JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

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Transformative Learning in Our Past and Future: A Retrospective Review toward Greater Heights

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Abstract

Amid times of change and transition, we glean insight through reflection. This retrospective review discusses the relevance and vitality of the Journal of Transformative Learning (JoTL) as the authors conclude their six-year JoTL co-editorship. Accomplishments include expanding the Editorial Board, converting to a new publishing platform, and achieving on-time releases of multiple volumes including three special issues and four conference proceedings. With deep appreciation and gratitude, the co-editors share thoughtful takeaways concerning the future of transformative learning that most certainly should include more special issues, more theories, frameworks, and models, more conference proceedings, and more opportunities for mentored student engagement.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Leadership Longevity, Editor Transition

Introduction

Times of change and transition are fitting moments worthy of reflection. For instance, coping with a life-threatening illness, launching a new business, adjusting to the loss of a loved one, and initiating a relational commitment—all are situations of change that can have physical and mental implications. Our story of transition, though not life-threatening, has been life-changing; it is equally significant and worthy of a retrospective review. New co-editors are slated for onboarding soon, and the *Journal of Transformative Learning* (JOTL) is nicely positioned for future growth. This is a perfect time to look back and forward.

We agreed to serve as co-editors in 2016 and thus began our JoTL co-editorship journey. The JoTL work was not our first foray in partnering. We were already meeting weekly as research collaborators. Our research affiliation began from a chance conversation following an awards luncheon that changed the trajectory of our scholarship. Multiple presentations, two funded interdisciplinary grants, and two book chapters later, we are still somewhat obsessed with leadership longevity—the process by which individuals navigate personal leader identity over time to continue leading for longer. The rhythm of our scholarly work has included sessions at the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and Higher Learning Commission conferences with leadership findings fitting for academicians, corporate executives, and nonprofit leaders. Through the development of the four-faceted model for accelerating leader identity (Sims & Cunliff, 2022; Sims, Cunliff, Robertson, & Sims, 2018), we developed a unique viewpoint for examining leadership across cultures, racio-ethnic identities, industries and contextual areas of inquiry. We would bring the same academic- and practitioner-oriented perspective across disciplines to transformative learning and to our efforts of laying the foundational scope for the JoTL.

Our vision for the JoTL has been to provide a forum of perspectives on the practice and application of transformative learning for use among organizations and educational institutions. We privileged outlooks across disciplines shared in original research manuscripts, essays, and teaching notes as well as through scholar Q&As and Special Issues. Steeped in a view of transformative learning as an

active process of learning that encourages seeing new things, seeing old things differently, and re-conceptualizing mindsets, the JoTL has fostered dialogue that provides essential resources for transformative learning practice. And, we have been the primary beneficiaries of witnessing our collective conversations and scholarly engagement up close for almost seven years.

Where We've Been and What We Hope to See

Our vision has taken flight, and we have not travelled alone. We followed the editorship of Dr. Jody Horn and joined the wonderful work of UCO's Center for Excellence in Transformative Teaching and Learning led by Dr. Jeff King. Our first order of the JoTL work was to expand the Editorial Board. Many thanks to this group who gave freely of their time and energy; they are a magnificent team who responded quickly to the need for review, helped find potential authors, and provided an encouraging word when needed. We also expanded our editorship to include student editorial research assistants. Through the years, we have enjoyed the expertise, reliability, and insight of Jacie Harvel, Andi Ullrich, Anna Doré, Augusta Davis, Morgan Scott, Jacquelin Hopper, and Zoe Wright. Their valuable assistance truly made it possible to accomplish so much with so little time. Thank you to UCO's former provost Dr. John Barthell, current provost Dr. Charlotte Simmons, and the Division of Academic Affairs for accepting our proposal to fund the students; this opportunity enabled them to gain practical experience in publishing that has favorably impacted their careers.

Since beginning our JoTL work, we have maintained a dedicated group of scholars and practitioners to serve as reviewers and to share their feedback. Along with expanding the Editorial Board and mentoring student editorial research assistants, we converted to a new publishing platform, and published 11 issues (including this one). Of those issues, three were Special Issues that focused on undergraduate research, international experiences, and the pandemic. Thank you to Dr. Doreen Sams, Dr. John Wood, and Dr. Jarrett Jobe for the time they devoted to partnering with us on a Special Issue. While serving in JoTL co-editorial roles, we also founded and published four UCO Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings and two books focused on transformative learning (Sims, Cunliff, & Dore, 2019; Sims, Cunliff, & Wright, 2022 *in press*). We are joined by two students (Anna Doré and Zoe Wright) in book editorship. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without the support and work of a dedicated team. And, much more potential awaits us in the area of transformative learning. Below we share our aspirations of what we hope to see in the future.

More Special Issues

Special Issues can elicit imagination and rumination around a topic. They permit others to engage in editorial commentary without the lengthier, multi-year commitment of journal editorship. In essence, the power of Special Issues is in *convening thought*. Since we imagined more Special Issues than our publication schedule permitted, we share this nudge to hopefully prompt many of you toward greater contemplation about the focused conversations that are still needed. What set of questions are missing to drive our thinking and scholarship about transformative learning forward? And, how can we convene a series of manuscripts with essays that think about plausible responses?

More Theories, Frameworks, and Models

The hope for more theories, frameworks, and models of transformative learning is closely related to our bias on the value of *convening thought.* Scholarship that illuminates our thinking and directs our understanding with lucidity is refreshing. We seek for practitioners and academicians to spend more time playing with logic, with captured observations, and with systematic investigations that help us re-think and know more about transformative learning.

More Conference Proceedings

The Transformative Learning Conference Proceedings are an extension of the Transformative Learning conference conversations and aligned with the mission of the JoTL. Though Proceedings

publications are not peer-reviewed, they demonstrate the breadth and richness of conference dialogue nestled in a single PDF. If you might have missed the conference, you get a glimpse of the interactions and presentations at the event when you glance through the Proceedings. Our hope is that the Conference and the Proceedings continue to flourish as they return for a come-back following the cancellations caused by the pandemic.

More Mentored Student Engagement

By far, a most enjoyable aspect of our work has been mentoring the development and heeding the instruction of our student editorial research assistants. Their ideas, suggestions, and agile pivots with smiles and laugher have been as much fun as they have been efficient. Plus, their JoTL work has been accomplished alongside their successful completion of undergraduate or graduate studies. Each of them has shared that the influence of the JoTL work on their personal transformation, development, and career is unmatched. It can be tempting to provide editorial opportunities exclusively to well-recognized scholars and practitioners. However, given the power and the possibilities for personal growth embedded in editorial work, our hope is for greater mentored student engagement.

Concluding Remarks

As we publish our final co-edited issue, we conclude our time of service with appreciation and gratitude for your involvement in the JoTL. Whether as a reader, reviewer, or Editorial Board member, your presence contributes to the transformative learning landscape. We are pleased that Shay Rahm and Dr. Laura Dumin have agreed to assume co-editing responsibilities. They are highly qualified and amazing people that you will enjoy working with as the JoTL moves forward to greater heights.

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Achieving Transformation through Workforce Diversity: An Interview with Chaunda Scott

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This editorial interview was conducted with Dr. Chaunda Scott, who works as a professor of Human Resource Development and Graduate Coordinator of the Human Diversity Inclusion and Social Justice Graduate Certificate Program in the Department of Organizational Leadership at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan.

Zoe Tell me a little about yourself and some of your background.

Chaunda Okay, well I'm a professor in the department of human resource development at Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan. My research, teaching, and service are all connected to workforce diversity issues and my main area is eradicating racism.

I have about eight co-edited books out on similar topics. I am also a secretary of a nonprofit organization in my hometown, which is Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the nonprofit is Minnesota's Black Community Project, and we were formed in 2016 to shed light on what African American success looks like in Minnesota.

As you know, most of the time when we see African Americans on the TV or on the news, it's negative. You know they're not really promoting the positive side of what the community is doing, so we formed to do that, to build off of my father's work who had been doing that in the 50s, 60s, and 70s.

Our book came out in 2020 *Minnesota's Black Community in the 21st Century*, building off my father's work which is Walters R Scott Sr., and we ended up getting book of the year. We were so grateful for all of the workers. Your own Dr. Jeanetta Sims contributed to the book as well, so we're very grateful for her.

Zoe That's wonderful. I would like to look at a couple questions regarding what you've done in your programs. How do you view the role of transformative learning when seen through the lens of workforce diversity?

Chaunda I see it in the same way I believe the founder of transformative learning, Jack Mezirow, did. He was one of my professors at Teachers College in Columbia University. I was very grateful to have the opportunity to meet him. I think one of the principles of transformative learning is that you know you've changed and others can see the change within you. I would say that, within the field of workforce diversity, you know there is much work to be done, but again it's really being acknowledged in society as a concept. Not only do I see it, but the world is seeing it, businesses are seeing it, academic programs are seeing it. I really see that as a transformative step in the work that I'm doing.

Zoe Have you had any unique experiences with transformative learning, perhaps through your work with the Fulbright Program?

Chaunda Right, well with my Fulbright experience in 2015, I was granted a Fulbright Specialist award that took me to Cape Town South Africa. I was working with the professors and administrators of Cape Peninsula University of Technology, and they were really looking to advance their workforce diversity learning curriculum. Since I've done some work in that area, I was able to share some of my practices with them to help them get started. I thought that it was good to be recognized on an international level for the work that I'm doing and then going to South Africa… I see that as very transformative.

Zoe I see that the 20th Diverse Voices Conference is coming up.

Chaunda Yes, you are very correct. I can't believe it myself. It was a conference that I really started when I first came to Oakland University. After coming from Harvard Graduate School of Education, it just felt very innovative. People were thinking and thinking of ideas and actually bringing them to life, and I just really thought that was so fascinating. After engaging with conversations with my classmates, finally when I graduated I was like "it would be great to keep this conversation going." So that was the start of the diverse voices conference and it's really just a platform where students, faculty, staff, and community members can talk about a topic together. Students aren't graded; they volunteer to participate in it. It has really been a wonderful journey.

I had two of my undergraduate students last year who went to one of my professional conferences the NAMS conference and they did an excellent job. They were speakers in the conference, they wrote a paper and they ended up getting the Best Paper Award. That's transformative in itself.

Zoe What types of transformation do you think have been the most challenging for you or your students?

Chaunda Diversity itself has been a kind of difficult topic to talk about through the years. I think now, because there's more evidence of the impact that diversity has in society, whether it be negative or positive, as seen with the events surrounding George Floyd, Briana Taylor, police brutality, and all these other things. All these things are coming into view and I think that, as a person who does that type of teaching in research and service, it has really helped me get the message across, even though the scenario itself is not as positive as I would like it to be.

I think that because society is showing us that we need these discussions, we are the ones that are going to solve these problems. So in some respect, I appreciate the help and I appreciate the people who are seeing it the way I'm seeing it. After all, it's not just me seeing these issues. I mean, the society is beginning to see it, and this is really helping me in the sense that I don't have to convince people to see it.

Zoe Looking to the classroom, what does transformative learning look like to you in your classes and how do you embed this in your curriculum?

Chaunda Well, as of 2019 I created a graduate human diversity inclusion and social justice certificate program. I was feeling that students, especially at the graduate level, are not really getting out with information on that topic. When they go into their careers they aren't using any sensitivity training or anything that they've studied, but what they've learned in the business field there. Taking people from the human resource development field and related fields and

turning them into chief diversity officer. Like, how can you be a chief diversity officer if you haven't had academic preparation to do that?

I created this program and it's been very popular with students. All over the country, they are applying or asking to see if the program is online—it is. It is offered in three different formats online, blended, and lecture format. I just finished an intensive class a couple weeks ago, and I was just amazed at some of the research topics that students were picking, things like the importance of pronouns. Students are talking about social justice in the community, social justice at church. They're really thinking about where their role is in the places where they go. I really found that to be quite impactful. To see students we had, like a really good group of students will be speaking in the 20th annual Diverse Voices Conference. It's just wonderful.

Zoe So you get to see your efforts come full circle?

Chaunda Right. I mean, you know, you get that passion in the class. For example, some students are working with younger children with autism and they come in and explain their day-to-day routine with us. They advance the learning for that community. It's wonderful.

Zoe Now, you've been a member of the Editorial Advisory Board here at JoTL for several years. What drew you to our project?

Chaunda I was invited by Dr. Sims to participate. Because I had had Jack Mezirow as one of my teachers, I know a lot about transformative learning and I firmly believe in its practices. I was really attracted to it and excited to find that there was a journal that was really focused on that. Dr. Sims has published some pieces of our work in there. She has the Diverse Scholars Program and I published the Diverse Voices Program in one article, so people could see how we can integrate those diverse practices into our teaching research.

Zoe What would you say is the most practical advice you would give to educators who have desire to enter programs like those you've participated in? Also, how would you advise these educators to create this sort of infrastructure themselves?

Chaunda Well I would say "be led by your passion." Meet people at your university who are doing this work, to have a sounding board. If those people aren't there, go to your professional conferences—that's where I met Dr. Sims. We don't work at the same university, but there are a lot of opportunities to meet likeminded people to be encouraged by.

I stepped out on my own to create the Diverse Voices Program as a very novice assistant professor and it wasn't always positive. I had gotten a couple of responses form people that I sent things out to, who I had told I was getting ready to start the Diverse Voices Conference. I got one response I will never forget, it had said "what about the people who don't value diversity?" I mean, I was appalled, but I responded and said "Well then, that's the conference you should start."

I learned from one of my professor Cornel West, at Harvard University, that not everybody is going to be supportive of everything you do. Don't be deterred by that. He said we need to be encouraged by that, because it shows that there's a need if people are really willing to respond negatively. That resistance should encourage you. I mean, 20 years later and the conference is still going, students still asking when it is and if they can be in it. It's just wonderful to me.

Zoe How do you believe organizations and professionals can be practicing transformative learning in their daily lives? What benefits can it have for them?

Chaunda Well I'll go back to a principle that I mentioned earlier. You're trying to do something; you're trying to change yourself; you're trying to learn something, and then you do it and not only do you feel good about it, but other people notice and give you accolades. I think that a real strength of transformative learning. It's not only for yourself, but other people can really enjoy or participate in your transformation. It's sort of like the concept of people losing weight. You see it and other people do, too. Transformation doesn't just take place with your inner self, because sometimes you can tell yourself "Oh, I look great" at 50 pounds overweight, but you now when transformation is happening when other people can really see it.

Zoe Lastly, is there anything else that you would like to add or expand on?

Chaunda I would say that as I move on my journey in my research, I'm currently working on a handbook for anti-racism in human resource development with Dr. Marilyn Byrd from the University of Oklahoma. In that area, workforce diversity and diversity education in general racism has not been part of the conversation. It's been gender, sexual orientation, age, all of these things, but not racism specifically. I believe that racism is the root problem and that, until we try to get to the root cause of the problem, it's just like putting a band aid on, you know? I'm really happy to expand my research more in that area. I believe we need more classes for students at all levels to talk about racism and social justice, because students are the future and we don't want to keep going in that vein that we're going in, right?

Zoe That's wonderful. Thank you so much for your time, I have no further questions.

Author's Note: Zoe Wright is a JoTL editorial research assistant who recently graduated with her MA in Composition and Rheotric.

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Mentoring Dialogue and Practice: A Transformative Experience

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Abstract

Mentoring novice faculty in higher education warrants further exploration. Novice scholars may underestimate the time and energy of gaining access to a new community of practice, learning the norms, and developing successful long-term academic practice. The purpose of this essay is to describe how transformative learning theory, a cognitive apprenticeship model, and critical reflection practice work together in a mentorship—one that benefits both the novice and seasoned academic. We note how all three frameworks rely on dialogue or discourse for creating new and effective assumptions. We emphasize dialogue between the mentor and novice as well as their individual and collaborative practice. Their practice entails the complex work of questioning higher education success, challenging assumptions, collaborating on writing, and growing individually by investing in each other. We contend that when novice and mentor engage with their colleagues, they deepen their work and expand their perspectives.

Keywords: mentoring, cognitive apprenticeship, transformative learning, dialogue, practice

While mentoring novice faculty in higher education is not a new idea, research about the structural success of faculty mentoring programs warrants further investigation (Zellers et al., 2008). These programs can be highly structured or left to the devices of the mentor and mentee. In our experience as being both the mentee and the mentor in academia, we are proposing the role of theory to inform and influence how two participants might develop a process for their work to be mutually beneficial. Many novice scholars underestimate the time and energy of gaining access to a new community of practice, learning the norms and developing successful long-term academic practice. According to Feeney and Bozeman (2008), mentoring is a vital professional activity to learn the ins-and-outs of an organization. All these transitions can potentially mold a young scholar's development of their own academic identity. We suggest that holding a complex view of academic life is a more genuine way to manage the multifaceted expectations of teaching, research, and service (Caskey & Weller Swanson, 2020).

The purpose of this article is to describe how we intertwine transformative learning theory, a cognitive apprenticeship model, and critical reflection practice to demonstrate how mentoring with intention can benefit both the novice and seasoned academic. According to Welsh et al. (2012), mentoring relationships can be either formal or informal. They can be mutually successful, nominally successful, or unproductive. Therefore, we believe that articulating a mentoring process with a theoretical construct provides a solid foundation for both the novice and mentor to engage with an understanding of the ebb and flow of growing into the role of a scholar. We begin by identifying an emerging scholar or protégé as an individual who has completed a degree program that required a thesis or dissertation and is now pursuing a long-term academic career. A mentor, in our view, is an advanced practitioner and scholar who is genuinely interested in the success of their protégé.

Previously, we described mentoring using a cognitive apprentice model that supports transformative learning with the novice looking though a kaleidoscope (Caskey & Weller Swanson,

2020). In this previous essay, we viewed an academic mentorship to be as dynamic and beautiful as the turning of a kaleidoscope. All the bits of colored glass kept their integrity; however, the reflective qualities could provide endless mandala.

The Role of Theory

In this article, we suggest how the intentional application of theory can help both participants name the challenges they experience along the way. Our approach is three-pronged conceptual framework, the first is to explain the stages of transformative learning theory for the young scholar through Jack Mezirow's (2000) scholarship. We hope to provide the mentor or expert scholar a roadmap to use Allen Collins and colleagues' cognitive apprenticeship model (Collins et al., 1991; Collins, 2006) which identifies when to be a teacher and when to remove support to allow for independent exploration by the novice. Lastly, we encourage both the novice and expert to engage in challenging their assumption through Stephen Brookfield's (2017) critical reflective practice. Our conceptual framework is situated within Max van Manen's (2014) phenomenological stance which values and explores the beauty in the ordinary. We appreciate bell hooks (1994) thoughts about the intersection of theory and living:

> When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to the processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. (p. 61)

Our mentoring model emphasizes dialogue between the mentor and novice but also their individual and collaborative practice. By practice we mean that the mentoring is more than just talking, it embodies the challenging work of questioning the system of what higher education deems as success, being a mirror for one another to challenge assumptions, co-writing to collaborate in an intimate way, and lastly, to grow individually because of investing in each other.

We bring phenomenology into practice because of the intimate nature and individualization it offers mentoring pairs to think about the work together. We agree with van Manen (2014) who posited that a phenomenological approach allows us to be:

> swept up in a spell of wonder about phenomena as they appear, show, present, or give themselves to us. In the encounter with things and events of the word, phenomenology directs its gaze toward the regions where meanings and understandings originate, well up and percolate through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—then infuse, permeate, infect, touch, stir us, and exercise a formative and affective effect on our being. (pp. 26–27)

We use a kaleidoscopic metaphor to illustrate the fluidity of transformative learning and explain the interplay of ideas. These ideas stand alone as represented by the pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope, but also remain essential in the creating of ever-changing mandala. A kaleidoscope requires the practice of turning the mandala and intentional dialogue to understand and grapple with its intricacies.

Transformative Learning: Dialectic Method of Inquiry

The basis for transformative learning theory is the ability to identify one's frame of reference or how one makes meaning. Transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009a) is the way we experience problems or issues and find ways to change our thinking about them to be more broad, open and flexible. In an intentional mentoring relationship, this transformation occurs when asking questions and questioning our assumptions through dialogue. The premise is that to transform requires individuals to re-evaluate the assumptions and expectations they utilize when making decisions and even when conclusions are tentative as new information integrates through lived experiences. Thus, transformation centers on

cognitive self-reflection (Desapio, 2017). We assert that a dialectic method has a place in an intentional mentoring approach.

We employ transformative learning theory because emerging scholars are simultaneously honing their craft of research, teaching, and service while gaining access to a new community with established rules and expectations. We build on the tenet that transformation is an integrative experience and is not directly taught (Misawa & McClain, 2019, p. 53), rather transformation occurs when a disorienting dilemma occurs where an expectation no longer serves the current demands. For example, an emerging scholar may hold expectations of crafting a publication or participating in an academic environment that are different than they imagine.

According to Mezirow (2000) the transformative learning model has four stages: centrality of experience, critical reflection, rational discourse, and responsive action. We are primarily focusing on his use of *habits of mind* that refers to habitual thoughts, reactions, and emotional processing built on a set of assumptions. Individuals may or may not be aware of these assumptions until the assumptions come into conflict with new information or a situation in which they no longer serve the desired outcome. For example, an emerging scholar may believe that publishers will readily accept their writing for a peer-reviewed journal. To the contrary, once they receive feedback, they may feel disheartened and need to reorient their assumptions about academic writing and what is necessary to publish in current journals.

The peer review example is about the *centrality of experience* referring to an individual or in our work an emerging scholar experiencing a *disorienting dilemma*. This occurs when a person's frame of reference conflicts with a new situation or information. It takes courage and *critical reflection* on the part of the emerging scholar to move forward in this example. However, it is difficult to examine our own assumptions; thus, engaging with a qualified mentor is a powerful way to unpack assumptions and transform a no longer effective habit of mind.

Dialogue to Build a Mentoring Relationship

Mentoring provides the dialogue necessary for the protégé to recognize the source of the frustration and begin to look at the possibilities for change and growth. Our emphasis on the dialogue of mentoring intertwines critical reflection, cognitive apprenticeship, and transformative learning. All three frameworks hinge on the role of dialogue or discourse for creating new and effective assumptions. According to Mezirow (1997), dialogue is a critical for transformative learning; it prompts discussion of related experiences, critical analysis of alternative viewpoints, and building common understanding. The cognitive apprenticeship model is a relationship in which the mentor provides specific and intentional information and practice for the novice to engage in authentic work. To continue our example, the mentor and novice scholar may have conversations about the academic publishing arena. They might review the fore mentioned manuscript and the reviewers' comments. This dialogue can help the novice gauge their reactions to the feedback with the mentors to determine a new baseline for the novice's view of their contribution to a large academic conversation happening in publications—resulting in a new plan of action. The mentor may offer to help the novice edit the existing article by suggesting that they read articles accepted by that journal looking for format, style, and content. An example would be the mentor completing a Text Structure Analysis (Stevens, 2019) alongside the novice to identify a good journal fit. The mentor may also suggest co-authoring an article which would provide a rich conversation about the skills, content, and practice useful for publication in a peer-reviewed journal. According to Mezirow (2000), this part of transformative learning is *rational discourse*.

