themselves.

Brockett explains two key concepts in adult education: andragogy (teaching adults) and self-directed learning. He outlines six valuable assumptions of andragogy, which are helpful for teachers when dealing with adults as potential learners. In Part II, Brockett includes six chapters where he shares his opinion about teacher preparation, understanding adult learners in order to

teach them effectively, and six teaching techniques, all of which are essential for effective teaching in the classroom.

In Part III, Brockett focuses on the practical aspects of effective teaching. He begins this part by reflecting on the learning environment. He states that every environment has variables such as psychological, physical, and social factors that can influence learning. Brockett believes that classroom climate, arrangement of classroom, proper lighting, seating arrangement, comfortable seats, and classroom temperature also affect the learning environment. To help the reader understand his points, he provides a Table illustrating different seating arrangements along with positive and negative considerations. Brockett also discusses the social dimension of the learning environment. He considers five situations for "creating a safe space for learning, where all learners are valued and treated in an equitable manner" (p. 108). Brockett also considers the challenges of teaching in large vs. small classrooms, as well as using proper technological equipment such as multi-media projectors and visual equipment.

In Chapter 10, Brockett continues to explore strategies for recognizing and overcoming possible learning barriers. He discusses resistance he has encountered and reveals his personal strategies to avoid such resistance. This leads to the topic of motivation: how teachers can increase the motivational level of their learners. Brockett also mentions the learning model proposed by John Keller in 1983, which features attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction. This model outlines how teachers can draw learners' attention, demonstrate the topic is relevant to the learner, and help learners to gain confidence and a full sense of self-satisfaction. By focusing on these motivational dimensions, teachers may overcome student anxiety, help students gain confidence, avoid disruptive learning situations, handle cheating and plagiarism, and prepare all learners to be strong students.

In his epilogue, Brockett reviews the seven qualities of an effective teacher. Trust, empathy, authenticity, and respect are basic qualities that set the tone for the teacher-learner relationship. At this point, Brockett shares two credos he adopted when he first became involved in teaching adult learners: "Bringing out the best in my learners is what I strive to achieve. My other credo is…I would rather spend my time and effort building people up than tearing them down" (p. 147). Finally, Brockett mentions that being an effective teacher of adults means that teachers need to demonstrate the quality of caring. He believes that "a teacher who does not care about what he or she is teaching, or is unable to demonstrate this quality of caring, will be doomed to being, at best, a mediocre teacher" (p. 147-148).

Brockett divides readers into four categories: those who are new teachers; those who have responsibility for teaching adults but who don't think of themselves primarily as teachers; those who are experienced teachers, but may not be prepared to face the challenge of meeting the unique needs of adult learners; and finally, for those graduate students in adult education or related fields who are interested in learning about teaching adults. This book is an effective guide for those who see teaching as more than "just another profession."

Teaching means to care and build up the future generation. Though Brockett focuses on adult teaching, I believe that these qualities are actually necessary for every level of effective teaching. My understanding as a former teacher is that effective teaching is all about building the learners into strong citizens. Some researchers may criticize the book for lacking theoretical perspective, but Brockett states clearly that his intended audience is mainly new graduates who

really want to participate in the teaching profession and want to teach effectively. I highly recommend this book to new educators engaged in teaching at any level of education and any institutional platform. I also feel it would be valuable for any teacher seeking to assess and improve their teaching and to further develop effective teaching strategies.

Reference

Brockett, R. G. (2015). *Teaching adults: A practical guide for new teachers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.