The individual growth of the protégé is the development of new skills and confidence in their writing and intellectual contributions to the field. As they develop academic writing skills, they become integrated into their academic identity. The role of the mentor fades as the novice begins to explore and articulate new research or writing projects and follows through with them. The *responsive action* taken by the mentor to usher novice into a community of practice of academic writing.

Transformation begins when we can imagine an alternative view of reality. Imagining outside our own frames of reference occurs within our kaleidoscopic metaphor (Caskey & Weller Swanson, 2020). Imagination is the courage to continue to turn the device to experience beautiful, complex, and ever-changing colors combinations and designs. The beauty of the kaleidoscopic metaphor is that the mentor holds his/her own kaleidoscope. Inside are the glass pieces which represent the intertwining of theory and practice (see Figure 1), the academic role filled with assumptions and challenges. As the mentor and novice are in dialogue the kaleidoscope spins and is shared with the novice. They learn what each glass piece represents and how the nuances of each are gracefully influences by the turning and shifting of mechanism. The cognitive apprenticeship model of supporting the development of a scholarly identity is mutually beneficially as the mentor and novice grow in new ways as they move forward, which according to van Manen (2014) is "the ultimate aim of a phenomenology of practice is modest: to nurture a measure of thoughtfulness and tact in the practice of our professional and in everyday life" (p. 31).

Figure 1. Kaleidoscopic Bits of Glass Supporting Dialogue and Practice

A Cognitive Apprenticeship: Practice through Dialogue

Collins (2006) defined cognitive apprentice as a teaching practice with a focus on cognitive skills and processes. Earlier, Collins et al. (1991) referred to those engaged in apprenticeship as the expert and the apprentice. In our application of the cognitive apprenticeship within higher education, we have used the terms mentor and protégé.

In a cognitive apprenticeship, the mentor prompts the protégé to address real world problems demanding the investigation of multiple perspectives and interrogating one's own assumptions. Cognitive apprenticeship in a mentoring relationship is unique because the goal is not to dispense knowledge or to simply reproduce the status quo, but rather to utilize dialogue that grows both the mentor and the emerging scholar (Fuller & Unwin, 2011). The mentor, then, gradually releases scaffolding, and the mentee begins to explore and articulate their own ideas. Phenomenology supports the organic nature of cognitive apprenticeship. Phenomenology takes the ordinary day to day experience and through reflective

practice reveals a "loving project of bringing all the living of life to meaningful expression through the imageriers…" (van Manen, 2014, p. 18).

Also integral to cognitive apprenticeship is Habermas' (1984) critical distinction between instrumental learning and communicative learning. *Instrumental learning* is learning that entails managing the environment or people to improve performance, while *communicative learning* is understanding someone's meaning when they are communicating with you through dialogue, text, or an artistic form (Mezirow, 2009b).

In a cognitive apprenticeship, the mentor needs to make thinking visible by bringing tacit cognitive processes to light (Collins et al., 1991)—making the implicit explicit. Using the cognitive apprenticeship model (Collins, 2006), the mentor employs a method of modeling, coaching, and/or scaffolding to guide the learning experience of the protégé. When modeling, the expert completes a task as the young scholar observes. In contrast, when coaching the expert observes as the young scholar completes a task. When scaffolding, the mentor works alongside and provides support to the protégé while completing a task. Modeling, coaching, and scaffolding are aspects of *instrumental learning*, in which the mentor structures the environment for improving performance (Mezirow, 2009a). Another aspect of instrumental learning transpires as the method transitions to the protégé who guides their own learning through articulation, reflection, and exploration. In this case, articulation involves the emerging scholar expressing their own thinking, whereas reflection requires the protégé to contemplate their own work and ponder their work relative to mentors' work. Exploration entails the young scholar engaging in ways to pursue their own ideas, recognize problems, and identify viable solutions.

These vital conversations or dialogues between mentor and protégé embody the grappling with ideas and assumptions held by both the mentor and the protégé. According to van Manen (2014), this is good talk. Good talk "happens between two people who share an affinity or attachment to one another—not only to each other, but also to their shared world" (van Manen, 2014, p. 36). The conversation is only part of the purpose but it also the collaboration that builds the ability to learn and grow from one another (van Manen, 2014). Our vision of dialogue in a mentoring relationship goes far beyond the function of academic life but also includes the understanding and nuances that go into becoming a scholar. In cognitive apprenticeship, *communicative learning* experiences are the interpersonal interactions, conversations, discourse, or dialogue that occur within a learning environment, specifically a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Within the community of practice, situated learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) can be transformational for the expert and the protégé alike. According to Collins (2006), the sociology of learning in the cognitive apprenticeship model encompasses situated learning, community of practice, intrinsic motivation, and collaboration. Within this sociology, the mentor and protégé play with ideas and grow.

Critical Reflection: Individual and Collaborative Practice

Novice scholars are initially tender at navigating their new roles that often come a steep learning curve, but also the risk and rewards of asking for feedback. Some feedback may challenge their deeply embedded assumptions yet may propel them to explore unfamiliar spaces or revisit experiences with alternative lenses. Development often occurs when theory challenges or interrupts the flow of ideas or hegemonic perspectives which the protégé and mentor may unconsciously hold. We agree with Wenger's (1998) notion that identity is "a constant becoming…it is something we constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives" (pp. 153–154). Being caught off guard or skewing a worldview "can be creatively dissonant" (Brookfield, 2017, p. 75) and can lead to transformational learning.

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000) and cognitive apprenticeship (Collins, 2006) provide solid frames that can anchor the development of novice scholars who are building a professional identity. We assert that each of these frames depends on dialogue or discourse. "Through discourse, learners make sense of new information and reach consensus by critically examining and comparing their assumptions with their peers" (Cordie & Adelino, 2020, p. 25). In addition to the frames of transformative learning and cognitive apprenticeship, we tap transformative learning theory as it relates to how individuals grow

intellectually and cognitive apprenticeship because it provides a model to organize intentional learning experiences to advance professional identity development. To this end, we look through three of Brookfield's (2017) four lenses of critical reflection: colleagues' perspectives, personal experience, and theory. Through these three lenses to light, we discuss the potential transformative learning has for novice scholars and their mentors.

Learning from Colleagues' Perspectives

Novice scholars and mentors alike can learn from their dialogue and interactions with their colleagues and the diverse perspectives they hold. For both novice scholars and their mentors, learning often occurs when listening to multiple audiences—students, faculty colleagues, mentors, peer reviewers, or members of a professional organization. By asking for feedback on their writing, presenting, teaching, or participation experiences, novice scholars can reap enormous benefits. Learning from others entails critical reflection—a collaboration in which "colleagues, clients, peers and experts pose questions to us, introduce new ways of looking at practice, and support us through the periods of struggle when challenging dominant assumptions threatens our sense of identity and raises the risk of our being marginalized" (Brookfield, 2016, p. 21). Specific examples of novice scholars learning from colleagues' perspectives include (a) viewing a new colleague or mentor as a critical friend—a person who speaks the truth and offers constructive feedback; (b) seeking a colleague's knowledge of institutional expectations such as promotion and tenure; and (c) talking about traditional challenges in the academy (e.g., writing, teaching, peer review) with a colleague. Mentors learn from colleagues' perspectives in similar and nuanced ways such as seeking council about a concern or issue, asking for feedback on a manuscript prior to submission, cooperating on the development of institutional policy or guidelines, and interacting with novice scholars and their fresh ideas.

In our kaleidoscopic metaphor, learning from other's perspectives happens iteratively when colleagues identify or clarify practices in the academic world. Learning occurs in dialogue with others—in this case, colleagues. Serving as mentors, these colleagues can reveal to the protégé what the pieces of glass in the kaleidoscope represent.

Learning from Personal Experience

The transition from novice scholar to expert scholar is learning to trust the legitimacy of one's own personal narrative. Naturally, novice scholars begin to take ownership of their own experiences and learning when pursuing their dissertation. During their developmental progression, the novice continues to imagine and design their own scholarly journey. With mentor guidance, they can consider ways to acquire deep disciplinary knowledge, but they can also learn how to draw connections between the discipline and their own experience. As novice scholars, they are already adept at communicating their learnings in at least two ways: (a) writing an expansive text (i.e., the dissertation), and (b) presenting their scholarly work (i.e., dissertation oral defense). During a novice's journey to develop the skills and habits of mind of an academic, the novice experiments with new ways of learning, while the mentor learns with and from the novice.

When transitioning to a faculty position, novice scholars build upon their own personal experience to advance their academic skills such as participating in thoughtful discourse, writing a cogent argument, or presenting their original ideas. For the personal experience to be transformative, these emergent scholars need to reflect critically upon their experience to examine their assumptions including their own thoughts, feelings, and actions related to that experience. In other words, transformative learning requires critical reflection, but critical reflection can occur without transformation (Brookfield, 2000). We contend that transformative learning cannot happen without dialogue—in this case, the dialogue inherent to critical reflection and development of an academic identity. Transformative learning cannot happen without practice—questioning one's own assumptions and grappling with what it means to be a scholar.

Learning from personal experience may appear in one's scholarly writing. For example, the ways that protégés incorporate their own experience in their writing such as writing in the first person, citing

transformative events, and recounting personal anecdotes. Likewise, mentors may feel empowered to include personal experience in their writing. Mentors as veteran scholars may feel more open to break free from the shackles of traditional academic writing and allow their own voice to flourish. For instance, they can experiment with non-fiction writing genres (e.g., autobiographical accounts) or creative and expressive writing (e.g., prose, poetry) to communicate their ideas.

Learning from personal experience can happen when the emerging scholar understands their own kaleidoscopic mandala because they know what the pieces of glass represent and how to influence their movement. They can engage in the practice of an internal dialogue—critical reflection—to move beyond surface level beauty to understand the deeper meaning of developing an academic identity.

Learning from Theory

Part of the transition from novice to experienced scholar is finding, learning, and using theory to advance your ideas. Identifying a theory along with the leading theorist(s) serves to encourage and propel scholarship According to Brookfield (2017), coming across a theory that describes clearly what you believe can be affirming. Using theory that aligns with one's own way of seeing the world feels comfortable. However, learning from theory also needs to come with a cautionary note because drawing from an affirming theory can become so comfortable that it clouds our thinking (van Manen, 2014). We assert that in a mentoring relationship a discussion about theory can advance the protégés' exploration and articulation of ideas.

Scholars have sought out theory from a deep need to ground their own thinking. For instance, hooks (1994) revealed, "I came to theory because I was hurting…I came to theory desperate, wanting to comprehend—to grasp what was happening around me and within me…I saw in theory then a location for healing" (hooks, 1994, p. 59). While seeking theory has been restorative for scholars, it has also been an academic tradition that shaped many scholars. Scholars have framed their ideas and advanced written conversations—written dialogues—to make larger connections with the scholarly community.

Emerging scholars warrant opportunities to learn from theory to bring new perspectives and other ways of considering the world to light. As experienced scholars, we celebrate the power of learning from theory. For the emerging and experienced scholars alike, instances of learning from theory include (a) recognizing how theory provides a robust foundation for their ideas; (b) situating their own ideas within the broader context of theory; (c) using the explicit language associated with theory; and (d) considering new ways of thinking based on exposure to theory.

A kaleidoscopic metaphor helps us articulate how we see a mentoring model work and inform the relationship differently than previous models—ones solely designed on theory. The kaleidoscope metaphor requires action of moving the optical lens, requires action for identifying sources of light, and requires attention to details as the mandala change in minuscule and intimate ways. All this action is what we refer to as a practice. Because at any time either party can let go or set down the kaleidoscope, and at any time they can pick it back up again to feel grounded, inspired, and impelled toward transformation.

A Kaleidoscopic Perspective of Transformative Learning

Ironically in our kaleidoscopic metaphor, Brookfield's (2017) perspective of critical reflection represents the light necessary to illuminate mandala. Reflection of light holds potential for emerging scholars and mentors to grow. Independently and collaboratively, emergent scholars and experienced scholars—mentors—can learn when they engage with their colleagues to deepen their work and expand their perspectives. They can both learn to draw upon their personal experience to enrich their academic endeavors whether teaching, writing, or presenting ideas. Similarly, they can learn to seek and embrace theories to support and/or challenge their worldview.

We agree with Brookfield (2016) who envisioned critical reflection as "the experimental pursuit of beautiful consequences: pragmatism." Pragmatism is a philosophical stance to examine "the truth of meaning of theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application" (Oxford Reference). According to Brookfield, pragmatists seek to make something better by engaging in continual

experimentation, learning from their missteps, and looking intentionally for innovative ideas and untapped options. Mezirow (2009b) might view this perspective as transformative learning.

Discussion

As we build on the work of other scholars, we make three points about mentoring novice faculty in an academic setting. First, mentoring needs to be mutually beneficial and critically reflective. According to Misawa and McClain (2019), the mentoring process "is reciprocal…a mentor and a mentee understand how their mentorship relation influences their academic and personal lives. A reciprocal aspect of mentorship focuses on the importance of respect between the mentor and mentee" (pp. 56–57). For example, the mentor and protégé can co-author an article together in which they both build their content knowledge and choose to be a critical friend while building a writing practice.

Second, mentoring requires understanding how to structure and implement modeling, scaffolding, and coaching methods as a mentor and when to support independent ideas of the protégé to articulate and explore their scholarly passions. Using a cognitive apprenticeship approach, the mentor recognizes when the protégé is ready to transition to the complexity of articulation, reflection, and exploration (Caskey & Weller Swanson, 2020). Building on the previous example, the mentor can encourage the protégé to write a single-authored article while still providing critical feedback.

Third, mentoring relies on the continuous and intentional use of dialogue (what do we talk about and how does it benefit one or both academics). In other words, dialogue helps learners to make sense of new information, examine their own assumptions, and build consensus with others (Cordie & Adelino, 2020). Staying with the writing for publication example, the mentor can talk with the protégé who may be grappling with the reviewers' feedback on an article by discussing the big ideas, possible changes needed, and where they agree with the reviewers' comments.

We employ the kaleidoscopic metaphor for mentoring because it offers both a model that responds to movement, growth, new sources of light but also honors the unchanging elements of theory, dialogue, and practice. The kaleidoscope turns and produces or reveals an ever-changing mandala both in the mentor's hands and in the protégé's hand.

As with any new skill or relationship praxis starts slow, clumsily and requiring practice of multiple steps but over time repetition becomes muscle memory and habits of mind allowing for new challenges for the seasoned mentor and the maturing novice. Dialogue starts shallow and develops into deeper trusted conversation, ones that are risky, challenging assumptions. The protégé and mentor build unconditional respect for one another.

The practice of a phenomenological wonder could encompass musings such as: what is the truth of this academic setting, what are the rules, asking new questions of the setting, posing new possibilities once old assumptions are unearthed. Phenomenological thinking compels us towards a disposition of wonder. We agree that "phenomenology is more a method of questioning than answering, realizing that insights come to us in that mode of musing, reflective questioning, and being obsessed with sources and meaning of lived meaning" (van Manen, 2014, p. 27). As we continue to practice, we still have wonderings and questions including:

- What other teaching and learning theories, models, and practices might enhance our kaleidoscopic mandala?
- As bell hooks (1994) stated that theory can heal, how can theory ward off possible injury from the process of developing an academic identity?

Through dialogue and practice, the protégé and mentor grow and learn in a practical, realistic way; they adopt a pragmatic stance while holding the kaleidoscope. Over time, they use rational discourse to explore and debate ideas, talk openly about their challenges, and make sense of their practice. The protégé and mentor learn by studying their current routines, playing with novel approaches, and attempting alternative strategies—all with the aim of transforming practice. They also take pleasure in

their individual transformations (Nin, 1985); they find beauty and possibility in the kaleidoscope's mandala (Caskey & Weller Swanson, 2020).

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Teaching with the Future in Mind: The Importance of Community-Engaged Projects Incorporating Students

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Abstract

Engaging undergraduate students in meaningful community work holds benefit for students, faculty, and the broader community. The purpose of this manuscript is to detail the opportunities, barriers, and lessons learned that related to three community research projects, utilizing the Socio-ecological Model as a guiding framework. Faculty created operational definitions for each level (intrapersonal, interpersonal, organization, community, and policy) of the Socio-ecological Model in order to consistently review and compare each project. The process allowed faculty to recognize shared opportunities, barriers, and lessons learned across multiple levels. Opportunities included fostering emotional intelligence and patience, researching in teams, developing qualitative research skills, incorporating community input in local health programming, fostering meaningful community partnerships, and influencing local policies. Barriers included having adequate time to conduct meaningful studies, providing time for training, and navigating conflicting priorities between partners. Lessons learned included knowing one's motivation, as well as the importance of providing feedback, flexibility, and building intentional collaborations. Analyzing these factors will allow faculty the ability to recognize key issues to address as well as pitfalls to avoid in future community-focused, experiential learning research experiences with students.

Undergraduate research experiences (UREs) are recognized as high-impact practices (Kuh, 2008) providing multiple benefits to students. Such benefits from research literature include a positive relationship with fourth-year GPA for undergraduate students participating in research during their first year (Bowman & Holmes, 2018), increased university program satisfaction (Wayment & Dickson, 2008), first-year student satisfaction (Bowman & Holmes, 2018), and increased understanding and ability to conduct research (Russell, Hancock, & McCullough, 2007; Stebner, King, & Baker, 2016). Undergraduates who took part in an early URE were more likely to stay through their second year compared to students who did not participate in an early URE; also, students who participated in early UREs and had average MCAT scores had an increased chance of being accepted to medical school compared to students who did not participate in early UREs and had average MCAT scores (Vincent-Ruz, Grabowski, & Schunn, 2018).

Experiential learning, such as URE, places the learner in real-world situations to apply knowledge and skills, reflect, and then integrate potential changes into their learning. Experiential learning itself is a process where learning occurs *during* the learner's experience (Kolb, 1984), with the learner both affecting and being affected by goals, cultures, experiences, and environments within a collaborative community space, such as with service-learning experiences (Cashman & Seifer, 2008).

Community-engaged learning (CEL), an extension of experiential learning, creates an experiential opportunity for students to engage, partner, and serve a community (Felter & Baumann, 2019; Makani & Rajan, 2016). Howard (1998) described service learning not as "the addition of service

to learning, but rather the integration of service with learning" (p. 21). Here Howard (1998) was referring to adding service learning to an academic course, with an experience that supported and enhanced course learning outcomes, where service learning serves as content along with other learning objectives and opportunities.

Transformative learning, another extension of experiential learning, is an "iterative process through which the adult learner is expanding their perspective through meaning-making" (Farrell Kilbourne et al., 2020, slide 3). This process includes a willingness to learn while being immersed in an experience. Transformative learning places the student at the center of the experience (Calleja, 2014) and may create cognitive dissonance (Farrell Kilbourne et al., 2020). The process includes critical reflection, rational discourse, and an expanded perspective that may shift an individual's identity, attitude, or worldview. This then leads to a greater willingness to learn (Farrell Kilbourne et al., 2020). Beginning in 2006, the University of Central Oklahoma operationalized transformative learning (TL; King et al., 2018) and formally adopted TL in 2007 (Walvoord & Hynes, 2016). The purpose of this manuscript is to detail opportunities, barriers, and lessons learned related to three TL, community-engaged research projects, utilizing the Socio-ecological Model as a conceptual framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Sallis et al., 2008). The manuscript will detail three specific TL projects facilitated by University of Central Oklahoma faculty and students to meet the needs of the local community; to establish a level of anonymity, the names of each organization are not expressly stated.

TL Project Descriptions

Hospital

This hospital is locally-owned and the largest non-profit health care system in the state. This hospital's 2019 Community Benefit Report notes that the system provided more than $20.3 million in financial assistance to more than 9,800 Oklahoma residents in the year prior. The system focuses on community building through community support and advocacy, and free health screenings and services. Students in an undergraduate public health capstone prerequisite course partnered with this hospital to assist with the required Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) guidelines for non-profit hospitals. The purpose of the partnership was to provide qualitative and quantitative data prioritizing populations from specific zip codes to the overall CHNA report.

The partnership began with the hospital's cancer center in 2012 and was repeated with the same hospital team in 2016. It continued in 2020 with a community health arm of the hospital. Each time, students worked in committees to develop and test survey and focus group questions; develop research processes, documents, and submit IRB paperwork; analyze results through SPSS as well as the categorization and organization of qualitative data; and create a written report to submit back to the hospital for their report to the IRS. While data collection was not included in the 2020 partnership due to COVID constraints, students in the 2012 and 2016 courses recruited community participants and facilitated focus groups, giving short surveys prior to the focus group sessions. Additionally, a graduate practicum student served as a liaison for the 2020 partnership, providing needed assistance when COVID restrictions changed the ability for all students to be physically engaged in the community.

For each of the three years where this partnership was embedded into the course, all students in the fall prerequisite course then moved to the capstone course the following spring. This allowed an extension of time, where students could finalize their analysis and report the following semester, as needed.

Granting Organization

This organization awards grants, funds evidence-based programs, and supports research in Oklahoma related to chronic illness and disease prevention. As a component of offering evidence-based programming, the organization works with evaluators examining both short- and long-term impacts of grantee work across multiple programmatic efforts. The authors of this manuscript subcontracted with one

such evaluation group for one evidence-based program. The purpose of this subcontract was to qualitatively examine grantees' experiences with resources, products, and materials developed and provided by the grant-maker, partners of the granting program, and the evaluation group. The grant-maker and associated partners provided materials and resources, including the following: sample policy language and evaluation guidance; trainings; and technical assistance. Structured interviews were conducted with grantee program representatives by the authors and four undergraduate research assistants. Thirty-one grantees were randomly selected and interviewed by telephone by undergraduate research assistants. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a transcription service. Transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO 12 Pro and analyzed using a grounded theory approach by the full research team; a written report was provided to the granting organization.

Nonprofit Organization

This nonprofit organization is the convening/backbone organization of a multi-partner collaboration, whose partners work together to lower the teen birth rate in the county. The organization serves as a resource and connector for partner organizations. The organization assists with mobilizing the community, collecting and analyzing data, and advocating for adolescents. A faculty-student-professional research team (comprised of a public health faculty member, undergraduate research assistant, and three local public health professionals) collaborated to conduct a mixed-methods project to assess the needs of the community and barriers for sexual health programming. The undergraduate research assistant and faculty developed the qualitative interview question path and assisted with the quantitative survey development. The team interviewed local caregivers, faith leaders, and community-based organization staff. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by a transcription service. Transcripts were uploaded to NVIVO 12 Pro and analyzed using a grounded theory approach by the student and faculty. A final report was prepared in conjunction with the nonprofit organization's director of research.

Findings

Although each project was unique, faculty noticed cross-cutting themes pertaining to community-engaged work involving undergraduate students, particularly related to multi-level personal and professional influences and experiences for faculty, students, and community. Three primary themes will be addressed through a Socio-ecological Model lens: opportunities, barriers, and lessons learned. The authors operationalized each level (intrapersonal: individual level influences/experiences; interpersonal: relational influences/experiences; organizational: specific organizational/institutional built, social, and policy influences/experiences; community: factors influencing and influenced by local community members; and policy: policy/advocacy related influences/experiences) of the Socio-ecological Model in order to consistently review and compare each project.

Opportunities

Intrapersonal & Interpersonal Opportunities

Faculty had an opportunity to develop interpersonal skills by working alongside students and partner/community agencies. Across all three projects, faculty navigated iterative protocol and tool development processes alongside partner organization staff. Faculty were able to move beyond teaching and researching alone (or solely alongside other faculty) to teaching and researching alongside students, fostering research skill development, patience, and emotional intelligence for faculty while also promoting the same among students.

Students learned and applied research methodology first-hand. Across each project, students benefited from planning, collecting, analyzing, and reporting research data. This level of involvement was well beyond merely learning research and evaluation design and methodology by sitting in a classroom setting. For example, one student team member completed an undergraduate quantitative research course and was able to learn a qualitative methodology specific to this student's partner organization (as described above). Two students applied concepts they were introduced to in an undergraduate assessment

and evaluation course, expanding on their skill set by using NVIVO 12 Pro for a project. Students were able to work alongside other students, discuss and negotiate results and meanings of findings, as well as form subgroups/committees when appropriate, and take some ownership of the final product. Students had opportunities to apply research methodology in community settings, learning nuances of community-engaged work. Although students may not have seen these as opportunities during the project, they were able to learn more about changing timelines for conducting community work, complications with recruiting and/or maintaining participants, seeking donations for incentives, and ethical considerations. Student researchers adapted and negotiated personal and partner schedules and deadlines in a real-world timeframe rather than artificial semesterly-frame. This dissonance of schedules provided students an experiential applied research opportunity and created an environment that encourages TL. Several students were also able to meet internship supervisors and future employers and consider research opportunities in graduate school settings.

Institutional Opportunities

Partner organizations had an opportunity to have a non-biased entity to facilitate applicable, relevant evaluation and research, which reduced the likelihood of biased evaluative results. Although local agencies had to edit and approve final reporting documents, they were able to apply their time elsewhere, rather than conduct research projects in addition to their direct service or project management. The discussion with student researchers regarding each team's role with partner institutions allowed for deeper thinking about these partnerships as well as a better understanding of the benefits of non-biased evaluation and research.

In addition, the university was able to be a visible partner in the community. University of Central Oklahoma is known as a metropolitan institution, because of the university's commitment to serving the community. Being a visible partner allows institutions to be actively involved in the community and be visible for recruitment/enrollment purposes, which is and will remain a relevant issue for institutions. It is important for potential students to see the benefits of attending their university and learning applicable skills at their institution.

Lastly, the university was able to utilize contracts to support student research opportunities and faculty research time (in two of the projects). This promotes more buy-in from students and faculty and also teaches the importance of being a good steward of ones' work time while promoting connectivity to the institution. Additionally, opportunities for TL were present as students navigated the processes of research contracts and applied this to their work.

Community Opportunities

Community members had an opportunity to inform local research and potential programs that benefited their own community. In each included project, community members were actively involved in one or more ways: informing data collection and/or tool development, participating in interviews, and/or participating in post-project presentations. Moreover, community members had a voice in priority issues, including influencing the way nonprofits and healthcare systems respond to and interact with communities (including racial ethnic minority groups and those who have limited health literacy, transportation, and/or childcare responsibilities). This commitment to promoting the voice of the community throughout each research project ensured that students applied classroom teachings on professional values to their experiential learning, providing opportunities for additional TL.

Barriers

Intrapersonal & Interpersonal Barriers

Contracted and grant-related projects involve balancing multiple interpersonal relationships, especially relationships amongst project funder and grantee/contract recipients, and relationships amongst project staff. Barriers arose amongst project staff due to the nature of faculty and student life. Students were enrolled in 12 or more credit hours, had part-time or full-time work commitments, and held familial obligations. Faculty also taught 12-credit hours and led additional projects and committee work. Project staff also had to be prepared for staff leaving mid-project (due to conflicting commitments). There were barriers related to time and patience required for faculty to develop/train student researchers, conduct

quality control checks as skills were solidified, and develop workplace culture and environment (including finding office space, purchasing equipment, and acquiring office phones for research use). Navigating these various responsibilities of both students and faculty created challenges that affected completion timelines. Faculty researchers, however, understood the importance of navigating these barriers because all three projects were viewed from initial conversations with community partners as transformative learning opportunities for students. It was understood by community partners that students would be involved, and partner organizations deliverables could still be met.

Interpersonal relationship barriers amongst project funders and research staff included negotiating expectations, deliverables, stipulations for reporting progress, and timelines. Timelines differed between project funders (such as funders needing information to inform programmatic decisions and those needing information for reporting to other agencies) and research staff (such as required time to develop a research protocol, acquire equipment and resources, and hire and train student researchers). Additionally, though student researchers learning or experiencing new research methodologies was a clear opportunity, these researchers required time to learn and practice prior to project implementation. This created a barrier due to navigating partner timelines as well as timelines of student researchers (e.g., ability to coordinate training schedules). Barriers such as these provided opportunities for student researchers to assess their abilities to meet deadlines while working with a team, providing additional possibilities for TL.

Institutional Barriers

Barriers arose with project staff and their home institution, related to time and training. Universities have set procedures, software, and protocols that hiring staff and project leaders must use or access. Faculty had to be trained to utilize human resources software to best manage student payroll and financial resources, manage timecards, follow protocols for software purchases (e.g., NVIVO), and acquire long-distance phone codes.

Moreover, there were institutional barriers related to policies for external contracts and funding faculty to conduct research. Faculty were approached by external agencies to be “hired” to provide evaluation, data collection, or other services. However, gaining approval for the external funding to support faculty time was not successful in one of the projects due to the lack of infrastructure in place at the time, at this primarily teaching university. Incorporating discussions of these institutional barriers into meetings with student researchers allowed for reflection, problem solving, and provided additional TL opportunities.

Policy Barriers

Changing policies related to reproductive rights, access to health care, and access to grocery stores and bike lanes, for example, take advocacy, policy change, and time for implementation. The outcomes related to these three projects were utilized to inform changes in the community, but seeing actual policy level change was not immediately apparent. Though policy change may not be readily noticeable, students were able to experience applied research within their community providing necessary information to partnered organizations regarding potential program revisions, assessing needs, or compliance. Ensuring that long-term thinking about policy needs was included in discussions and reflections with student researchers promoted an environment ripe for TL.

Lessons Learned

Intrapersonal Lessons

We learned identifying personal and professional motivations is a good start, but establishing our “why” was most important. For faculty at universities with heavy teaching loads, our “why” focused on being impactful in teaching and research, connecting our programs to community partners to build program reputation, applying course content to real-world applications, providing opportunities for students through environments that include disorienting dilemmas and deep reflection (in an effort to support transformative learning), paying student researchers for their efforts, and increasing networking opportunities. For students, their “why” included gaining experience for personal growth, graduate school applications, and landing paid internships/jobs. Students with more intrinsic, internal motivations persisted further as complications arose. It was important for us to personally remember our “why” when

funding shifted from paid to not paid, timelines shifted, and analysis/reporting expectations changed in some projects.

Interpersonal Lessons

We learned students benefited most when they were not shielded from conflict or misunderstandings/negotiations and when they had a level of ownership of the project; incorporating them from start to finish, an important aspect of experiential learning, allowed for deeper interpersonal relationships and the application of emotional intelligence. Moreover, communication needs to be clear and often. We each experienced disconnect, occasional lack of responses, and misunderstandings. We had to learn how to best communicate with our emerging adult researchers (e.g., text messages/group chats rather than email, fewer in-person meetings, concise agendas, and clear expectations) and offer grace when expectations were unmet. Discussing these interpersonal lessons among the team offered student researchers time for reflection and growth that can lead to TL.

Institutional & Community Lessons

Doing community work is an iterative process that involves constant negotiation with institutions and community partners. We learned the importance of patience and persistence. One student researcher remarked she had no idea how much preparation and meetings were required to conduct qualitative work in the community; she realized it was not as simple as having an idea and conducting a project. Adding people adds multiple goals, thought processes, methods for accomplishing desired goals, etc. Due to conflicting priorities and timelines, we learned the importance of knowing barriers will exist with institutions and community partners. Moreover, we experienced ethical dilemmas, including not being able to control how agencies reported results to the community. We learned that data ownership and dissemination plans should be established prior to the project. Throughout each of these lessons, it was paramount that student researchers were a part of the discussion, promoting reflection on disorienting dilemmas and allowing for the possibility of transformation.

Implications for Transformative Learning Practice

First, faculty should develop intentional partnerships with students and communities, not research just to research. We noticed our community projects incorporating students were mutually beneficial: assisting with tenure and promotion for faculty; increasing real-world experiences for students; pursuing the university's mission of transformative learning; encouraging retention and student success, and internship/job opportunities for students; and ensuring community members' needs were met. These projects truly allowed for professional and personal growth for all involved. Despite barriers that arose, students and faculty learned that deliverables could be provided and deadlines met. Additionally, researchers were able to overcome and negotiate through resilience, while working in an environment that included opportunities for growth and reflection

Second, faculty should be flexible, without minimizing rigor in research. Applied research opportunities may not always include calm, placid waters. Consider timelines and meeting shared needs. We recognize grant deadlines cannot be ignored. However, maintain a level of rigor so professional needs of faculty and students are not lost, with the changing timelines and community needs. By not yielding to partners' desires to minimize rigor to meet reporting deadlines, we strengthened the end project and helped to better inform future policies. Openly discussing these decisions with student researchers and asking for their input created space for meaningful reflection and shared governance. These aspects contributed to an environment conducive for TL.

Third, faculty should develop community- and student-centered projects to promote sustainability. Although community and policy level influences are difficult to incorporate in research projects, intentional incorporation promotes sustainability. For example, with one of the nonprofit projects, community members learned what the nonprofit was doing to decrease teen birth rates in their local community, could share what they wanted to see differently, and could sign up for working groups to either implement programs as peers or help advise programs. This helped with community awareness of teen pregnancy prevention and influenced the way community members supported legislation in a state

that currently does not mandate health education. Experiential learning, like UREs, may provide opportunities for students to experience and appreciate a facet of their work previously unknown to them. UREs can provide opportunities to retain students within a university and in a particular program and field, creating further sustainability at different levels.

Conclusions

Incorporating undergraduate students in community-engaged work is multi-beneficial for students, faculty, and the community. Although time, communication, and changing priority barriers existed, benefits for each priority population outweighed the barriers in all projects presented. Recognizing opportunities, barriers, and lessons learned at each level of the Socio-ecological Model will allow faculty the ability to address potential pitfalls to avoid in future community-engaged, transformative learning research experiences with undergraduate students.

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"But Have We Had Enough?": An Exploratory Examination of Teachers' Exposure to Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Professional Development

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Abstract

This exploratory study examined teachers' culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy beliefs using the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE) (Siwatu et al., 2017). In-service teachers with various dosage and exposure to culturally responsive professional development were examined and data was collected from a small sample (n=26) of PreK-12 classroom teachers. Initial results found positive correlations between professional development experiences and teachers' beliefs in implementing essential culturally responsive classroom management practices. Implications for culturally responsive professional development in teacher education are discussed.

Keywords: self-efficacy, culturally responsive classroom management, professional development"

Teacher burnout remains a leading cause in teacher attrition rates (Aloe et al., 2014; Mullen et al., 2021). Since the 1990's teacher turnover rates have continued to rise and vary widely across the U.S. (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017). Researchers note that one of the leading causes for teachers leaving the profession is that they are unprepared in the area of classroom management, particularly those teachers serving in high need and culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse schools (Melnick & Meister, 2008). As a result, poorly managed classrooms not only lead to high teacher turnover but severe racial disparities in student outcomes which disproportionately impact students of color in the domains of academic achievement, school discipline, and overall educational attainment (Milner, 2020; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). Furthermore, these educational lags lead to byproducts such as the school-to-prison pipeline, homelessness, underemployment, suicide, and homicide (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020; Milner et al., 2019).

As Black, Latinx, and Native/Indigenous students are suspended at rates disproportionate to their total population and significantly higher rates than their White peers; these trends must be redressed

(American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force; 2008; Williams et al., 2018; Heilbrun et al., 2018). Schools need effective educators who can support the cultural assets of a diverse student population while reducing the negative outcomes of poorly managed classroom environments which rely heavily on punitive discipline practices. A transformative learning experience such as Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Professional Development (CRCM PD) is essential in forging pathways which interrupt past and current negative discipline trends in education which continue to adversely affect culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The adverse effects of punitive school discipline practices and policies have been documented extensively in school discipline research over the past three decades (Gregory et al., 2010; McCarthy & Hodge, 1987; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Researchers revealed these “zero-tolerance” policies intended to create safe and compliant schools ended up exacerbating suspension rates, drop-out rates, worsened school climates, and lowered student achievement (Hanselman, 2019; Hoffman, 2014; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Black students, in particular, carry significant weight in representations of discipline referrals, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and law enforcement referrals than any other racial or ethnic group (Blad & Harwin, 2017; Heilbrun et al., 2018). Studies have also shown that Black students are not only subject to more frequent discipline referrals but also receive harsher consequences for the same infractions committed by their White and sometimes Asian counterparts (Milner et al., 2019; Skiba et al., 2002). Addressing the classroom management issues which exacerbate the occurrence of punitive discipline practices that not only disproportionately affect Black students, but all students, is of utmost importance.

To begin, all educators need to understand the important connections between culture and behavior so they may make more informed decisions when responding to diverse students’ perceived misbehavior (Siwatu et al., 2017). Additionally, managing a culturally diverse classroom is complicated by the lack of CRCM PD available for today’s teachers (Weinstein et al., 2004). In U.S. public schools, students of color make up most of the student population, yet the teaching force remains predominantly White, affluent, and female (Rychly & Graves, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). This is concerning as a historical analysis of schools in the U.S. illuminates, our educational institutions are not places of racial neutrality. Race, culture, class, language, and other social characteristics are intricately tied together to opportunities for learning and discipline practices (Anderson, 1988; Tyack, 1974).

Nurturing a culturally responsive teaching force must become a national priority. Educators must be effective in understanding the cultural aspects of student behavior; they must also view the diverse behavioral practices of their pupils through a culturally responsive lens (Hilaski, 2020; Umultu & Kim, 2020; Weinstein et al., 2003; Weinstein et al., 2004;). Increasing teachers’ understanding of students’ diverse behavioral practices will have a profound and positive impact in overturning current disparities in discipline rates for diverse students. CRCM practices seek to reduce and eliminate the harmful effects of the current cultural conflicts reproduced by culturally unaware teachers (Weinstein et al., 2004). Unfortunately, in-service educators have few opportunities to receive authentic, comprehensive, and on-going professional development in culturally responsive practices. There are even fewer with a CRCM focus (Austin et al., 2019; Gay, 2010; Lakhwani, 2019).

Teachers’ self-efficacy or their beliefs regarding actualizing CRCM practices is a critical consideration as well (Bradshaw et al., 2018; Jackson & Boutte, 2018; Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu et al., 2017). Theoretical support for this assertion is based on Bandura’s social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977). Bandura’s (1977) social cognitive theory examined the cognitive factors at play in individual behavior. This theory describes two particular beliefs individuals can possess—self-efficacy and outcome beliefs; both can be used as solid predictions of individual behavior. In this study, teacher self-efficacy is the focus and grounds the theoretical underpinnings of the following findings. As Bandura (1977) defines *self-efficacy* as the belief in one’s capabilities, teacher’s self-efficacy can be described as the belief in their ability to perform specific teaching tasks (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). This present study examines how teachers’ prior experiences with culturally responsive professional development shape their self-efficacy about enacting CRCM.

This exploratory study examines the possibility of reduction and elimination of the disproportionate discipline outcomes marginalized students experience when educators participate in transformative learning experiences through CRCM PD. This study also connects to the transformative learning possibilities educators can experience when their professional development opportunities are grounded in not only culturally responsive but transformative learning as well. Such transformations resemble the work of late educator Jack Mezirow (1978, 1991) and his Transformative Learning Theory. He describes this theory as a liberatory framework which can be utilized to engage educators and students in learning which challenges assumptions, critically analyzes concepts from multiple perspectives and ultimately leads to a transformative change where the learner embarks on new understandings and deeper, more meaningful, connections. For educators, such transformation is essential, even critical to educators re-thinking their approaches to classroom management and allowing them to embrace practices which result in more positive, uplifting, and culturally inclusive experiences for their students.

While research on the effects of culturally responsive professional development exist, there is limited research on the impact of variations in dosage and exposure of professional development on teachers' self-efficacy related classroom management (Lakhwani, 2019; Penner-Williams et al., 2019; Siwatu, 2007). This study will contribute to the growing empirical research regarding the impact of CRCM PD on in-service teachers' efficacy and enactment of these practices. This analysis will proceed with a brief review of literature related to the history of assimilation to White cultural norms in schools, CRCM, critiques of culturally responsive pedagogy, and increasing empirical support for culturally responsive teacher professional development. Next, a review of the CRCM self-efficacy scale developed by Siwatu et al. (2017) and the associated methodologies. After the presentation of the findings, this article will conclude with the implications for schools and school districts.

Literature Review

Whiteness as the Norm

America's history of education rests on the utilization of the public school as a mechanism for "Americanization" and assimilation into White society for nondominant groups (Adams, 2020; Anderson, 1988). After the abolition of slavery and the onslaught of large-scale immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe (Hirshman & Mogford, 2009), changing economic and demographic conditions in the north loomed as a perceived threat to "American" life. With foundations in The Doctrine of Discovery and Manifest Destiny (Nash, 2019), the promises of industrialization and centralizing education for greater efficiency helped policy makers and education reformers reimagine mechanisms of maintaining their cheap labor force and racial hierarchies by turning to "schooling" as an institution of assimilation (Ramsey, 2018; Rury, 2005; Tyack, 1974). Assimilationist ideologies are not exclusive to education but have ruled Western thought for centuries making its claim that individuals or groups from diverse racial, religious, ethnic, or linguistic backgrounds must relinquish their cultural identities and conform to Western, Eurocentric manifestations of "civilized" cultural practices (Postman, 1995; Schlesinger, 1991). This desire for a singular "common culture" in the U.S. has often come by way of dominance, subordination, and control of historically oppressed groups through racial violence and other means of force as common methods of coercion (Golemboski, 2018). As far back as the nineteenth century, U.S. schools have committed to the institutional practice of cultural erasure of diverse student identities, voices, experiences, knowledge, and histories (Adams, 2020; Blanton, 2004; Tamura, 1994).

Educators unaware of this history can consciously and unconsciously reinforce the negative narratives and harmful practices which support assimilation and further continue the marginalization of their diverse students. Though educators who utilize the pedagogy of assimilation often believe they are giving diverse students "better" educational opportunities, they are instead harming students by demonizing their personhood and separating them from their home and community knowledge (Watts, 2021). Furthermore, as doctrines of assimilation rule in schools, race-evasive or colorblind ideologies

combine in the minds of many educators to form a melting pot of simultaneous colorblind racism heaped upon the heads of diverse students, their families, and communities (Jupp et al., 2019). These ideologies are traditionally assumed to be singularly held by White educators; however, White teachers should not be tasked with all the heavy lifting in this area, as educator and scholar Lisa Delpit (2006) explains:

> Indeed these views are not limited to white adults. In my experience in predominantly black school districts, the middle-class African-American teachers who do not identify with the poor African American students they teach may hold similarly damaging stereotypes (p. xxiv).

For all educators, when instructing “other peoples’ children” (Delpit, 2006), *all* teachers should be regularly self-reflecting on deeply-held beliefs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003) and ensuring their thoughts and actions are not furthering the harmful, degrading, and devastating assimilatory practices of nineteenth and twentieth century schools. For better educational outcomes to occur for diverse students, educators of the twenty-first century need the knowledge and skills to interrupt the centuries-old tradition of assimilating students into the status quo of whiteness as the norm. The development of a culturally competent teacher force is the means to this end and the future of education in a multiracial, multiethnic, and pluralistic society.

Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

Essential to working with culturally and ethnically diverse students in the classroom setting are understanding how culture influences students’ classroom behavior. When teachers filter students’ behaviors through the lens of mainstream socio-cultural norms, as Weinstein et al. (2003) point out, discrimination against culturally diverse students becomes common, especially as the cultural gap between students and teachers widens. Working with culturally diverse students requires a level of intentionality on the part of classroom teachers to understand and implement specific approaches and strategies when managing a classroom of culturally diverse students (Ebersole et al., 2016; Gay, 2013). Building on research on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and scholarship on culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010), Weinstein et al. (2003) affirms that guidelines for managing a culturally diverse classroom—referred to as CRCM—is pertinent to creating culturally inclusive and affirming learning spaces. Implementing CRCM is a process that should be foundational to any teachers’ journey from preparation to practice.

As Weinstein et al. (2003) explain, CRCM is a process that requires frequent examination of the tasks that make up a classroom management plan. These tasks include examining the classroom environment’s physical organization, collaborating with students to establish expectations for behavior, communicating with students in culturally consistent ways, creating caring and inclusive classrooms, working with families, and appropriate ways to deal with problem behavior. Before establishing a CRCM plan, three prerequisites are required, which “begins with an understanding of ‘the self,’ ‘the other,’ and the context” (Weinstein et al., 2003, p. 270). To be effective culturally responsive classroom managers, Weinstein et al. (2003) emphasizes that we must

> recognize that we are all cultural beings, with our own cultural beliefs, biases, and assumptions about human behavior, acknowledge the cultural, racial, ethnic, and class differences that exist among people, and understand the ways that schools reflect and perpetuate discriminatory practices of the larger society. (p. 270)

that frequently lead to cultural conflicts in the classroom. As Evans et al. (2020) explain:

> Genuinely embracing culturally responsive pedagogies challenges both teacher educators and preK-12 educators to critically reflect on the ways they operate within institutionalized systems towards perpetuating the academic marginalization and social disenfranchisement of Students of Color. This task not only takes a significant amount of personal reflection, cultural humility, and

> emotional vulnerability for a predominantly white teaching force, but challenges educators to dismantle social hierarchies, discourse, and power systems that have favored whiteness for centuries. (p. 63)

In response to issues of cultural conflict which can result from teachers' misinterpretation of culturally diverse students' behaviors due to a lack of culturally competent knowledge and skills, CRCM seeks to equip teachers with the skills and mindset necessary to reverse these trends (Weinstein et al., 2004). There are five components of CRCM that are essential in managing classrooms in culturally responsive manners. These components consist of recognizing one's ethnocentrism and biases; being knowledgeable of students' cultural backgrounds; understanding the social, political, and economic contexts of the educational system; being willing and able to utilize culturally appropriate classroom management; and committing to building caring classroom communities. Such components constitute the essential critical self-reflection needed for truly transformative learning experiences among educators (Mezirow, 1991, 1997; Negi & Jain, 2021). As Bondy et al. (2007) unpack in their research, the main objective for CRCM is to create learning environments that encourage success and resilience through practices that embrace and affirm, instead of rejecting and devaluing, the cultural differences of all students.

Critics of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Practice

However beneficial current research suggests culturally responsive education may be; criticism regarding topics of race, class, religion, and politics remains unrelenting. As the social norms surrounding these topics have changed drastically during the age of social media, more people are feeling more comfortable discussing these issues and challenging those they disagree with. Although pedagogies of culturally responsive education seek to remedy many of the issues of inequity in public schools; its essential components and pathways for progress are constantly attacked or misinterpreted by those who often benefit from school systems that marginalize and oppress others (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

In Alan James' (1982) *What's Wrong with Multicultural Education?*, James' argument focuses on his perceived flawed assumptions within culturally responsive practice. James (1982) argues eight points in his critique of multicultural education asserting that multicultural education supports crude and ill-defined concepts of culture; falsely assumes a banking concept of education; is dangerous; is a form of indoctrination; it is superficial; it ignores the need for a common culture; conflicts with equitability of educational opportunity; and poses a danger of becoming institutionalized and bureaucratized.

Although James is speaking from a British perspective in terms of culture, his claims align with other critics of culturally responsive and multicultural education in the U.S. Prominent multicultural education critics such as Postman (1995) and Schlesinger (1998) both hold dearly to the idea that U.S. schools should teach students to have a common understanding of what it means to be an "American." Unfortunately, these beliefs are always professed outside the context of the U.S.'s founding on racism, sexism, and classism and do not take into account the ideology of white supremacy, which is at the helm of all that is "American" (Kendi, 2016; Takaki, 2008; Zinn, 2003). However, culturally responsive education is assumed not to promote a common culture because it allows for the inclusion, respect, and representation of all cultures. Moreover, contemporary critics pick up where traditional condemners leave off. Groups such as Moms for Liberty (Herald Reports, 2021), and elected officials like Representative Adam Neimerg, of Illinois, and U.S. Senator Marsha Blackburn, of Tennessee, similarly condemn culturally responsive teaching as "not education" but "indoctrination" or an attempt to insert "progressive politics" into the classroom (Szalinski, 2021).

Critics are also concerned with the liberties of classroom teachers. Their opposition stems from their beliefs that while affirming the identities and "ideas" of culturally diverse students, teachers will be forced to go against their personal religious beliefs in an attempt to create a culturally inclusive learning space (McKinney, 2020). Critics claim to not be opposed to teaching students to think critically or the development of students' socio-political awareness through community engagement. However, they

believe instructional time should be used to "focus on improving mastery of subjects," versus teaching students how to "go to protests" (Szalinski, 2021). Beliefs as such show a failure to realize that culturally responsive practices will move culturally and linguistically diverse students closer to mastery of subjects when educators are challenged to disrupt deficit beliefs held regarding the academic potential of socially, culturally, and economically diverse students.

To these critics and others' dismay, as previously discussed, implementing culturally responsive practices in the classroom requires examining worldviews on the practitioner's part (Jackson & Boutte, 2018). Limiting teaching and learning to focusing on mastery of subject matter and teaching students to be mere "active participants" within their local communities will not meet the goal of transformative learning especially if educators fail to acknowledge the historical and racial factors that have contributed to the education debt which has devastated communities primarily populated by marginalized students (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Students must be empowered to challenge and disrupt the very systems that once kept them in bondage. Overall, teachers must understand that the goal of CRCM is not to achieve compliance or control, but instead to create a positive learning environment where all students can be successful (Weinstein, et al. 2003, p. 275). Culturally responsive professional development will prepare educators to guide students in relevant and meaningful learning experiences that will not only have a positive impact on their academic performance but also their ability to meaningfully exercise their civic duties in the same manner of those who critique culturally responsive pedagogy.

Increasing Empirical Support for Culturally Responsive Teacher Professional Development

Providing educators with adequate professional development opportunities in CRCM increases the chance of utilizing such approaches in place of punitive discipline practices currently in place (Acquah & Szelei, 2020). Effective professional development is "structured professional learning that results in changes in teacher practices and improvements in student learning outcomes" (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017, p. v). Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) analyzed decades of literature to determine seven features of effective professional development. These features include professional development which is content-focused, active in learning, supports collaboration, models effective practice, provides coaching and support, offers feedback and reflection, and is sustained and on-going. Unfortunately, many educators do not receive this kind of professional development. In the U.S., 80 percent of teachers' workday is devoted to classroom instruction. The amount of time U.S. teachers spend on instruction is a stark contrast to other nations, where teachers spend 60 percent of their workday instructing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

U.S. teachers' access to and participation in culturally responsive professional development is also lacking because there are few empirically-based research initiatives on the benefits of culturally responsive professional development practices (Brown & Crippen, 2016). Although quantitative research on the effectiveness of these practices on students' outcomes is emerging (Brenneman et al., 2019; Byrd, 2016), decades of qualitative studies on the need for these approaches suggest an imbalance (Gorski et al., 2012). Although larger-scale culturally responsive programs are still needed, individual studies show that when teachers are engaged in effective culturally responsive education, teacher effectiveness in these practices, student achievement, and discipline rates improve (Austin et al., 2019; Byrd, 2016; Lakhwani, 2019).

Studies by Kelly et al. (2015) and Portes et al. (2018) provide evidence of culturally responsive professional development effectiveness and support these methods to increase diverse students' achievement. In Lakhwani (2019), the retrospective test administered to teacher participants after only a 2-hour professional development session showed moderate growth in teachers' knowledge and skills. In Siwatu (2007), after teachers participated in a self-efficacy and outcome beliefs survey, strong correlations were found between teachers' beliefs in their abilities to perform in culturally responsive ways and their expected outcomes. Similarly, in Austin et al. (2019), teachers and students showed significant gains in knowledge, skills, academic achievement, and gap closure after a 2-year participation in a culturally responsive practice program. Williams & Glass (2019) found that teachers' participation in multicultural education courses increased their ability to create culturally responsive classroom

environments. Finally, Main & Hammond (2008) found positive correlations between teachers' classroom management self-efficacy beliefs and their ability to maintain on-task behavior from students. More research is also emerging on the effectiveness of culturally responsive professional development on teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and overall effectiveness in culturally responsive practices, student achievement, and discipline outcomes (Cruz et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond, 1993; Charity Hudley & Mallinson, 2017; Lawrence, 2020).

Incorporating culturally responsive pedagogies into the training and professional development opportunities for in-service teachers is a critical first step to increasing teacher effectiveness and reversing decades of educational malpractice of culturally diverse students. This project utilized Siwatu et al.'s (2017) Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE) in an effort to guide such efforts. The research team used this scale to assess teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and collect necessary data to design professional development (PD) opportunities for K-12 educators. In particular, the scale assesses the effects of various doses and exposure to culturally responsive professional development for teachers. In utilizing the CRCMSE, we aimed to determine which areas of CRCM were educators most proficient in and how these areas correlated with professional development (PD) exposure throughout their careers. This exploratory study seeks to add to this body of research by considering the following research questions:

1. What is the association between participants' responses on the CRCM scale and the dosage (# of hours) of PDs they attended?
2. What is the association between participants' responses on the CRCM scale and their exposure (how many years) to CRCM PDs?

Methods

Data Collection

An Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved survey was administered nationally in the Fall of 2020. This survey included demographic items seeking to obtain information on respondents' race and gender. Additionally, the survey asked respondents pertinent questions on current school district, teaching experience, and if they attended professional development on CRCM. Participants were also questioned on their exposure to CRCM professional developments and the number of professional development hours in this particular area. Finally, respondents were required to complete the CRCM self-efficacy scale developed by Siwatu et al. (2017), provided in Appendix A.

Participants

Participants for this exploratory study included in-service teachers (n=26) in Texas and across the U.S. in states such as California, Kentucky, Oregon, and Maryland, along with others. Each of the participants' school districts were matched with the National Center for Education Statistics database to determine their urbanicity. The sample included 16 respondents from urban school districts, three from suburban school districts, and seven from rural school districts. Of the 31 sample responses collected, five opted out of the survey leaving 26 (83%) participant responses in total. Included in the sample were 3 males (11%) and 23 (88%) females. Participants were asked to provide identifying demographic features such as race/ethnicity: 9 (34%) indicated that they were White, 2 (7%) were Hispanic/Latinx, and 15 (57%) identified as African American/Black.

Measures

The research team utilized Siwatu et al. (2017) Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale to assess teachers' self-efficacy beliefs regarding their ability to engage in CRCM tasks. Built on prior work on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and CRCM (Siwatu, 2007; Siwatu et al., 2017), this study sought to contribute to scholarship by determining associations in teacher responses based on their prior experiences with culturally responsive professional development and other factors.

The scale consisted of 35 items that indicated how confident participants were in performing CRCM behaviors. The confidence ratings ranged from 0–10 on a Likert-type scale, with 0 indicating no confidence to 10 indicating complete confidence. Siwatu et al., 2017 used a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine the scales' validity. This scale has a reliability of and internal validity of ($r= .77$, $n= 370$, $p< .001$).

Data Screening & Analysis

Initial screening of the data found no missing responses on either the demographic questions or the CRCM self-efficacy scale. The variables of the number of years teaching, exposure to CRCM professional development, the dosage of professional developments attended, and the number of hours of professional development seminars attended was dummy coded, with 0 either indicating no or the minimum response for those items. The researchers performed an exploratory descriptive analysis to ascertain the respondents' differences and similarities regarding demographics (Table 1) and their overall self-efficacy ratings (Table 2). Lastly, in an effort to ascertain whether an association existed between variables, two separate Pearson correlations were conducted. The first correlation opted to establish an association between the prompt the number of professional development hours obtained by a participant and each of the survey prompts from the CRCM survey prompt. The second correlation analysis was used to determine a relationship between the number of professional development session attended and the CRCM survey prompts

Findings

Researchers sought to determine the relationship between the dosage of CRCM PD (# of hours), exposure to CRCM PD (# of years), and teacher's self-efficacy in utilizing culturally responsive practices in their classrooms. Descriptive results are located in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Demographic and Experience Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Urbanicity			
Urban	16		
Suburban	3		
Rural	7		
Number of Years		1.46	1.27
0–5 Years	9		
5–10 Years	4		
10–15 Years	5		
15+ Years	8		
CRCM Attended?			
No	9		
Yes	17		
Number of PD Seminars		1.03	1.4
0	8		
1	7		

Note. PD = professional development

Table 1 Continued

Descriptive Statistics of Teacher Demographic and Experience Variables

Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Number of PD Seminars		1.03	1.4
2	7		
3	4		
PD Hours	26	1.27	1.08
No Exposure	9		
0–3 Hours	12		
0–6 Hours	4		
More than 6 Hours	1		

Note. PD = professional development

Other identifying factors included the number of years of teaching in which 9 (34%) indicated they had 0–5 years of experience, 4 (15%) had 5–10 years, 5 (19%) had 10–15 years, and 8 (30%) had 15 or more years of teaching experience. Participants were also asked to include whether or not they had any prior experience with professional development in culturally responsive practices, in which 17 (65%) replied yes, while 9 (34%) indicated they had no prior experience. Finally, participants were asked to include the number of culturally responsive professional development hours they received (dosage). For dosage, 6 (23%) indicated they had 0–3 hours, 8 (30%) had 3–6 hours, and 3 (11%) of those with prior experiences had six or more hours. For exposure or the number of academic years participants reported taking training in culturally responsive teaching, 12 (46%) indicated they had one year of exposure, 4 (15%) had two years of exposure, and 1 (3%) had two years or more of exposure.

According to Table 2**,** the participants reported a high sense of self-efficacy for each of the items. The participants reported the highest mean (*M* = 9.08) on items 9 (encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate) and 6 (clearly communicate classroom policies), and had the lowest mean (*M* = 7.31) on items 28 (use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds), 31 (modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture), and 32 (implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a student's culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms).

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses from CRCM Self-Efficacy Scale

Question	*M*	Std. Dev.
1. Assess students' behaviors with the knowledge that acceptable school behaviors may not match those that are acceptable within a student's home culture.	8.54	1.77
2. Use culturally responsive discipline practices to alter the behavior of a student who is being defiant.	7.92	1.79
3. Create a learning environment that conveys respect for the cultures of all students in my classroom.	8.58	1.33
4. Use my knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds to create a culturally compatible learning environment.	8.31	1.76

Table 2 Continued

Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses from CRCM Self-Efficacy Scale

Question	*M*	Std. Dev.
5. Establish high behavioral expectations that encourage students to produce high-quality work.	8.65	1.77
6. Clearly communicate classroom policies.	9.08	1.02
7. Structure the learning environment so that all students feel like a valued member of the learning community.	8.96	1.04
8. Use what I know about my students' cultural background to develop an effective learning environment.	8.77	1.34
9. Encourage students to work together on classroom tasks, when appropriate.	9.08	1.09
10. Design the classroom in a way that communicates respect for diversity.	8.88	1.03
11. Use strategies that will hold students accountable for producing high-quality work.	8.81	1.44
12. Address inappropriate behavior without relying on traditional methods of discipline such as office referrals.	8.54	1.77
13. Critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective.	7.81	1.83
14. Modify lesson plans so that students remain actively engaged throughout the entire class period or lesson.	8.50	1.61
15. Redirect students' behavior without the use of coercive means (i.e., consequences or verbal reprimand).	8.15	1.87
16. Restructure the curriculum so that every child can succeed, regardless of their academic history.	8.38	1.63
17. Communicate with students using expressions that are familiar to them.	8.19	1.86
18. Personalize the classroom so that it is reflective of the cultural background of my students.	8.27	1.64
19. Establish routines for carrying out specific classroom tasks.	8.81	1.63
20. Design activities that require students to work together toward a common academic goal.	8.69	1.29
21. Modify the curriculum to allow students to work in groups.	8.62	1.33
22. Teach students how to work together.	8.73	1.28
23. Critically assess whether a particular behavior constitutes misbehavior.	8.35	1.52
24. Teach children self-management strategies that will assist them in regulating their classroom behavior.	8.15	1.67
25. Develop a partnership with parents from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.	7.88	1.63
26. Communicate with students' parents whose primary language is not English.	6.96	2.52
27. Establish two-way communication with non-English speaking parents.	6.92	2.31
28. Use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.	7.31	2.09
29. Model classroom routines for English Language Learners.	8.27	1.82
30. Explain classroom rules so that they are easily understood by English Language Learners.	7.88	1.93

Table 2 Continued

Mean and Standard Deviation of Responses from CRCM Self-Efficacy Scale

Question	*M*	Std. Dev.
31. Modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture.	7.31	2.31
32. Implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a student's' culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms.	7.31	2.56
33. Develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family backgrounds.	7.69	2.19
34. Manage situations in which students are defiant.	7.81	2.00
35. Prevent disruptions by recognizing potential causes for misbehavior.	8.15	2.07

Correlational Matrix

Moreover, researchers focused on two research questions: 1) What is the association between participants' responses on the CRCM scale and the dosage of PDs they attended? 2) What is the association between participants' responses on the CRCM scale and their exposure to CRCM PDs? The first inquiry considers the relationship between dosage or the number of hours reported in CRT professional development, and teachers' self-efficacy in CRCM. Also, of the 35 questions, researchers found that only 8 questions gave statistically significant results: Questions 8, 13, 28, 31, 32, and 33. After conducting correlations, only four out of 35 questions had a positive association with the variable number of hours of PDs attended. According to the data, there was a positive association between participants' dosage to culturally responsive PD and their responses to the scale items in Table 3. Participants with higher dosage reported greater self-efficacy on question 8, 31, 32, and 33, with statistically significant *r* values ranging from 0.411 to .475 ($p < .05$) for the aforementioned variables indicating a moderate positive relationship.

Table 3

Correlational Matrix of Dosage of Professional Development Seminars on CRCM Attended and Significant Items

	1	2	3	4	5
Number of hours in CRCM professional development	1				
Use what I know about my students' cultural background to develop an effective learning environment	0.411*	1			
Modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture	0.475*	0.788***	1		
Implement an intervention that minimizes a conflict that occurs when a student's culturally based behavior is not consistent with school norms	0.460*	0.853***	0.944***	1	

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

Table 3 Continued

Correlational Matrix of Dosage of Professional Development Seminars on CRCM Attended and Significant Items

	1	2	3	4	5
Develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background	0.430*	0.824***	0.890***	0.926***	1

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

The second inquiry examined the relationship between exposure or the number of years participants had professional development related to CRT and their self-efficacy in enacting CRCM practices in their classrooms. Results from a correlational analysis are reported in Table 4 and overall data suggest a positive correlation between exposure and four items on the survey.

Table 4

Correlational Matrix of Professional Development Session Attend and Significant Items

	1	2	3	4
Number of professional development sessions attended	1			
Critically analyze students' classroom behavior from a cross-cultural perspective	0.393*	1		
Use culturally appropriate methods to relate to parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	0.392*	0.735***	1	
Modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture	0.417*	0.826***	0.840***	1
Develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background	0.409*	0.793***	0.826***	0.890***

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

For each of the four items (items 13, 28, 31, and 32) as the number of years with professional development increased so did teacher's self-efficacy in CRCM. For instance, teachers report a greater sense of efficiency to "develop an effective classroom management plan based on my understanding of students' family background" with greater frequency the more of CRT training they reported. Table 4 records statistically significant r values ranging from .392 to .417 for the aforementioned variable indicating a moderate positive relationship.

Discussion

This particular study sought to determine how and if dosage and exposure to professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy was associated with practitioners' self-efficacy in managing culturally diverse classrooms. Our descriptive analysis revealed that the highest mean scores were in areas that involved creating a culturally responsive learning environment that fostered community among diverse learners. A sense of community is essential to a culturally responsive learning environment. Within this community, all students must feel valued, respected, and empowered. Teachers need to know how to design a classroom that communicates respect for diversity yet emphasizes collectivism and mutual aid (Gay, 2002). Participants were also confident in their abilities to create a culturally compatible learning environment and in their abilities to create learning environments that convey respect for all students. This confidence was confirmed in the mean scores for descriptive items associated with core components of a culturally responsive learning space—high expectations for all students, bringing students' culture into the classroom, modifying curriculum to meet students social, cultural, and academic needs, and communicating with students in a manner that acknowledges their cultural and ethnic communication styles (Gay 2002; Gay 2013).

The findings illustrate the lowest mean scores in areas that involved validating students' home language by establishing culturally appropriate communication methods with students and families whose primary language is not English. The research team found this concerning because effective cross-cultural communications are pivotal to culturally responsive teaching. Effective communication is critical to any classroom, as communication is the heart of the classroom community (Anderson et al., 2021). Additionally, modifying aspects of the classroom to match students' home culture and implementing interventions to minimize conflict when students' behavior is inconsistent with school norms had low means. American public schools are breeding grounds for forced assimilation. In these academic spaces, students of color are required to reject their ethnic and cultural home identities and languages and replace them with American Standard English and customs deemed as foundational to the "American" identity (Watts, 2021). Educators in public schools have become the upholders of the values and customs aligned with this ideal "American" identity and, as a result, struggle to find culturally appropriate ways to embrace students' authentic ethnic and cultural identities when managing culturally diverse classrooms. The key to culturally relevant and responsive practices is bringing students' home cultures and cultural frames of reference and lived experiences into the academic space (Gay, 2010). A disconnect between school and home cultures of culturally and linguistically diverse students can lead to negative teacher expectations, which will negatively impact a students' ability to perform at their highest potential (Gay, 2013). In reference to the low means scores of understanding and managing students' behavior, this is troubling considering current schooling practices and policies often mirror the institutional discrimination outside of schools (Weinstein et al., 2004).

Within this lack of understanding of students' home culture, misinterpretations of culturally appropriate and inappropriate behavior can harm classroom management efforts and the ability to create a caring classroom community. Williams et al. (2018) is correct in asserting that teachers' perception of their students' actions or inaction plays a critical role in their classroom environment. To be an effective and culturally responsive educator, practitioners must understand the cultural contexts of students' behavior and culturally appropriate ways to intervene.

Our study discovered that the dosage of professional development hours was positively associated with educators' abilities to use students' cultural backgrounds to create a culturally compatible learning environment, use students' cultural backgrounds to develop effective learning environments, and modify aspects of the classroom so that it matches aspects of students' home culture. From the professional development received, participants with a high dosage of professional development felt they were proficient in their abilities to use their students' cultural content knowledge, which is pertinent to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2010; Weinstein et al., 2004). Participants in our study who received a higher dosage of culturally responsive professional development felt confident in their ability to resort to culturally responsive management practices over traditional and potentially harmful discipline practices such as office referrals and in-school suspension.

Implications

Although much research directs its attention to the racial disparity between students and White teachers and the negative cultural implications that can ensue, our study participants were majority Black/African Americans in urban school districts. This is important because it is often assumed that only White teachers need training in culturally responsive practices and teachers of color (particularly Black) do not need it or need less of it. There is an assumed cultural competence that comes with being a teacher of color; however, as our study discovered, this should not be presumed universally true. Potentially, *cultural pedagogical divergence* can be present and teachers who are members of the same marginalized group as their students can still demonstrate cultural incompetence when they adhere to dominant (White, middle-class) forms of teaching and instruction. Due to this potential occurrence, it is our stance that *all* educators should be considered in need of development in CRCM practices as it is key in preparing teachers to engage in preventative classroom management practices, not simply just responding or reacting to them. The possibilities that this kind of transformative learning can render among educators at large should not be dismissed and garner great consideration for classrooms and schools looking to implement authentic culturally responsive practices and pedagogies (Evans et al., 2020).

Limitations

Two major limitations in this study should be noted. First, the sample size does not provide enough power to assume these findings can be generalized to the teacher population. Future studies exploring this topic can lean on larger sample sizes from a diverse group of teachers to glean results that are transferable to specific school regions/locales (i.e., urbanicity, and/or traditional/charter schools. Second, as the current social and political climate remains polarizing surrounding race and social justice issues in education (Aguilera, 2020; Daniels, 2019), we caution that participants in this study could have been susceptible to *social desirability bias* in their responses. *Social desirability bias* describes a tendency for research participants to respond to self-reports in ways that they deem socially acceptable rather than reflective of their true feelings (Holtgraves, 2004; Paulhus, 1984). This kind of bias shows up most often in self-reports, surveys or interviews involving sensitive issues such as religion, politics, drug use, and race issues (Larson & Bradshaw, 2017). For practitioners seeking to assess teachers' culturally responsive practices to inform professional development planning, this can pose challenges. Future researchers must be cautious when using these results to make conclusions regarding teachers' culturally responsive effectiveness (Chu, 2013).

Conclusion

Beginning this study, the research team sought to understand if dosage and exposure to culturally responsive professional developments would have positive associations on practitioners' self-efficacy in implementing culturally responsive practices in their classroom management. The data gathered from the administered survey confirms that educators who had a higher exposure and dosage of culturally responsive professional development felt confident in their abilities as culturally responsive educators. Existing research confirms that quality professional development sessions have a positive relationship to the quality of education and teachers' effectiveness in working with culturally diverse students (Lakhwani, 2019). For practitioners to internalize the components of CRCM, the amount of dosage and exposure must be substantial to accomplish what Weinstein et al. (2004) describe as a practice that leads to the application of CRCM strategies. Failure of teacher preparation programs to provide these critical CRCM practice opportunities to pre-service teachers has placed this responsibility on local school districts and individual schools. As Siwatu (2007) notes, pre-service teachers enter the profession feeling less efficacious in their abilities to implement culturally responsive practices proven effective when working with culturally diverse students. Because they lack confidence in this area, they will not utilize practices that they do not believe will lead to positive outcomes with students, leading to

harmful learning experiences for marginalized students. Such missed opportunities for transformative learning experiences for educators ultimately results in harmful school practices for students. To build the confidence of pre-service and in-service educators, efficacy-building interventions—targeting specific culturally responsive teaching competencies and components of CRCM—must be prioritized at the campus or district level.

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Faculty Gains through Teaching Abroad: A Transformative Learning Approach

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Abstract

This investigation explores the benefits that faculty gain from teaching on short-term, faculty-led programs, complementing a much more extensive literature on student outcomes of this study abroad program model. A secondary goal of the research was to learn whether faculty gains stemming from these experiences resulted in follow-on benefits for the institution and, more broadly, for internationalizing curricula and teaching on the home campus. Among the findings, the four key benefits that faculty reported were cultural and intercultural learning, a further development of their own research interests and professional networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. While these findings support related research demonstrating some strengthening of internationalization efforts, the authors argue that their research provides support for a transformative learning approach which would enhance faculty development through reflection and longer-term benefits to the institution.

Keywords: faculty, internationalization, faculty development, transformative learning, authenticity, education abroad

Introduction

U.S. campuses have increasingly viewed short-term education abroad programming as an effective means for rapidly expanding access to a wider range of students, and especially for those who might not otherwise go abroad without the support and sense of security provided within a group. Accordingly, the number of students participating on faculty-led programs, most eight weeks or less, has risen over the past two decades, outpacing other forms of education abroad in terms of growth (Redden, 2018). Approximately 65% of students who study abroad did so on a short-term program of eight weeks or less in 2018–19 compared to 56% in 2005–6, and only just over two percent went for at least an academic year (Institute for International Education, 2020), thus moving considerably away from the traditional Junior Year Abroad (JYA) model. While numerous factors explain these shifts, much has come down to a response from institutions to market demand with a greater diversity of students who may be unable or less inclined to go abroad for a longer sojourn due to curricular, financial, familial, or other considerations.

The discussion and research to date on short-term programs has revolved largely around the ways in which such programming benefits students, especially as a high-impact practice with transformational learning potential. At the same time, with the exception of a very small number of studies (Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020; Watts, 2015), very little is known about what *faculty* may gain from these short-term experiences as opposed to longer-term positions as study abroad directors (Goode, 2007). Given that faculty are already leading programs abroad in increasing numbers, with this being in some

cases their sole means of international exposure, it is surprising that more work has not been done in this area.

Filling an important gap in the literature, here we explore case studies at two institutions—Boston College (BC) and Smith College (Smith)—following a pilot survey conducted of faculty who had taught abroad through the Office of International Programs (OIP) or Global Studies Center (GSC), respectively. The study began with a goal of understanding the extent to which faculty teaching abroad has an impact on the pedagogy and global content of the home campus curriculum. Among the findings, the four key benefits that faculty reported were cultural and intercultural learning, further development of their own research interests and professional networks, deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. In addition to contributing to their home campuses' internationalization strategies, these findings suggest that faculty's teaching overseas can serve as a point of disruption, leading to significant and transformative alterations in their thinking, teaching, and research—and much more than has previously been considered. Further, this learning is deepened when faculty are afforded opportunities to reflect upon and consider ways of transferring the knowledge they gathered overseas when returning to the home campus.

Faculty and Short-term Programming

The increasing scale and scope of globalization has had dramatic influences on higher education. Many university leaders have sought to address the changes in the global environment through their academic and co-curricular offering, (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Mestenhauser & Ellingboe, 1998). In seeking a purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments, leaders and scholars have repeatedly pointed to the critical role of faculty, with the introduction of curricular reforms and new pedagogical practices (Childress, 2018; Landorf et al., 2018). This comes with an understanding, as Green and Mertova (2016) note, that faculty are the architects of the curriculum, and any planning must respect the deep connections faculty have to their disciplinary knowledge and social relations with academic peers on campus and beyond (Leask & Bridge, 2013; Green & Whitsed, 2015; Clifford, 2009).

To foster faculty engagement, a number of strategies have been employed, including training, research grants, traveling seminars, and opportunities for teaching abroad. Increasingly, faculty have had the chance to lead short-term programs, which are usually eight weeks or less and typically organized around a theme related to the faculty member's discipline or area of expertise (Keese & O'Brien, 2011). Such opportunities are attractive to students that may not be ready or able to participate in more traditional semester or academic year programs, for reasons including curricular requirements, finances, family commitments, or a fear of venturing abroad on one's own without support (Gaia, 2015). Faculty have also found these programs appealing for exploring a new country or reconnecting with a place they know, as well as for being able to fit an international experience in and around other personal and professional commitments.

While the popularity of faculty-led programs is undeniable, the research on these programs is still growing and often lopsided. A significant amount has been written on the extent to which students are fulfilling stated learning outcomes such as global awareness (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004), intercultural competency (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Hammer, 2012; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013), language development (Engle & Engle, 2004), and civic mindedness (Mulvaney, 2017). It is expected that, upon return, these skills will contribute to students' learning on campus and ultimately prepare graduates for an increasingly global and diverse workplace (Trooboff et al., 2008; Niehaus & Wegener, 2018). Additional studies have addressed concerns around the quality and credibility of shorter experiences, with fewer opportunities for immersion and sometimes relaxed academic standards (Di Gregorio, 2015).

By contrast, only a handful of published studies (Rasch, 2001; Strang, 2006; Watts, 2015; Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020) have investigated the extent of faculty development while teaching on a short-term program. Paparella (2018) notes, for example, that faculty leaders find the intellectual engagement with students in a holistic manner meaningful and satisfying, there is still much needed to

provide basic support and training from the home campus. Hull (2013) similarly observes that faculty deepen their disciplinary knowledge through networks and first-hand experiences in an international context and come to better appreciate the value of study abroad and campus internationalization at their own institutions. Most aligned with the study presented here is the multi-institutional survey conducted by Gillespie et al. (2020), involving more than 200 faculty members who led off-campus study programs at 27 selective liberal arts colleges. The authors find that faculty have positive experiences when global learning is seen as a campus value and the work is supported with training, compensation, recognition, and adequate staffing. Conversely, they face challenges in terms of excessive workloads, lack of preparation for their responsibilities with risk management, and experiences of stress and/or burn-out on their return (see also Paparella, 2018).

Teaching Abroad as Transformational Change

Adding to previous scholarship, here we find that the framework of teaching as transformational change can offer a valuable lens for understanding how faculty's participation in short-term programming may lead to gains for faculty and the institutions they serve, provided that training and support are available to help faculty reflect on their experiences abroad and apply what they have learned. Several studies in recent years have emphasized the relationship of transformational learning to the pedagogies and experiences of study abroad (Brewer & Cunningham, 2010; Curran, Owens, Thorson, & Vibert, 2019; Green & Mertova, 2016). If "transformation" may seem like too grandiose a term to describe what faculty go through on a short-term program, teaching overseas can nonetheless present a point of disruption, or what Mezirow calls a "disorientating dilemma" (1991), forcing a faculty leader to rethink their assumptions about what, how, and who they teach.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning hinges on this concept of a disorienting dilemma that challenges the assumptions of an individual's ingrained and culturally-informed "frames of reference," or their unexamined positionality in the world. This disruptive moment can be a critical incident that disturbs one's worldview, or a realization that how one makes sense of the world is under question. This is followed by the phases of transformative learning—the questioning, exploring, and enacting of new perspectives with the potential of radically transforming a person's way of knowing and living in the world (Mezirow, 2000).

While previous studies have effectively connected transformative learning theories with the internationalization of higher education (Sanderson, 2008; Schuerholz-Lehr et al., 2007; Kahn & Agnew, 2017; Clifford & Montgomery, 2015), the bulk of the scholarship in this area has been applied in other areas of higher education and adult learning, investigating for example the impact of technology and curricular reforms on teaching. In these and other cases, according to Mezirow's approach, transformative learning begins when:

> we encounter experiences, often in an emotionally charged situation, that fail to fit our expectations and consequently lack meaning for us, or we encounter an anomaly that cannot be given coherence either by learning within existing schemes or by learning new schemes. (Mezirow, 1991, as cited in Whitelaw et al., 2004, p. 11)

In the case of leading an overseas program, any number of triggers may lead to such disorientation, including the need to respond to a new cultural context; coming into much closer contact with students, in and out of the classroom; teaching in a new environment where regular classrooms may not be available and, even if they are, facilities and support systems may be very different; and finding the need to weave lesson plans into other onsite activities. In addition to teaching and caring for students, faculty themselves may face culture shock, as they are pushed out of their comfort zones. While not all of these experiences are negative, and in fact the experience on the whole may be very positive, they nonetheless can present significant points of disruption.

Drawing on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, Cranton's work on authentic teaching offers an aid in understanding how faculty make sense of their experiences teaching abroad. Sanderson

(2008) references Cranton's (2001) early notion of the "authentic self" or the "self as teacher, teacher as self," as central to a transformative process in international higher education by which faculty might develop a more cosmopolitan outlook, allowing for a dismantling of "the barriers that obstruct a legitimate understanding and acceptance of others" (p. 287). In Cranton and Carusetta's (2004) subsequent research on authentic teaching and transformative learning, these authors identify five key elements of authenticity—self-awareness, awareness of others, relationships with learners, awareness of context, and a critically reflective approach to practice—which provide a framework for furthering this process of reflection.

Faculty who return from teaching abroad will ideally already be aware of cultural differences and some of the elements of authenticity identified by Cranton and Carusetta. An intentional faculty development process of self-assessment and reflection might prompt the deeper learning from these experiences as a process of their own transformative faculty development. In not creating a space for critical reflection, there is a risk that faculty themselves are not engaging in this reflective work, preventing them from being their best in working with students. At the same time, from the perspective of institutional leaders, there is a significant concern that faculty and the campuses on which they teach will not be able to make the most out of the disorienting dilemmas they face. By simply moving forward and not contemplating further, faculty may suppress the moments of discomfort and/or not consider ways of applying what they have learned abroad back to the home campus.

Methods

To better understand what faculty gain from teaching abroad on short-term programs, and how what they learn can be transferred back to the home institution, this study was conducted on two campuses: Boston College (BC) and Smith College (Smith). In addition to being the respective home institutions of the two authors, providing ready access to faculty, these cases were selected for their long commitment to both international education and undergraduate education. At the same time, they present unique variations in history and mission, allowing for a greater variety of faculty responses.

Located in Northampton, Massachusetts, Smith opened in 1875 to provide women with an undergraduate education that was typically only available to men at the time. The college was one of the first to provide study abroad opportunities in the U.S., with its first program offered in 1925. Today the college enrolls around 2,900 students total, of which 2,500 are undergraduates, and is a member of the historic Seven Sisters colleges, comprised of prestigious, historically women's institutions in the Northeast. Approximately 40% of Smith undergraduates study abroad by the time of graduation.

Situated in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, BC was founded in 1863 by the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Created originally for men only, BC went co-educational by 1970. While the institution has developed over time as a top-tier, highly selective research university, with approximately 14,500 students in total, leaders remain fundamentally committed to a strong undergraduate education and Jesuit values. The first international office was started in the early 1970s, and today approximately 1200 (50%) of BC undergraduates study abroad each year.

Respondents

All faculty who had taught overseas through BC's OIP or Smith's GSC between 2012 to 2018 were invited to complete a survey. Of the 123 who received an invitation, 54 (44%) began the survey and 52 (42%) fully completed it. All faculty engaged in this survey had had some sort of international experience prior to teaching abroad. Eight had taught one time abroad, 24 had taught two to five times, and 16 had taught six or more times (see Table. 1). The largest number of respondents (34) had taught at least once in Europe (see Table. 2), mirroring the sizeable percentage of U.S. undergraduates who opt to study there (Institute of International Education, 2020), with 18 in Italy. Fifteen had taught in other world regions, representing all other continents except Antarctica. In some cases, faculty had taught separate programs in different years, going to different countries, or in one case a faculty member's program had been split between two countries.

Table 1

Number of Times Leading an Overseas Program

Number of Times	Frequency
1	8
2-5	24
6+	4

Note. These numbers represent those who answered the question; not all responded.

Table 2

World Region	# of Responses
Europe	37
East/South Asia	3
Middle East/North Africa	9
Latin America	5
Sub-Saharan Africa	2

Note. Faculty members could select multiple countries either for programs that ran in multiple locations or where a faculty member led programs to different locations at different times. Not all faculty completed this field. Individual countries are not listed as they could help to identify individual faculty.

The survey did not ask respondents to indicate their department or school affiliation, title, or tenure status, with an understanding that it would have been too easy to identify faculty based on this information, thus preventing them from sharing more openly. From the original invitation, however, it is possible to gain a sense of the distribution of disciplines represented. Among those invited, 72 were in the humanities (theology, philosophy, languages & literatures, art & art history), 26 in the social sciences or had a social science lens to their work (political science, psychology, economics, history, cultural studies, international studies), 13 in the natural sciences, and 13 in professional fields (business, nursing, education, social work). This disciplinary distribution was supported by the program themes listed. Future studies might track results by faculty rank, years of experience teaching, gender, and discipline, among other categories.

Survey and Analysis

Administered through Qualtrics, the survey was distributed in February 2018 and composed of 19 questions, including multiple choice and open-ended questions (Appendix A). The multiple-choice questions were primarily used to gather biographical data on the respondents whereas the open-ended questions allowed faculty to reflect more thoroughly on the experiences. The survey results were coded and analyzed by the two authors, using Atlas Ti coding software. Open-ended results coded within Atlas Ti by one author were compared with a manual coding process by the second author to established intercoder reliability. Coding of the open-ended responses was begun as bottom-up, or in an inductive manner, with the two authors identifying commonalities and agreeing on a final set of codes for categorizing survey data by themes. A finalized coding book comprised of 15 codes was determined and re-applied to the text (Appendix B). The structure and content of the sections below are based on analysis of these results. Quotations in the text below were chosen as those most (or in some cases least) representative of what respondents had shared in open-ended questions.

To verify the analysis, preliminary results of the study were presented to twelve faculty in January 2020, as part of a BC Center for Teaching Excellence faculty learning community, organized for

faculty who had previously taught abroad through the OIP. Some of the community participants had been given an opportunity to complete the survey yet others had not. The group was able to offer clarifications and additional nuance.

Findings

The findings presented in this paper focus most directly on the results relevant for the potential gains to faculty and potential for transformative learning. While the survey included sections on expectations, logistics, experiences with students and local communities, and recommendations, the findings related to logistics and workload are being considered separately for program assessment and organizational improvement. Here we focus primarily on what faculty reported in terms of their own gains and recommendations they provided for helping future faculty make the most out of their experiences abroad. We organize the findings into two sections: what faculty have gained and the extent to which what they learn can be brought back to the home campus.

Faculty Gains

Respondents in this study observed that leading a short-term program abroad is challenging, if also enriching. In the words of one faculty program leader: "The intensity of leading short-term programs abroad, along with the complex nature of the faculty leaders' roles, is not for everyone." As another noted: "You need to want to do it; it's a big investment of your time." If it was not something to be undertaken lightly, faculty in the study overwhelmingly expressed great satisfaction with the work, both in terms personal fulfillment and professional gains. As one leader put it: "This is the most academically valuable and rewarding thing I do." In terms of enrichment, here we explore four key areas of learning that faculty articulated following their teaching abroad: cultural and intercultural learning, a further development of their own research interests and professional networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation for teaching. While not an exhaustive list of what was reported, these areas were most frequently cited by respondents.

Cultural and Intercultural Understanding

This study initially set out to consider the extent to which faculty gain international knowledge, expertise, and contacts that may contribute to institution-wide internationalization strategies. If all respondents had traveled and/or lived abroad, not all had prior familiarity with the country where they were teaching, thus opening the door for them to learn quite a bit, along with the students. This was often the case with disciplines not rooted in cultural knowledge, such as the natural sciences and more technical fields. In a Dublin-based program, for example, the faculty member was able to teach an accounting course, while adding site visits to local businesses and communities. While not an expert on Ireland, she was able to offer her expertise, while collaborating with an onsite coordinator, who could add a local component.

Even with prior knowledge of a host culture and customs, other respondents reported that teaching overseas deepened their understanding of the place. A faculty member who had taught multiple times at an Italian university noted that each time was different and that, with each new cohort, she "became much more familiar with the Italian university system, and got to know colleagues in many fields at the University." Similarly, another respondent pointed out that she gained a deeper understanding of the Middle East through the observations and interviews that her group had with local officials and experts, adding that this, "direct experience has made [her] more knowledgeable in the classroom." The act of having to organize lectures and co-curricular programs often gives faculty an opportunity to engage with those whom they may not ordinarily meet on their own. Moreover, the need to answer student questions, as well as provide a context for lectures and activities, forces faculty to bone up on aspects of local cultures that may not relate directly to their own scholarly work.

Research and Networks

In addition to learning more about the host culture, respondents found that their teaching abroad contributed to their research. Much of the benefit came down to being in the location itself, as one respondent noted: “My attachment to living culture is essential to my research, thus these experiences are crucial.” By returning to a place where they have ongoing research, it is possible for faculty to stay fresh on current events. The tone and tenor of a location may transform quickly from one year to the next with sweeping changes such as new political leaders, variations in population, and/or military or economic upheaval. In other circumstances, the shifts may be more subtle yet still highly significant for those like the respondent above, who contextualize their research in a “living” place.

One of the advantages of teaching abroad is the ability to network with and learn from guest speakers and site visits. As one faculty member noted, “I have written articles about the Middle East based on observations and interviews we had with officials. I reference information and opinions we heard in class.” An on-the-ground class can provide a pretext for getting to know a local official or expert. In a follow up conversation, one faculty member who taught in Paris noted that it was sometimes possible to secure a speaker who would not be as interested in granting an individual interview to the faculty member yet is pleased to talk with a student group, as there is a bit of excitement or novelty in doing so. Additionally, the questions that students ask help a faculty consider the same topics from new angles, thus adding depth and additional layers to her research.

Those who were not experts in the location where they were leading students also found benefits for their research and teaching. A respondent who leads students to Spain noted, “Because I take a comparative approach in teaching law while abroad, it has been incredibly interesting and stimulating for me to learn more about other legal systems.” As a legal expert, teaching in a business school, being on site provides a more solid understanding of how legal systems function in a place like Spain, e.g. helping to explain the outcomes of court cases that may have international implications. Conversing with colleagues likewise can shed light on issues that are equally relevant for U.S. entities conducting business in Europe such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the implications of Brexit for the European Union.

Finally, faculty frequently used their teaching abroad as a launching pad for conducting additional research before or after a program. At BC, some took advantage of a grant through the College of Arts and Sciences designed expressly to extend their time abroad for such purposes. Others called for additional funding along these lines, with the argument that the costs were relatively low, given that faculty were already getting their flights to and from the location covered through the program. As a caveat, one faculty member cautioned colleagues to “make sure you are able to spend the maximum amount of time involved in the program and with students rather than trying to work in professional trips/research.” In other words, while a program is in progress, faculty need to give their full attention to students; research should be done before or after the program dates.

A Deeper Knowledge of Students

Typically, those who sign on to teach overseas enjoy working with students and are used to seeing them in settings that stretch beyond the classroom. Despite all they felt that they knew from these prior interactions, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents reported that they learned much more while teaching overseas, in a greatly accelerated timeline. As one faculty member noted:

> I learned that I only know a sliver of my student’s lives through our normal interactions, even including close work in the research lab. Travel opened up so many rambling conversations and intense experiences shared with students.

The sort of interactions described by this faculty member may take place while conversing with students over meals, traveling from one location to another either in the same city or for an excursion, or in the small moments that pop up in between planned activities. The barriers are quickly lowered when students see faculty outside of their prescribed role in front of the classroom or behind a desk, and when not dressed in the same manner, for example in shorts and a t-shirt back at the hotel. The frequency with

which faculty and students encounter each other also breaks down a wall, making the "rambling" conversations more possible and organic. All of this allows students (and faculty) to share more than they might at home, thus opening a window into each other's worlds.

Much of what faculty gain lies at a human level, with an opportunity to discover more about students as individuals. This can entail learning details of students' upbringing; parents, friends, and significant others; likes and dislikes; and areas of involvement at home and on campus. Students may be curious about faculty members' lives in return, and so it becomes easy to connect over points in common, as well as to understand each other better. The extent to which this sharing takes place is often set by the tone of the program, and the faculty member's own willingness to let down their guard. As one faculty member observed, "I learned that one of the most important factors leading to the success of [an abroad] course is community." From this perspective, it was necessary for the faculty leader to create a space for sharing, both in developing a closer relationship with the students, yet also in allowing students to feel more comfortable with each other.

Gaining a deeper awareness of students also meant uncovering some of their strengths and limitations. A faculty leader found for instance that "students have a surprisingly limited knowledge of modern history and current events." This might prompt the faculty member to provide more context in future lessons, to fill in some of the gaps in student's knowledge base. On the flipside, students will inevitably offer skills and experience that the faculty member does not have and which may benefit the group. At the same time, another respondent noted that the overseas experience sheds light on, "[students'] learning styles, and even ideas about education that students bring with them." By being in such close contact, faculty can observe what students are absorbing and which techniques work the best for individual participants, something that is not always feasible in larger classes and with less time for interaction on the home campus.

Probably the biggest surprise for faculty came down to an appreciation of students' mental health and wellbeing. As one respondent explained:

> Living closely with different groups of students, and being responsible for them 24/7, helped me understand the kinds of issues students have to deal with in a way teaching on campus doesn't. On campus class deans, housing coordinators, medical and psychiatric services, and many other support systems deal with many of the issues I had to tackle as a faculty study abroad program director.

Faculty like this one may be familiar with numerous reports chronicling the increase in students seeking out mental health care, however they recognized that it was a very different thing to deal with such cases on the ground, with far less support. Even with pre-departure training and resources provided by the international office on the home campus, many felt out of their depth, with great concern as to what might happen. In separate correspondence, one faculty member described an incident with one student who had a psychotic break on the last day of the program. In less severe cases, faculty members come across any number of issues including anxiety, depression, and eating disorders that affected students' ability to participate fully in the program.

Not all faculty were completely blindsided by student issues. In addition to their own prior experiences with students, they may have school-age children who are dealing with some of the same concerns. What is different is the close contact with a larger group of students, in an intense environment, and with much less support, all of which amplifies the severity of the situation. While often quite challenged, faculty felt that their deeper understanding of students is something that will help them be better mentors, teachers, and advisors, both abroad and on their home campus.

Rejuvenation

While faculty felt the full weight of responsibility that comes with leading a group overseas, many also agreed with one faculty member who observed that teaching abroad is one of the best aspects of her job: "I find it one of the most rewarding and enlightening experiences of my professional career."

This sentiment was echoed by another who stated, “I have been doing it for 10 years now, and it is easy for me to acknowledge this aspect of my teaching career as one of the most lively and fulfilling.”

The faculty members here describe a sense of fulfillment—and, significantly, of rejuvenation—in teaching overseas. Being abroad permits them to get out of the rut of teaching on campus. Even those who are constantly rethinking their lesson plans and develop new courses, in order to keep things fresh for both students and themselves, find the new setting to be invigorating. As one respondent remarked: “I would strongly encourage a colleague to take students on a faculty-led study abroad program not only so that they could assist students in exposure to cultural diversity, but also so that the faculty member could experience teaching in a much more stimulating cultural environment.”

These comments provide insights for how institutions might combat complacency and burnout among faculty, in addition to other strategies that are employed on campuses. This is above all important for the two cases included in this study, which pride themselves in liberal arts-based undergraduate teaching, yet also for other universities and colleges that are hoping to retain the best and brightest faculty, while serving students.

Bringing Back Learning to Campus

Based on the results presented thus far, faculty gain much from being abroad in terms of their exposure to other cultures, as well as in their increased understanding and appreciation of students. Teaching in a very new environment can be challenging though it also provides an opening for faculty to rethink their pedagogical practices and course content. As with students who are encouraged to move outside of the proverbial “comfort zone” in overseas programming, faculty too benefit from the disruptive aspects of being pushed out of the familiar. Within this context, two key questions remain at the core of this study: How much of what faculty learn is being brought back to campus? And to what extent is this learning contributing to overall institutional internationalization efforts?

Teaching and Mentoring

As noted in multiple examples above, faculty observed that their abroad experiences help them to become better instructors and mentors. This is accomplished in large part by having an opportunity to learn more about students, including their likes and dislikes, preferred ways of learning, and the struggles they go through as young adults. They also often return with a sense of rejuvenation, with an opportunity to teach in a new environment, as challenging as the experience might be. Moreover, all of this can provide faculty with a greater sense of confidence and credibility.

As with internationalization, however, what is nonetheless notably missing from the responses are concrete examples of the ways in which faculty members’ teaching and mentoring are altered upon returning to the home campus. It may be that the nature of the questions on the survey did not sufficiently prompt respondents to drill down to the level of detail required. Similarly, a focus group or interview format could permit a further probing of this question. These limitations notwithstanding, there is nonetheless a gap between the more abstract sense of what is gained abroad and how such learning then tangibly translates into different practices. None of this is to say that faculty are not incorporating what they learn from abroad yet that the process is fuzzy, often without a lot of direction or space for reflection.

Need for Training and Collegial Connections

From these findings, it becomes clear that there is a need for mechanisms that help faculty translate their experiences abroad into the classroom, while also seeing their teaching as linked more visibly to broader internationalization strategies. While respondents did not make overt connections to campus internationalization, many did express the need and/or desire for additional professional development opportunities including workshops, seminars, and panel discussions. Such activities were separated from the regular pre-departure training offered on topics like health and safety and logistics.

In returning to campus, one faculty member noted that there are places for sharing what they have learned: “We also have a forum (Liberal Arts Lunch, for instance) for group leaders to share their

knowledge and experience with other faculty." However, most who did comment saw a need for group that was tailored for those who had taught abroad. At BC, several articulated the idea of creating a cohort experience akin to that offered by the University's Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE).

Unlike with pre-departure training, intended primarily to pass on certain information, the post-program experience called for is less about instruction and more about permitting participants to debrief their experiences. The cohorts developed by BC's CTE do not typically include lectures, and instead begin with a faculty member sharing a case study, which then leads the rest of the group to chime in. Through storytelling, faculty are then able to consider how they might alter their own pedagogical practices. When done properly, it may be possible for faculty to follow the advice of one respondent, who recommended that colleagues "treat the summer abroad course as a laboratory for new pedagogical approaches and new or re-envisioned courses."

Discussion and Conclusions

The research presented here contributes to the limited body of scholarship (Paparella, 2018; Gillespie et al., 2020) investigating the extent to which faculty may benefit from teaching abroad on short-term, faculty-led programs, helping to complement a much larger and well-researched body of literature focusing on students' gains from education abroad. If such programs are ultimately designed to benefit students, we would be amiss to not also consider the ways in which faculty may bring back knowledge, skills, and perspectives that can help shape their own teaching, research, and personal outlook, while also contributing to their home institution's internationalization efforts.

We had hypothesized that there would be connections in which the faculty gains from teaching abroad would lead to an enhanced global pedagogy and curricula on the home campus. The ties between overseas teaching and internationalization efforts writ large remained largely abstract for faculty respondents. At the same time, in survey responses and follow up discussions, faculty noted four broad benefits of teaching overseas, some of which are "international" in nature, yet others that are more universal: a greater cultural and intercultural understanding, an expansion of personal and academic networks, a deeper knowledge of students, and a sense of rejuvenation. While we were less successful in finding data on this topic, this is an area for future research, perhaps with revised questions and/or other methodologies such as focus groups or interviews that permit more probing.

Faculty who had had limited exposure to their program's host culture prior to leading a group felt much of the culture "shock" that comes with being in a new place, akin to what their students experienced. Those who were already familiar with the culture had less of a sense of dissonance yet too gained greater and updated knowledge of their host culture. Regardless of experience, all faculty had an opportunity to expand their academic and personal networks, providing benefits for teaching and research within their respective disciplines.

More surprising for many faculty was the deeper understanding that they gained of students. Most thought that they already knew much about those with whom they are in contact on a daily basis on the home campus. However, in a less formal setting and with frequent interaction, faculty leaders found themselves more intimately intertwined in students' lives; serving as *ad hoc* counselors and first responders in emergencies, they became acutely aware of students' backgrounds, hopes, concerns, relationships, areas of knowledge (and deficits), and sometimes even medical histories. While exhausting at times, many faculty found the combination of increased intimacy with students and challenges for teaching and mentoring to be rejuvenating and constructive, taking them back to when they first started working with students.

This study confirms some of the findings from earlier publications such as Gillespie et al.'s (2020) recent book, which provides a useful overview of how institutions may better organize overseas programming for the benefit of faculty and students. At the same time, what has been largely left out of previous work, and which we focus on here, is a deeper way in which overseas teaching may affect faculty personally and professionally, within a framework of transformative, authentic teaching (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004). A transformative learning approach suggests change will not occur if the experience

itself has not had a transformative impact on faculty that translates into new pedagogical approaches, an embrace of the transformational possibilities of global learning, and the integration of the experience in their own scholarship, teaching and co-learning with students.

The findings outlined here inspire hope by uncovering the power of an overseas teaching experience. At the same time, as with reentry needs for students, there is a legitimate concern that faculty, and the institutions they serve, may not fully benefit from overseas learning. There is a tendency for all of us upon returning home to plunge back into old routines, as a way of resuming "normal" work and life. This can be necessary yet there is also a need for faculty to have space for reflection, figuratively and literally. It is recommended that institutions provide training and seminars for returning faculty to process what they have learned and consider how they can transfer the knowledge gained back to their teaching, research, and mentoring.

Given how the sheer amount of time and resources that go into offering international programs, along with the rapid increase in short-term faculty-led programs, it is essential that we understand more about how such programming can benefit faculty as well as students. Moving forward, it will be beneficial to expand the research outlined here to different types of institutions and with faculty who have varying levels of intercultural and international competency. This will include adding greater texture by tracking results more closely according to categories such as faculty status, gender, and/or discipline. Additionally, investigations among faculty from other countries, as well as research from the perspective of students, will add other dimensions to our knowledge of this topic.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. Have you led students abroad at your current institution? (Note: this survey is designed for those who have led a program abroad. If you have not, select "no" and you will be taken to the end of the survey.)
    a. Name of Institution (optional) – Selected Choice or Other
    b. How many times have you led students abroad?
2. Was the nature of the last program you led abroad?
    a. List of countries (select all that apply)
    b. What was the theme of the program? (Write "N/A" if not applicable)
    c. Did another faculty member or staff person accompany you as a back-up or logistical support?
    d. What was the duration of the program?
    e. Was the trip a one-time program or an ongoing offering to be repeated? (Select all that apply.)
    f. In addition to you, as the faculty leader, who else was primarily involved in planning and designing the program?
    g. What has been the average number of students on the program? (If a one-time program, how many students did you have?)
3. What was your initial primary motivation(s) for serving as a faculty leader for such a program? (Select up to 3 responses, including "other" with write-in field)
4. In returning from teaching abroad, what do you feel that you gained the most from the experience? (Select up to 3 responses, including "other" with write-in field)
5. In returning from teaching abroad, what do you feel that you gained the most from the experience? (Select up to 3 responses, including "other" with write-in field.)
6. What advice would you offer to a colleague considering whether to take students on a faculty-led study abroad program?
7. What sorts of training do you believe would help prepare faculty best for leading a short-term program abroad? What might have been missing from the training you received?
8. In what ways has your teaching abroad influenced the ways in which you teach on campus? Your research? Other aspects of your role as a faculty member?
9. How might your institution help faculty transfer the skills and experiences gained while teaching on short-term abroad programs to their teaching, research, and other activities on the home campus?
10. Please provide any comments that you would like to add related to teaching abroad as a faculty member.

Appendix B
Codebook

Code Name	
Amount of Work	
Exposure to Students	
Faculty Development	
Faculty Support	
Funding	
Health & Safety	
Integration of Knowledge on Campus	
Qualities Needed for Success	
Regional Knowledge	
Rejuvenation Excitement	
Research	
Responsibility of Position	
Sharing What is Learned	
Support of Other Faculty	
Teaching	

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Experiences Contributing to Professional Identity Transformation among Medical Laboratory Professional Students

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Abstract

Despite the importance of medical laboratory professionals (MLPs) to the field of health care, there has been little research published on the education of MLP students or attempts to understand their development. In particular, there is a lack of attention to the MLP students' professional identity, learning, and the professional socialization processes that are important aspects of their professional training. This paper provides insights regarding these dimensions of MLP student training, focusing on the situations that supported transformative learning in their professional identity development. It reports on a study that explored changes in MLP students' identity during a contemporary medical laboratory education program in Canada. Data obtained through interviews were analyzed from an emergent, thematic perspective to identify situations that affected the development of, or shift in, the students' professional identity. Findings suggest that the shifts in the participants' identities were affected by a collection of reflections, experiences, pre-established ideas, and concepts formed throughout the educational process.

Keywords: Professional identity, identity transformation, medical laboratory profession, medical laboratory students

Introduction

While the field of research on the education of medical students and nurses is well established, the situation for the medical laboratory professional (MLP) students is very different, despite their importance to the field of health care. There has been little published research on MLP practitioners or students. In particular, there has been little attention on the MLP students' professional identity, learning, and professional socialization processes. Hence, little is known about how and which experiences during their training affect their learning and lead to a transformation of their professional identity. However, with the growing demand for new MLPs, insights into such experiences could be helpful to MLP training programs to better support students' learning. This paper reports on a study that offers such insights regarding transformative learning in MLP students' education. The study sought to identify key experiences in the MLP education program that affected the development or shifted MLP students' professional identity related to becoming a beginning MLP practitioner.

Background Literature

In this section, we address the three key ideas or contexts that provide the theoretical bases underlying the study: transformative learning, professional identity, and research related to MLP professional identity.

Transformative Learning

According to Mezirow (2003): "Transformative learning…transforms problematic frames of reference—sets of fixed assumptions and expectations (habits of mind, meaning perspectives, mindsets)—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective, and emotionally able to change" (p. 58). Mezirow proposed that every individual has a view of the world based on a set of assumptions derived from the individual's upbringing, life experiences, culture, or education, and thus he developed an approach to learning primed by a shift in this worldview (Christie et al., 2015; Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1981, 1991, 1997, 2012). This shift in worldview falls in line with Mezirow's ideas relating to the human search for meaning, understanding, and coherence in the individual experience (Fleisher, 2006). Mezirow developed a linear model that procedurally laid out his view of transformative learning, including ten initial phases incorporating aspects of a disorienting dilemma, critical assessment, exploration of options, acquisition of knowledge, and the reintegration of perspective (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 2012). In addition, while experience may be considered the trigger for many forms of transformative learning, fundamental to Mezirow's perspective is the notion of reflective practice (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1981, 2012; Taylor & Cranton, 2013). Critical reflection allows learners to reflect on those experiences that one cannot accommodate into their prior life structure (Merriam et al., 2007). Fundamentally, such reflection involves a critical evaluation of events that allows us to incorporate new concepts within our perceptions. Individuals navigate a series of personal negotiations with varying levels of difficulty as they work to acquire new aspects of their identity (Cruess et al., 2015).

Connected with the social constructivism and experiential learning that can occur within occupational contexts, transformative learning offers one way to consider the outcome as individuals respond to professional socialization processes through a series of personal negotiations and build their professional identity (Skorikov & Vondracek, 2011). Thus, in this study, which is connected to an occupational context, the MLP students' engagement in experiential learning and interactions with their mentors in their contemporary medical laboratory education program provided them with opportunities to change or broaden their identity as they transitioned from students to MLPs. Based on Mezirow's perspectives of transformative learning, this change could result from disorienting dilemmas, problematic assumptions and expectations, exploration of a situation/event, and acquisition of knowledge during the medical laboratory program. Such factors provide the theoretical basis for identifying transformative learning experiences that affected the MLP students' professional identity.

Professional Identity

Within the broader literature of professional identity, there are different interpretations of professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2004; Gee, 2001; Gibson, 2013; Gur, 2014; Hitlin, 2003; Rogers & Scott, 2008). However, there are commonalities in these interpretations that provided the basis for our thinking about MLP students' professional identity.

Professional identity is a way of being or relating to how individuals see themselves in reference to a group of occupational or institutional peers (Hayden, 2015) or a sub-identity that emerges due to condensation of individual and social perceptions around themes that are related to a specific occupational environment (Gur, 2014). It is something that individuals shape through reflection, a complex and dynamic equilibrium between personal self-image and roles one feels obliged to play, and a percolated understanding and acceptance of a series of competing and sometimes contradictory values, behaviors, and attitudes ground in the life experiences of the individual (Beijaard et al., 2004; Samuel & Stephens, 2000; Volkmann & Anderson, 1998). Gecas and Burke (1995) noted that a central aspect of identity is its fixing of an individual's place in society or culture through relationships to others, while Slay and Smith (2012) extended this notion, indicating that membership in a profession influences self-definition and shows how others think about an individual. Illeris (2014) describes the concept of part-identities, including the professional/occupational identity, as one component of the individual's total identity,

which develops under specific conditions. Moreover, Illeris (2014) draws direct connections between identity and transformative learning, arguing that "learning which implies change in the identity of the learner" *is* the mark of transformative learning (p. 40).

A professional identity is also one that, while internalized by the individual, can be considered relative to a social group. It may be considered an identity within the multi-identity in which individuals construct an image of who they are as a professional (Slay & Smith, 2011). It is "an attitude of personal responsibility regarding one's role in the profession, a commitment to behave ethically and morally, and the development of feelings of pride for the profession" (Bruss & Kopala, 1993, p. 686) and an important cognitive mechanism that affects workers' attitudes and behaviours in work settings and beyond (Caza & Creary, 2016).

Professional identity can further be defined as attributes, beliefs, and values people use to define themselves within the specialized skill and education-based occupations (Benveniste, 1987; Ibarra, 1999; Schein, 1978). Ibarra (1999) further indicated that individuals adjust and adapt their professional identity during periods of career transition due to the professional discourse of which they are exposed, while Wenger (1998) noted that the professional socialization experiences through a community of practice are of specific importance in professional identity development.

In this study, MLP students' professional identity was considered to include the way they viewed themselves, the way they viewed others, the way they viewed their medical laboratory work and their program; and fundamentally explored how the reframing of perspectives, values, and thoughts occurred based on their experience during their clinical practicum.

Studies Related to MLP Students' Professional Identity

A few studies that addressed the learning and development of MLP students indirectly offer some insights regarding their professional identity. For example, Latshaw and Honeycutt (2010) investigated MLP students' perceptions regarding professionalism at various stages throughout their educational program. Findings based on the students' reflective reports throughout their educational program indicated that their professional perceptions expanded following service-learning participation. These perceptions included that MLPs should take personal responsibility to collaborate with other health care professionals, educate the community, and exhibit pride in the medical laboratory profession. With a different focus, Isabel (2016) examined the learning perspectives of MLP students completing their clinical education. The eight participants were interviewed before and after their exposure to the clinical community of practice and were observed during their clinical field experience. Findings indicated that the clinical preceptor (mentor) was a central factor of MLS student learning. Successful learning during clinical practicum depended on the student's ability to be organized, be focused, and maintain a positive attitude throughout the program.

Concerning education and training programs, Nasr and Jackson-Harris (2016) investigated the factors that influenced student success rates in clinical laboratory science programs. They found that 57% of respondents indicated that the greatest strength of their program was the quality of the internship that they were required to complete, suggesting that the clinical practicum was a central aspect of the successful completion of their program. In addition, McClure (2009) and Beck and Doig (2007) indicated that many students entering the clinical laboratory science profession did not see the profession as their final career choice but as a stepping stone to other health care fields, suggesting a poorly developed professional identity.

These studies touched on some aspects of identity involving MLT students' professional perception, learning perspective, view of their program's strength, and attitude to the profession. In comparison, this study explicitly addressed professional identity with more depth from the participants' perspectives of their experiences, learning, and change during clinical practicum. This broad focus on the MLTs' perspectives also allowed for an examination of transformative learning, which has not been investigated in other studies. Thus, this study offers a unique understanding of the relationship between the MLTs' clinical program and their transition from students to beginning MLPs.

Research Methods

An exploratory single case study (Yin, 2009) was used to allow for qualitative depth in investigating the collective changes in the MLP students' professional identity at the end of their clinical practicum and education program. It is exploratory because the intention is to gain initial insights of their identity development as an under-researched area in the field of MLP education.

Participants' MLP Education Program

MLPs perform applied diagnostic tests on human specimens spanning numerous fields to assist in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. The MLP training programs in Canada are guided by the expected competencies of entry-level practitioners, consisting mainly of technical aspects of the profession, to ensure the basic understanding of the practice can be demonstrated (Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS), 2015). Specific to this study, the participants were in a medical laboratory technology program (a specialization within the MLP field), a three-year (10 semesters) diploma program consisting of classroom training, simulated clinical laboratory training, and applied clinical practicum training. This study focused on the program's final year, where students are exposed to simulated clinical laboratory environments for 15 weeks, followed by a final workplace-based semester consisting of a 15-week clinical practicum. This practicum consisted of five consecutive three-week rotations with preceptor (mentor) medical laboratory technologists at a clinical site(s) in various laboratory practice areas. The practicum constituted the first robust exposure to the clinical laboratory environment and a point in which students were assessed by preceptors and future peers in the field. This study focused on the students' identity influenced by this workplace-based practicum.

Participants

The participants were recruited from a cohort of MLP students in their final year of study at a polytechnic college in Canada. They were in their third year of an accredited medical laboratory technology program, of which completion and subsequent certification allow for entry to practice as a medical laboratory technologist (MLT) in all Canadian jurisdictions. Eight of the students who consented and were available to be interviewed in a timely manner became the participants. They were broadly representative of the demographic profile of students of the laboratory profession in Canada.

Data Collection

The main sources of data to determine transformative learning and identity development were semi-structured interviews prior to and at the end of the clinical practicum. While initial interviews allowed for the establishment of a baseline picture of the participants, including elements linked with personal and biographical factors that attracted them to the field, developing professional relationships that had occurred throughout their didactic training, and their level of engagement with professional rhetoric and norms of the profession, the post-practicum interviews are central to this analysis.

These interviews required the participants to draw on their experiences with the clinical practicum to share their perspective of aspects of their identity associated with the medical laboratory field and how they had shifted from their pre-practicum state. The interviews addressed their perspective of, for example, their experience with their clinical practicum; the field of MLP; "good" or "bad" characteristics/behaviour of MLPs they observed; changes to how they viewed themselves; how they viewed themselves as health professionals; positioning regarding the relationship between MLP, teamwork, and health care teams; their feelings about the medical laboratory profession overall and being an MLP; experiences that made them think differently about their role and future as an MLP; and experiences on their practicum that they felt had a lasting impression on them. The interviews included open questions that required participants to share stories of their experiences on the clinical practicum that conveyed aspects of their identity and those experiences that they felt most significantly affected them,

for example, stories about best and worst experiences, what made them memorable, and how they made them feel about the medical laboratory profession. The 16 interviews occurred immediately before and following the completion of the full 15-week clinical semester and averaged approximately 50 minutes. Each interview was recorded and transcribed, and field notes were made, focusing mainly on expressions and emotions. Interview questions were semi-structured and open ended and allowed participants to explore the guiding questions freely.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed an approach, wherein coding of the interview transcripts consisted of the digitization of files, a close reading of the textual data, and creation and reduction of textual segments into primary themes (Creswell, 2012), followed by a comparison of the emerging themes as series in time. The analysis was guided by the theoretical perspectives of transformative learning and professional identity described above. Each interview transcript was scrutinized and coded to identify statements by the participants that suggested characteristics of their identity (e.g., statements of beliefs, views, what value, judgment, feelings) and situations affecting development or transformation in identity (e.g., disorienting dilemmas, problematic assumptions and expectations, exploration of a situation/event, and knowledge acquired during the medical laboratory program). Similar statements and situations were grouped for each participant. The groups were then compared across the participants to establish common groupings, which became the themes and labelled to reflect different aspects of their professional identity and transformation. The themes were identified by the first author/researcher and reviewed by the second author to independently check their relationship to the data. Any discrepancies were discussed, clarified, and revised. While this did not change the themes, it resulted in removing or reclassifying some statements. The four themes that represent the experiences that supported transformative learning formed the findings being reported here.

Findings

Each participant was exposed to similar practice areas at various clinical laboratory sites during the clinical phase of training. For example, each participant was required to complete a 3-week rotation in microbiology and perform key competencies defined by the education program. While the experiences that participants had were varied and diverse, significant commonalities in experiences also existed that relate to clinical practice. Following analysis of the data, four broad themes emerged as those situations within the clinical practice that most significantly led to transformative learning as defined by a modification of the meaning perspectives that students had constructed: experiences involving patients, experiences with autopsy, experiences involving mistakes; and experiences related to workplace culture.

Experiences Involving Patients

All but one of the participants described detailed direct or indirect patient experiences that appeared to affect them through an emotional or caring response. These responses were deeply meaningful but fundamentally ranged from concern to sadness to disbelief in the reality of health care. Notably, that health care professions can include interaction with the critically ill. One of the stories shared was that of Blake, who, during a routine blood collection procedure at a patient's bedside, described an experience with a young man who was gravely ill. As Blake described,

> I had never seen someone so sick in my life. He was this young man—I am the same age as this guy, and it could just as well have been me in the bed there. He could not move, he could not lift his arm out, his mom was sitting there looking at him, and I was… [Long pause]. There was that moment of apprehension where I did not know if I wanted to touch him. I have never seen someone in such a sorry state.

This experience appeared to be a powerful one for Blake, evoking a visible reaction during the recollection of the event. Blake demonstrated a sombre tone and thoughtfulness during the description. Other participants shared similar stories of how their patient encounters affected them. For example, Blaine's experience with a patient focused on being "on-call" with a supervising technologist. Laboratory environments often employ call shifts, much like other fields wherein technologists are off-site and called in when needed. On-call MLPs often find themselves in clinical areas like the emergency room, intensive care unit, or other patient areas. As follows, Blaine described in detail this first on-call experience and how this experience seemed to impact the view of the role,

> I was on call one night with one of the techs, and it was crazy that night. This person, we went to emerge, and the person was pale as a ghost, and she could not really talk to us, but she was moaning, and she was so upset, but she could not show any emotion. She was cold and clammy. I was just like, man, you are so sick, and [while searching for a vein] I could not feel anything. Her blood pressure was almost non-existent, and I could not feel a vein to save a life. Anyway, I got the tech to [collect blood], and she got it or whatever. I was just like, man, this person is so sick, and it really hit me.

This experience occurred near the end of Blaine's practicum, and by Blaine's description, it was a moving event evoking a sense of difference in perception and feelings of responsibility. In many ways, this level of caring was somewhat counterintuitive in that MLPs are taught to consider the patient in an overtly scientific manner with a focus on analytic variables. However, Blaine's view of patients had become very humanized. As the following excerpt illustrates, these feelings were not unique to Blaine as Kelly experienced worry about a patient who had just undergone a bone marrow aspiration. In this instance, the patient was unaware of Kelly's involvement, and the circumstance resembles looking at a person through a one-way mirror:

> Seeing him [a patient] obviously in pain, no doubt [during the bone marrow aspiration], and then going to lunch and seeing him sitting down in the hospital [cafeteria], I was just kind of like, I do not want to say "worried about him," but, whenever I saw a sample come down from hematology, I knew his name. He always has units in the blood bank. Just things like that, to see a face with it, that is what makes things different.

These patient experiences extended beyond those accompanied by actual patient contact. For example, Blake, Casey, and Jess noted patient test results as particularly significant, despite having no direct contact with the patient. In one instance, Blake shared a story relating to a likely terminal diagnosis from a peripheral blood smear stating,

> It just totally caught me off guard. I did not understand that what I was looking at was the end of someone's life; that this was the science, there was nothing that you can do, this person is old enough now that any course of action was not going to—like, it might have given him like a couple of months just to get their affairs in order—but it was not going to save their life.

Others believed that the communication of critical results to the appropriate care provider was highly significant. For context, within the field of laboratory medicine, a critical or panic value is typically a test result with the potential for immediate impact on patient care and is communicated to the primary care team immediately. Several examples of this were shared as follows:

> We were always getting something. You see a chloride that was off the charts, or you see a blood gas result that had a critical, maybe like a critical CO_2, or maybe a bicarb was low, and then they were looking at me well, you have to phone them. It is a critical result; make sure you get that across to them. (Blake)

> When QC came in, we ran the specimen, and it was still within the hour for the STAT specimen, but then when we called the critical, the patient had already died. You realize how important your results are; it was a critical potassium result. (Jess)
> After you call a result or see someone who had a [high] critical result and then they are gone way down [in subsequent testing]. You are like, oh, that is good, and you were part of helping them because you got and called the results. (Hunter)

It appeared that a significant moment within the practicum was the realization that, at times, they are responsible for what can be life or death decisions and/or actions. They were no longer students, and their actions had the potential for grave consequences.

Experiences with Autopsy

While not all participants had an opportunity to participate in an autopsy, those that did, emphasized that the experience was especially significant. When asked what they felt was the most memorable experience, all five participants who participated indicated the autopsy stood out. Participants fixated on the abstract aspects of death and the nuances of working with cadavers. As the following comments illustrate, the participants' responses to autopsy were diverse, and in some cases, the participants were unsure about how they felt when confronted with the juxtaposition of caring and detachment:

> I was mind blown. I was just like, I just seen someone's entire body, inside and outside. I guess it makes you think about the repercussions of not staying in good health. (Jess)

> Surprisingly, we had the autopsy just before lunch and, I had no problem [eating] (laughter), and I did not know if I would. I was weirdly able to detach what was in the room, what was going on, and then when I left, you know, being able to just put it behind me kind of thing. (Kelly)

While participants had mixed emotions regarding autopsy, they unanimously considered it a significantly positive learning experience. It appears the autopsy left them with a different sense of appreciation for the work and those performing the autopsy.

Experiences Involving Mistakes

Along with the emotional experiences involving patients and bodies, most participants indicated a heightened sense of concern around the impact of errors within the laboratory. Several participants described an error of which they were at least partially at fault or witnessed. Jamie shared a lengthy story about a critical error that resulted in patient harm during the clinical practicum. While Jamie was not responsible for the error, it involved the release of an inaccurate result by another MLT whom Jamie was working with and in which the patient received incorrect treatment following the error. Jamie focused on the emotional turmoil that the MLT that made the error demonstrated, stating,

> The patient lived, and they were fine, but I do not know; I think that was just scary. That stuck with me because I would be the same way if [I made the mistake]. I feel like that would just hit me hard, especially if anything were to happen to the patient. (Jamie)

Participants detailed several instances of mistakes, with responses tending to move between those tied to their sense of fault, the evoked emotions, and how their errors were visible by others. Blaine and Jamie, for example, each described an error that had minimal impact in which the quality control for the tests they were performing was incorrectly performed. Despite their minimal impact, they were each significantly affected by the mistake:

> I did not click the specific QC because I forgot we had to. It reran the whole QC, and everything was almost [out of acceptable range]; the whole screen was pretty much red which means we could not report any of the patients' results regardless of what our QC was that morning. So, I was like, oh my god! There were four stats up there, and I just screwed all this up! (Blaine)
> So [QC] ran, and it was coming up errors, so I saw the error, and I put it back on, and I did not tell anyone that I put it back on, which was so stupid. One of the techs who just graduated from here works there, and she was just like, did you put that on? That was flashing, and you did not tell anyone! I said, I just thought you were running the second one for the patient control. Then she just completely [she was very upset] (Jamie)

Other participants tended to focus on the idea of ownership and the potential permanence of mistakes made. As the following comments demonstrate, this realization appeared to be an important one for them:

> [If I made a mistake] I would say I am the least experienced, the least experienced person here; I believe I am the one who made that mistake. (Blake)

> I found it was a lot more if you screwed up, there is no fixing it. Especially when it came to precious specimens, you know there was no going back if you ran out of the specimen. There was no fixing that. (Daryl)

Experiences Related to Workplace Culture

In addition to the experiences relating to results, patients, and their own internalized feelings surrounding these experiences, participants appeared cautious regarding workplace conflict and were apprehensive when it occurred. Five participants described circumstances in which they observed conflict or tension in the workplace and indicated a particular aversion to what we have categorized as "office politics." Moreover, the participants often perceived those who engaged in these behaviours (office politics) as those they deemed less than ideal in their working ability. Unlike the more emotional aspects of the previous experiences, much of this focus on workplace culture seemed to inform the participants' understanding of the ideal characteristics of the MLPs. Blaine, for example, described surprise upon realizing that there may be discontent in the workplace, stating:

> One day, there was a big argument, and I did not even know what to do, and I just kind of sat there. And it was against the core lab and histology, and I did not realize there was [tension] between those.

It appeared that the participants had a general discomfort with conflict. It is possible that this discomfort was associated with their relative inexperience with the clinical realm, or it may have indicated a more significant discomfort with others. As the following comments illustrate, the participants were significantly surprised and affected by such conflict:

> You hear about something that happened a few weeks ago, and there was like a big outburst, and you are like, what the hell man? Generally, it was not directed at me, just interoffice politics garbage, attacking behind people's backs. (Casey)

> [I dislike] people who get so caught up in the politics of what is happening in their surroundings that it now lacks patient care. People were caring more about what if something were to happen or what will happen because they are not getting along with so-and-so. And instead of trying to confront things one on one or trying to resolve issues, they let it boil up, and finally, that just consumes them, and I see that a lot. (Daryl)

> I found in the core lab, there was one person in chemistry, one person in hematology, the person in hematology, did not do any work, and they left at eight, so the person who was there until like twelve had so much other work to do because that person did not want to do it and so that is a really big thing. (Blaine)

Discussion

The findings of the study indicated four categories of experiences during the clinical practicum that significantly affected the participants' meaning perspectives and developing professional identity and suggesting that transformative learning occurred. This section discusses these findings based on three themes associated with them: (i) *interactions with patients and the reality of health care* associated with the patients and autopsy experiences); (ii) *validation of developing knowledge* associated with the mistakes experiences; and (iii) *support from preceptors and mentors* associated with the workplace culture experiences. In addition, the theme of *embracing reflection* is addressed as an important underlying process supporting their transformative learning.

Interactions with Patients and the Reality of Health Care

A significant finding from the research was the role of real patients and their specimens on the participants' developing professional identity. This role is related to the transformative learning that occurred. The participants' shift in identity was significantly impacted by those practicum experiences that exposed them to situations with an emotional element. For example, observing a patient during a cardiac event or seeing a patient's face when they find out they have months left to live resulted in a form of "reality shock" that influenced their transformation. In this case, the influence can be related to MacCurdy's (1943) psychological concept of "near-miss" and "remote-miss" regarding how individuals who were far removed from the bombing in London during the Second World War internalized these events differently than those close to the destruction. It offers an analogy to the concept of "reality shock" that can come with being close to events that do not fit within pre-existing concepts. Following various events during practicum, participants had to reconsider many of their "remote" (initial) views, convictions, values, and ideas.

Participants witnessed trauma, suffering, and pain of others, which they likely did not fully realize was possible until their exposure (proximity) to clinical practice—a situation that contributed to their transformative learning. It is valuable in discussing this point further to revisit the experiences of Blaine, Blake, and Jess as they stood out as particularly meaningful, emotional, and clear situations of coming face to face with the reality of patient care that generated personal responses that they did not expect.

Blaine's experience centred on being on-call with one of the supervising technologists and the events in an emergency room. Blaine described in detail the patient's condition recalling sights, sounds, and feelings in the room at the time, and displayed apprehension and a genuine concern for the individual's well-being. Thus, we view Blaine's emotional response as being insightful, in that MLPs are often taught (perhaps to their detriment) to consider the patient in an overtly scientific manner with a focus on analytic variables and the correlation of these variables with clinical conditions. The experience was an opportunity for Blaine to apply the learning that had occurred within a high-stress environment. Still, it allowed for a reconsideration of the MLP role and the relationship with the patient. This reconsideration resulted in Blaine obtaining a balance between the technical and holistic views embracing the emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions of learning (Illeris, 2004; Mezirow, 2012.)

In Blake's case, it was a terminal test result and the recognition of its repercussions to the patient that served as a similar learning experience. Over time, skilled MLPs can easily distinguish between non-consequential, pathologic, and even terminal results and are commonly aware of the diagnosis and prognosis of disease well before the patient, and in many cases, even before the physician. While all participants referred to reflecting on this somehow, for Blake, this realization seemed to trigger

considerable thought, reflection, and emotion related to the transformative learning process. For Blake and Blaine, the transformation was catalyzed with what they considered to be an “it really hit me” (Blaine) moment. This moment for them, observed similarly but less obviously among other participants, was a central event in their shift in the conceptualization of their role and the role of the field. The participants had to grasp that the reality of their work brought them face to face with mortality. Their work links them closely to patients who are gravely or terminally ill, and that the weight of the knowledge that their actions are meaningful. These moments required them to reframe their ideas and perspectives; ideas, and perspectives missing from their classroom experiences. However, while the study participants viewed these experiences as positive, they can be profoundly traumatic.

Touching on the potentially traumatic nature of the participants’ experiences leading to transformation was Jess’s experience regarding a patient who had already died. All participants who engaged in autopsy had complicated feelings around it. These feelings ranged from incredible fascination to being horrified. Jess seemed to be the most personally impacted by the experience, and in many instances, seemed significantly unnerved by the process of an autopsy. Jess used strong language in the discussion of the autopsy and demonstrated an aspect of desire for dignity for the body. Troubled by the experience, Jess expressed a strong sense of empathy for the deceased’s family. Among the participants, Jess also demonstrated the most respect and admiration for those performing the autopsy, indicating a personal inability to perform this work as there would be too much potential for emotional attachment.

Each of these examples of participants’ transforming experiences highlights our conclusion that situations involving actual patients in the clinical practicum that generated strong emotions for participants have significant potential for learning and reflection; they are transformative in participants’ developing a professional identity and supported by Mezirow’s initial categorization of transformational learning when we consider the fundamental aspect of a dramatic shift or disjuncture (Kitchenham, 2008; Jarvis, 2008). Essentially these moments served as a form of disorienting dilemma. Unlike the classroom experience, or experiences involving technical skill development, the learning and emotional turmoil during these experiences created an opportunity for deep reflection. They involved a more holistic aspect of the learning processes, necessitating modifying pre-established meaning perspectives.

Validation of Developing Knowledge

In addition to their experiences with patient care, a second significant influencer emerged relating to how the participants’ applied their growing knowledge in formal and informal circumstances. In many instances, the participants were challenged to use their knowledge inside and outside the clinical realm allowing them to develop and demonstrate their growing professional identity and alter their relationship with others. This challenge served as a vital point of validation or reaffirmation, which like the experiences with patients, helped catalyze the transformational changes underway.

Throughout the post-practicum interview, it was evident that the participants had become considerably more confident and competent in the technical aspects of the field, as highlighted by their perceptions surrounding the possibility and consequences of mistakes. All participants described various experiences throughout their clinical practicum, which allowed them to demonstrate their growing competence, and these were significant moments. Some participants, for example, described feelings of accomplishment following the completion of a high-level task such as a complex antibody investigation, while others expressed genuine satisfaction in realizing simple concepts about human pathogens, such as being able to distinguish select bacteria based on smell. Each participant described experiences within the clinical setting that allowed them to validate their knowledge internally and demonstrate this to their peers.

Moreover, each participant encountered various forms of technical decision-making and had to accept the consequences of their professional judgments. In this regard, participants often referred to the experiences in which they were given heightened autonomy and where the potential for mistakes was left solely on their shoulders. It appeared that increased levels of independent thinking and work were particularly important in validating their knowledge; thus, contributing to the transformational change. Several of the stories shared related to making such judgments and demonstrating their growing

competence to their peers. However, the participants were required to demonstrate clinical decisions and were confronted with the realization that they would inevitably have to live with and reflect upon those decisions (i.e., another reality shock), thus contributing to the shift in professional identity. Fundamentally, much like the impact of real patient experiences, the building of confidence and competence and recognition of the potential for error was a central event in the participants' shift in the conceptualization of themselves within the field.

It also is important to recognize that participants had developed comfort in sharing their growing knowledge base. This comfort with new knowledge extends beyond the instrumental learning associated with the increased technical knowledge and speaks to their positionality within the field and as a presentation of their identity to their family. Again, these moments of validation provided an opportunity to develop new understandings of themselves and their positions within the field and highlight our conclusion that situations involving the validation of knowledge create significant potential for learning and reflection contributing to transformative identity development.

Support from Preceptors and Mentors.

The third set of experiences affecting the participants relates to the support they received from their preceptors and the socialization processes this fostered. Professional socialization can be understood as how individuals acquire the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledge of a group they are or seek to be members of (Waugaman & Lohrer, 2000; Weidman et al., 2001). Within the participants' MLP practicum, professional socialization seemed to be a relatively unstructured and informal experience resultant from the guidance of preceptor technologists and interaction with the practice. Nevertheless, through their preceptors and mentors and the working culture/environment, the participants were able to ground many of their learning experiences. Following their practicum, participants strongly identified with the concept of knowledge and understanding, resulting from their exposure to highly competent MLPs. This conclusion was most evident in the participants' relatively high regard for senior technologists serving as informal mentors. The value of experience on the part of the preceptor was universally recognized, and several of the participants indicated they wished to be (something) that many of the senior technologists were. Each participant shared several stories of how observing and interacting with their preceptors and mentors during clinical practice were valuable points of socializing and learning for them. Furthermore, throughout the interviews, we noted that in each of the most significant events that participants described, a preceptor was present and served as a guiding light in their navigation and reflection of the experience. Ranging from Blake's experience with a terminal diagnosis to Kelly's autopsy experience, a mentor appeared to be vital for the participants' reflections to Jamie's self-described mentor in routine hematology.

While literature related to the significance of active preceptors is both broad and comprehensive (Johnson et al., 2012; Löfmarka et al., 2012; Madavanpraphakaran et al., 2014), the role MLP preceptors play in the formation of the professional identity is much less explored. For the participants, the identification and influence of preceptors and mentors related to aspects of age, experience, and even focus area within the laboratory environment. All participants accepted the value that the experience of the senior technologists held and had established a level of respect towards them. This research supports the idea that mentorship received is a vital aspect of professional identity development within the participants' curriculum, contributing positively to the transformational shift in identity that is underway. For the participants, the informal mentorship was crucial as it allowed them to relate to the profession meaningfully, creating, in many instances, a sounding board on which they could navigate their ongoing identity shift.

Embracing Reflection.

The previous sub-sections highlighted the importance of select experiences for the participants' transformational learning. However, reflection is key to transformative learning (Merriam et al., 2007), and requires specific discussion in relation to this group. Fostering reflection and reflective practices is a common idea in health care professional identity research (Mann et al., 2009; Wald et al., 2015).

Reflective practices and how to learn from clinical experiences instead of broader reflection is a much more focused approach to health professional education (Mann et al, 2009). In this instance, the participants' broad reflections concerning relationships and their positionality within the field served to foster meaningful change.

While the participants had likely engaged in reflective practices related to their technical abilities, during their clinical practicum, they had an opportunity to reflect on their shifting positionality within the field, thus modifying their narrative—for example, the beginning transition from student to practitioner. Furthermore, following the practicum, there was a considerable shift in the participants' confidence in becoming good MLPs in the future. However, in many instances, participants identified humility surrounding their realizations regarding their limited skills compared to others. Though the participants were considered competent (relating to completing their clinical practicum and its directed curriculum), they realized that their learning was far from complete. Further complementing this realization was a growing understanding of the knowledge of their mentors and the realization that many of their preconceptions of the field proved different than they expected. Fundamentally, the participants' broad reflections regarding the practice proved influential in shaping their relationship with the field, further contributing to their transformational learning.

Notably, while the participants had embraced the value of reflection during their clinical practicum, there was little formal focus on the importance of reflection within their program. Most Canadian MLP professional training programs focus specifically on highly technical, workplace-focused tasks with minimal attention placed on any form of reflective practice, and there is little formal consideration of professional identity development outside of limited aspects of professionalism and professional practice. The CNA program the participants completed necessarily developed a curriculum that focuses explicitly on the outcomes required by the CSMLS competency profile. This profile makes only a single reference to reflective practice and one oriented towards technical practice instead of self-reflection (CSMLS, 2015).

This lack of reflection within the curriculum raises several questions regarding whether incorporating increased reflective practice and reflection within the Canadian MLP curriculum could allow for easier transformational change in the professional identity. Most of the participants, for example, identified significant levels of personal struggle when confronted with their emotional responses indicating they may have been ill-prepared for the transformative learning underway.

Conclusions

As we discussed in the previous section, this research supports the conclusion that the transformational learning which occurred was the result of events throughout the participants' clinical practicum, and transformational learning was not limited to a single event or moment in time. Instead, the participants' identity shift was affected by a collective of reflections, experiences, pre-established ideas, and concepts formed throughout the educational process.

Figure 1 provides a representation of those factors which contributed significantly to the professional identity development of the participants and serves as a starting point for future research regarding factors influencing MLP professional identity development.

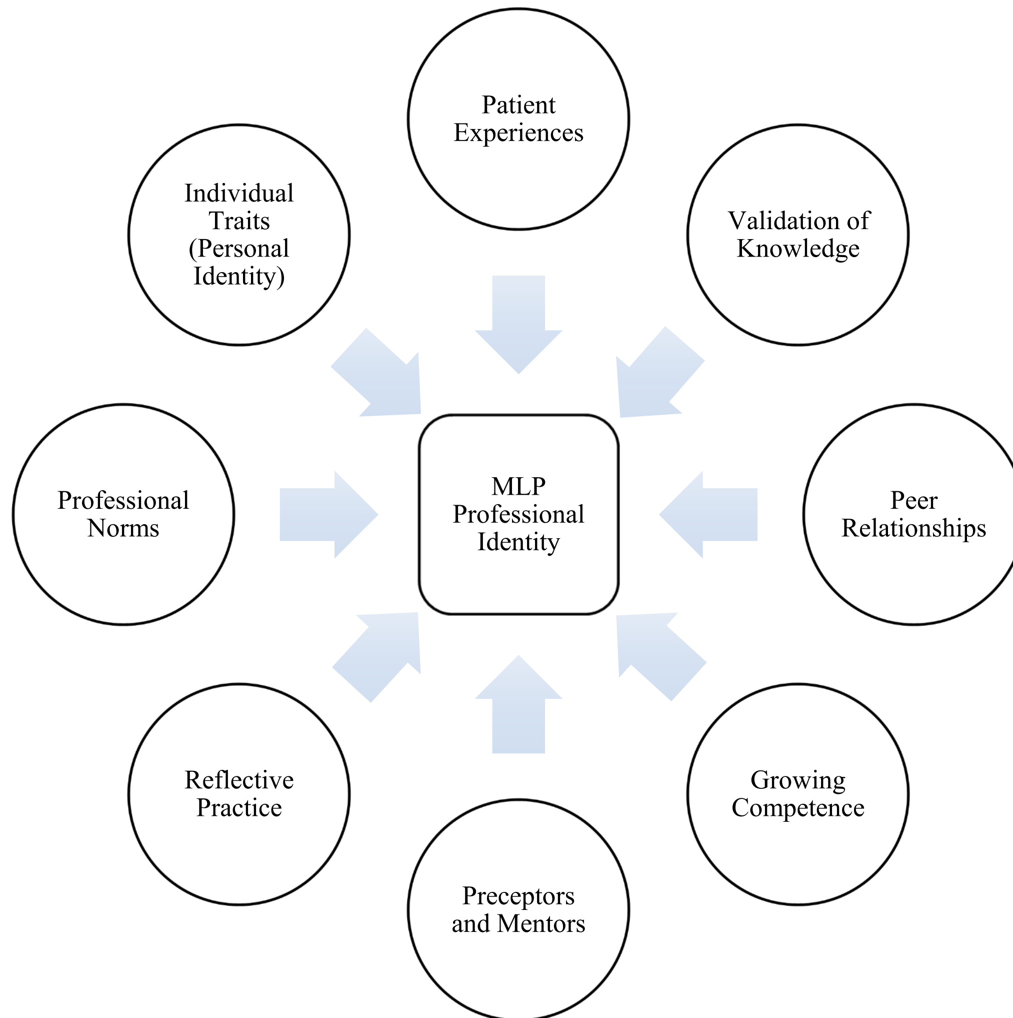

Figure 1. Factors contributing to the transformation of the MLP professional identity

Note: It is important to note that the factors indicated in Figure 1 are not meant to capture all of those influencers that may have impacted the participant but emphasize those evident throughout the research approach. Thus, additional factors outside of those highlighted, such as gender, social class, or ethnicity, likely contributed to the development of MLP professional identity but were beyond the scope of this study which explored the factors within the clinical practicum experiences.

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Transformative Learning in a Transformed Learning Environment

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Abstract

Covid-19 presented a number of unforeseen issues for full-time mature students' transformative learning experiences. The key question being explored in this research is whether mature students achieved transformative learning during this unanticipated transfer of much of their college learning experience from campus based to an on-line environment, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This research is based on a detailed exploration of the learning experiences of 104 full-time mature students from two Institutes of Technology in Ireland. By using reflective accounts, which were structured using Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning, respondents were able to describe their views, insights, opinions, and experiences. Based on the information elicited from respondents, a number of themes were identified—namely personal circumstances, career, qualifications, personal growth, and confidence—all of which provided significant evidence of the achievement of transformative learning among the full-time mature student respondents in this research.

Keywords: Transformative learning, critical reflection, lifelong learning.

Introduction

Jack Mezirow's transformative learning theory is defined as "the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analysing underlying premises" (Elias, 1997, p. 3).

This research is based on an in-depth examination and evaluation of the learning experiences of 104 full-time mature students from two institutes of technology in Ireland. In the Irish education system, a mature student is anyone who is 23 years or older on January 1st of their first year of entry to third-level education (Irish Universities Association, 2022). The term adult learner may more accurately describe this type of student in other jurisdictions, but for the purpose of this research the participants are referred to as mature students.

Existing literature demonstrates that transformative learning can and does take place for mature learners who engage in on-line education, but in traditional circumstances the student has chosen to study on-line. The over-arching question being explored in this research is whether mature students showed evidence of transformative learning, given the transfer of a significant proportion of their formal learning to an on-line environment, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The participant's engagement with education in the on-line learning environment was not anticipated or explicitly chosen when they decided to attend full-time higher education on campus, and they engaged in remote emergency teaching as opposed to a traditional online programme of study. Rather, they were forced online, as were the academic staff responsible for facilitating their learning. This research sought to see if transformative learning could still occur in this unchartered context.

In order to elicit detailed responses from the research participants, it was decided to use reflective accounts. Mezirow's ten phases of transformative learning were applied, thereby allowing

respondents to present their views and opinions in a more discursive manner than might have been possible using a closed question format.

Based on the information elicited from respondents, it was anticipated that a number of themes would be identified, which would provide evidence of the level of achievement of transformative learning among full-time mature student respondents in this research.

As a foundation for the empirical research, a review of relevant literature was undertaken, as explored in the following section.

Literature Review

Fanning and Gaba (2007) reported that adults prefer to apply their learning, be active in their learning, and experience their learning. These authors describe experiential learning as "learning by doing, thinking about, and assimilation of lessons learned into everyday behaviours" (p. 115).

Transformative learning explains how we make meaning, interpret experiences, and how we question, reflect on and converse about these experiences in order to develop and grow. It is an approach to teaching based on promoting change, where educators challenge learners to critically question and assess the integrity of their deeply held assumptions about how they relate to the world around them (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009).

Experiential uncertainty, in this case stemming from the Covid-19 pandemic, is both a global crisis and an individual experience for mature students and may involve a fundamental reconsideration of how one thinks, feels, or acts. Thus, transformative learning becomes not only a possibility, but a necessity. The opportunity to learn transformatively arises out of the experience of crisis or disorientation. In the light of Covid-19, pre-pandemic mindsets are dysfunctional. When our meaning perspectives are questioned, we are no longer able to interpret the situation based on our previous experiences (Mälkki, 2019). The experience of not-knowing, or the challenge of combining social solidarity with physical isolation, which have resulted from Covid-19 for many mature students, provide the kind of disruptions that transformative learning theory defines as disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1991).

Jack Mezirow (1991) outlines ten phases within the process of perspective transformation. It begins with (1) a disorienting dilemma, which sets the stage for (2) an exploration of feelings like guilt or shame that arise due to the crisis or dilemma. In step (3), learners critically assess and reflect on their guiding assumptions underlying their current meaning perspective. This is followed by (4) the realisation that one's personal problem is shared, and learners realise that others have undergone comparable changes and overcome similar challenges. In the next phase, (5) learners explore alternative ways of being and living in terms of relationships, roles, and actions. This phase is complemented by another phase, where (6) learners plan (new) courses of action and then (7) acquire new knowledge in order to put these courses of action into practice. Then learners provisionally try out these new roles (8), and then they (9) build (self-) confidence and competence and ultimately, (10) re-integrate new practices into their lives, employing a new, transformed meaning perspective, as well as experiencing personal growth and development (Irving & Williams, 1999). The concept of personal growth to achieve transformative learning through working with others is also discussed by Branshaw (2009).

According to Mezirow, what gets transformed as a result of transformative learning is what he terms a frame of reference or a meaning perspective. This involves cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. It selectively shapes and delimits perception, cognition, feelings, and disposition by predisposing one's intentions, expectations, and purposes. "It provides the context for making meaning" (Mezirow, 2012, p. 82). Kegan (2000) comments that all good educators recognise that students come to the learning environment with prior knowledge that affects both their present and future learning. He refers to this prior knowledge as a student's learning past.

Learning transformatively is not necessarily an endlessly positive experience in the context of self-actualisation. It is psychologically challenging, involving risks to one's livelihood, social networks, and psychological stability (Brookfield, 1990). Brookfield identifies several layers of transformative learning, all of which are reflected in the current crisis: psychological stability is put at risk as emotionally charged situations arise and are experienced individually; social networks are at

risk due to the necessary isolation that has to be lived through physical distancing. The experience of being physically distant while being connected through social media adds additional challenges. In recognising the increasing propensity for mature students to avail of on-line learning, Cranton (2010, 2021) identified strategies for encouraging how transformative learning might be carried into that environment. She, along with Geraldine Torrisi-Steele, presented a revised version of this article in 2021 to reflect the changed learning environment that has resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, transformative learning is also empowering. The process begins with a disorienting dilemma: an individual is unable to make sense of an experience within her or his current pre-pandemic frame of reference, which in this context is the enforced transition to an on-line learning environment and thus adapting new learning to this new context may no longer be sufficient. When a well-established meaning perspective can no longer comfortably account for or facilitate anomalies in a new situation, a transformation may begin (Mezirow, 1978).

Wingo et al (2017) highlight the importance of academic leaders in the promotion of institutional plans to support on-line learners. Given the rapid transition to on-line learning, in the context of the Covid-19 imposed changes to the learning environment, there may have been little opportunity for such promotion. This may, in turn, have imposed an additional burden on learners who experienced an original disorienting dilemma, having lost their ability to implement their previous learning plan. Nichols et al (2020) explore the concept of pursuing academic qualifications through transformative learning in an on-line environment. The transition to an on-line learning environment may have left some mature students feeling a sense of urgency to rediscover a sense of direction; they are in need of "an exploratory, associative, open-ended, tolerant exchange of intimations free from the demand that it [should] issue in conclusions binding on all" (Arcilla, 1995, p. 7). This sense of direction needs to be rediscovered in the light of disorientation when concepts of health or normality are disrupted. Several studies have been conducted which highlighted the importance of strong student-centred, institutional support for on-line learning (Huang et al., 2011). Estes (2004) argues that while experiential educators may claim to value student-centred learning, the values, as evidenced in practice, may often be more teacher-centred (2004). The enforced transition to an on-line learning environment provided an opportunity to examine the level of student-centredness experienced by the mature student participants in this research.

Huang et al. (2011) suggest that despite many on-line learning studies having been undertaken, relatively few have explored the extent of educators' on-line technology adoption. Buchan et al. (2011) investigate the transformational impact of introducing significant new learning technology. In a situation such as that currently being faced by students and educators alike, where acceptance of on-learning mechanisms is essential, any resistance to their use by teaching staff can have a ripple effect on students' acceptance of such practices. King (2003) states that faculty members—and by extension students—in higher education face a multitude of demands and challenges in their work. Not least among these is the need to use technology in ways that will be meaningful and useful. Maguire (2009) argues that while faculty members may be excluded from discussions about and creation of distance education policy, they are still expected to willingly teach on-line courses. This challenge has been brought to the fore in the current learning environment. Orr, Williams, & Pennington (2009) state that effective processes, practices, and infrastructure are essential components of successful on-line teaching and learning efforts. Wang & Wang (2009) explore the increasing use of on-line learning tools and their wide application in both educational and non-educational institutions. Wickersham and McElhany (2010) explore the continued expansion of on-line education opportunities and the resulting importance of the establishment of institutional quality standards in relation to on-line education.

In addition to studies on academic staff-members' readiness for the on-line teaching environment, a significant level of research has been undertaken in relation to the concerns shared by both faculty members and mature students as to the students' technical skills and their abilities to use technology effectively in an on-line environment. Some of the most significant researchers in this context are Bacow et al. (2012). They discuss "the need for open, shared data on student learning and performance tracked through interactive on-line learning systems, and the need for investment in the creation of sustainable and customizable platforms for delivering interactive on-line learning instruction" (p. 3). Meyer (2013) explores the importance of designing on-line learning environments

that fit the needs of the specific learners in question. This is important in the context of interaction with mature students, as distinct from younger learners. Bolliger et al. (2009) sought to develop a self-reported measure of instructor satisfaction within the context of teaching in the on-line environment. Among the elements they identified in their five-factor model of most relevance to this research are instructor-to-student interaction and student-to-student interaction, both of which may be challenged by a transition to an on-line teaching and learning environment. In addition, Chapman et al. (2004) explore the importance of maintaining academic integrity in a remote learning context, while Green et al. (2010) outline academic institutions' evolving conceptualisations of learning as knowledge creation in the context of teaching and learning in on-line courses. This literature on on-line learning and its impacts on both lecturers and students shows that the issues facing academics and mature students due to enforced on-line learning are not new concerns in the academic environment. Gunawardena et al (2009) outlined many of the same concerns previously. However, in the context of the current pandemic, it would appear that, over time, both students and staff members have become accustomed to, and therefore more comfortable with using such on-line learning environments and mechanisms. As there is evidence of a gradual emergence from the current global crisis, the experiences and skills gained over the past number of years will likely enhance the teaching practices and learning experiences of mature students going forward.

Learning Perspectives

Mezirow (1991) draws heavily on the work of German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1971, 1984, 1987) and builds on the Habermasian ideas of discourse, instrumental, communicative, and emancipatory knowledge, as well as the role of argument and rationality as key concepts in his transformative learning theory. Mezirow identifies a Habermasian notion of discourse as the process through which one learns transformatively. Learning is central for Habermas (Habermas, 1975). It is not surprising that Habermas relates adult learning to his vision of a democratic society. He refers to this relation as the adult learning project (Habermas, 1987) and associates democracy with free and unrestrained communication. Habermas links "the importance of learning how to reason to adults' ability to participate in democratic decision making" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 1131).

Habermas' view of what adults need to be active citizens departs from the uncritical version of lifelong learning, where a lack of basic skills in concert with employability is central for adults in order to fulfil their roles as active citizens participating in democracy.

It is clear that Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory, Kegan and Lahey's (2009) developmental approach and Habermas' (1975) notion of learning democracy intersect: they all see a need to help adults learn to live with ambiguity and, in the context of Covid-19, uncertainty and not-knowing.

Transformative learning theory, as much as it focuses on individuals experiencing a perspective transformation, is mainly concerned with a discursive format to promote the kind of learning which is appropriate for deliberative decision-making processes and participation in democracy. What is missing is a philosophical grounding that reflects both processes of transformation and related, suitable concepts to foster transformative learning on a meta-theoretical level (Eschenbacher, 2019). In the context of Covid-19, this becomes apparent as a dilemma that needs to be adequately addressed through the theory of transformative learning.

American philosopher Richard Rorty (1989) differentiates the question of how one should live one's life, where no consensus is necessary, from the question of how broader society should live our lives, where there is a need for consensus and solidarity, as required of citizens by governments in dealing with Covid-19. It is central to Rorty's ideas that one is not trapped by one way of looking at the world that is forced on us. Whenever one encounters the experience of a crisis or dilemma, the limits of one's frame of reference are revealed. The integrity of one's deeply held assumptions is challenged, and people are invited to ask, "Does our use of these words get in the way of our use of those other words?" (Rorty, 1989, p. 12).

Transformative learning adds an additional, previously overlooked component to the discourse on lifelong learning, namely the inclusion of personal development as part of lifelong learning in the sense of being better able to live with uncertainty, and ambiguity. This may help some

people to master the challenges and demands of adults' everyday lives, even in the face of crises such as that which the world is currently experiencing with the Covid-19 pandemic. Transformative learning also has the potential to transform a global and individual crisis into a learning experience which addresses both the individual and society.

Malcom Knowles (1984) researched this idea in the 1980s and proposed a model of adult learning called Andragogy, which views the adult learner as a primary source of data for making sound decisions regarding the learning process (Knowles et al., 1998, p. 183). Knowles' definition of Andragogy involves four interconnected assumptions about adult learners:

1. *Self-concept.* This assumption is that as a person grows and matures, their self-concept moves from one of total dependency (as is the reality of the infant) to one of increasing self-directedness. Adults may be more likely to resist or resent instances when others impose their will upon them (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).
2. *Role of experience.* Adults enter a learning situation with a wealth of experience. This may serve as a resource to make learning meaningful. Estes (1991) states that *"learning consists, not in modifying the units (or experiences), but only of establishing associations between units"* (p.6). However, we must also be aware of how prior assumptions can act as barriers to this development (Kagan, 1992; Slotta et al., 1995), and determine ways to challenge the assumptions that are causing the barriers.
3. *Readiness to learn.* Unlike many children, adults need to know the utility and value of the content they are learning and how it applies to them and their future careers (Knowles et al., 2005). Tough (1979) argues that the first task of a teacher of adult learners is to help them become aware of the need to know.
4. *Orientation to learning*. Adults are life-centred and/or problem-centred in their desire to learn. Thus, adults learn best and are motivated more when knowledge skills and attitude are presented in the context of real-life problem solving (Knowles et al., 2005).

Kegan & Lahey (2009) explore the notion of a hidden mindset that creates a natural but enforcing immunity to change. Through the transformative learning process, students must learn to continually challenge this reluctance to change based on their assumptions and structure their knowledge differently. A central role of the educator in the transformative learning context is to serve as an "agent of change" by creating an active learning environment that facilitates such personal and cognitive transformation. Transformative learning is designed to help individuals develop better assumptions about the world that will guide their activities more effectively and create enhanced conditions for learning and social action (Mezirow, 1989, 2012).

A key application of transformative learning theory, as it relates to mature students, lies in the concept of experiential learning, which in its simplest form refers to learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking (Mälkki, 2019; Brookfield, 2000; Estes, 2004). Mackintosh (2014) believed experiential learning contributes to the transformative learning experience and supports changes in learners' points of view. Learning that is transformative occurs when situations cause one to question currently held frames of reference and, as a result, alter them to reflect their acquisition of knowledge due to a specific experience (Mezirow, 1994). Fanning and Gaba (2007) argued that adult learners need to actively participate in an experiential learning environment in order to learn effectively and transfer that learning to their own contexts. Among the most significant outcomes of such experiences to be explored in this research, is an increase in student self-confidence, as described by Pomeroy and Oliver (2021). A key issue focused on in this research is whether the transition to on-line learning imposed, of necessity, on mature students as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, has resulted in unexpected, enhanced learning opportunities.

This research involved the collection and analysis of qualitative data from full-time mature students and the research methodology applied is described in detail in the following section.

Research Aim

The aim of this research was to capture the lived experience of mature learners who were plunged into an unfamiliar learning environment due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors sought to examine if these students demonstrated evidence of transformative learning through their own reflective accounts of each of Mezirow's ten phases.

Research Scope and Limitations

This research examines the experiences of 104 mature students in two Irish institutes of technology. The findings are therefore not generalisable. However, this research provided the opportunity to record and analyse the lived experience of these students during an unforeseen and challenging event, the Covid-19 pandemic. A longitudinal study with an additional qualitative data collection phase using a method such as semi-structured in-depth interview would help to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the transformative learning experience, but that is beyond the scope of this research, which sought evidence of, rather than a wholistic understanding of transformative learning among this specific cohort, at this specific point in time.

Research Methodology

This phenomenological research employed a qualitative approach and thematic analysis (Creswell, 2009; Brauna & Clark, 2006; Saunders et al., 2012). to determine the extent to which, if any, evidence of transformative learning could be identified among the reflective accounts of mature learners who had to engage in remote emergency learning on-line due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We acknowledge that we cannot separate ourselves entirely from the research as we are working as educators of mature learners, but in so far as possible, we sought to set aside and bracket our own experiences in order to focus on and derive meaning from the participants' experiences (Nieswiadomy, 1993 cited in Creswell, 2009). A constructivist rather than positivist assumption guided this research, as we believe that human experience is socially constructed, rather than a social reality that can be objectively known and measured (Greene, 2007). There is no one truth in terms of the experience of transformative learning, rather participants can only report their experiences of what they believe constitutes transformative learning for them; "lived experience is the starting point and end point of phenomenological research… [it] is the breathing of meaning" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 36).

The research gathered data from full-time undergraduate mature students in years one to four of their programme of study. The purposive sampling allowed the researchers to target current students who had initially registered for a campus course but are now undertaking their studies on-line. This phenomenological study required placing the student at the centre of the research, as it is their actual lived experience (Dewey, 1938; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2006) that determines the extent to which transformative learning has occurred, and through a greater understanding of this experience, we hope to develop the capacity to facilitate transformative learning for our students. Students who met the inclusion criteria (n = 1,509) were invited to participate in the on-line survey, by way of an e-mail, which was distributed centrally by each Institute of Technology to those students who met the criterion of being registered as full-time mature students. They were asked to complete a reflective account of their learning experience. Informed consent was sought, and participants were assured that their responses would be anonymous. There was no incentive offered to encourage participation.

Similar to a diary entry or personal log, the reflective account required the participants to reflect on events of which they have lived experienced and consider the impact these experiences may have had on their lives and their self-perceptions (Saunders et al., 2012). Having completed some short demographic questions, the participants were given a brief overview of each phase of the transformative learning process and asked to consider and describe their experience of each of the ten stages of Mezirow's transformative learning theory. This method fits well in the study of transformative learning, as the process of transformative learning itself requires reflective practice by the students which requires the participant to make themselves "the object of self-inquiry" (Mortari, 2015, p. 1), a process through which they become the subject of their own experience. The

participants were not required to respond to all questions. They had the option to skip questions if desired, as it could not be assumed that all students would have had experienced all of the phases of transformative learning but may have experienced some.

The on-line survey was accessible for a period of two weeks, and there were 104 responses received, a response rate of 6.9%. Thematic analysis, which focuses on identifiable themes and patterns of behaviour (Aronson, 1995), was used to derive meaning from the data. The six phases of thematic analysis identified by Brauna and Clark (2006) were followed closely and this was a recursive rather than a linear process to allow movement back and forth between the phases as required. Initially, the authors familiarised themselves with the qualitative responses that had been collected and organised the data in preparation for the open and axial coding that followed. The initial open coding phase allowed for the development of initial concepts based on the words used by the participants to describe their experiences of transformative learning. Initially, this was conducted individually by the authors and then reviewed together to progress and search for themes. Microsoft Excel was used to record the frequency with which themes and subthemes were reported. The themes were then reviewed and refined to create an overall understanding of the data, and compelling extracts were chosen from the data set to illustrate and support the findings.

Interpretative phenomenological analysis was the methodology through which the reported experiences of the participants were considered. This method allowed the authors to acknowledge our input into the process of attributing meaning to the data rather than trying to remove ourselves entirely and most importantly give experience primacy (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Critics argue that this flexibility can be mistaken for lack of rigour (Larkin et al., 2006). However, we believe this method is appropriate as it aims to create understanding of the participants' world and their lived experience and then allows the development of a more overt interpretation of their experiences, and in this context in particular, how their experiences have been impacted by the move to on-line learning.

Finally, the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis were considered in the context of the literature related to transformative learning and also in the context of previous research we had undertaken into transformative learning by mature learners (Moloney, 2018; Moran, 2015). These themes are discussed in the following sections.

Findings and Discussion

During the course of this research, 104 full-time mature students provided detailed insights into their transformative learning experiences. A more comprehensive analysis of the data would necessitate follow-up interviews being carried out with respondents, which is beyond the scope of this research. However, there is clear evidence of all 10 phases of transformative learning, as described by Mezirow. In addition, respondents demonstrated that they expect to be treated differently in the workplace as a result of having undertaken their formal full-time education. This data was collated and then based on the level of commonality among respondents' perspectives, it was categorised using five core themes: personal circumstances, career, qualifications, personal growth, and confidence, which are also dominant in both the general transformative learning literature and that which focuses on transformative learning opportunities in an on-line environment. Rather than presenting the findings from each of the phases, we have chosen to focus on the themes that emerged from the data across all responses, as these themes indicate the issues that were of most concern to the participants, therefore reflecting their lived experience, which forms the basis of phenomenology. The following sections provide a detailed discussion of the findings from the analysis of this qualitative data.

Personal Circumstances

During their reflective accounts, many participants described various personal circumstances that had affected their decision to attend a higher education institution as a mature learner. An individual's perception of their own personal circumstances is an important consideration in the work of Rorty (1989, 2009). Glowacki-Dudka et al. (2005) argue that "educators have a critical responsibility to acknowledge, respect and understand people from diverse backgrounds" (p. 30). The impact of the enforced transition to on-line learning may have had an additional impact on the

personal circumstances of some mature students, as described by King (2003). Additionally, Greenman and Dieckmann (2004) examine how the context in which a mature student is undertaking a course may impact on the level of transformative learning they achieve. The most prominent aspects that emerged included health, family and relationships. In addition, many participants reported that the time was just right for their return to education, either as a result of a change in their employment status or a change in their family circumstances such as divorce or their family having grown up.

Physical and mental health, as described in the research of Tsimane and Downing (2020), were dominant themes which emerged from the data. For some participants their health issues were linked to the work they were doing before becoming a mature learner, one stating that "I no longer want to work in a job that breaks my body"; and for others there were external factors that had negatively impacted their health, "I was involved in a car accident which left me unable to work and decided to go back into education." A significant number of students also reported having experienced depression, while some signalled additional forms of mental illness and issues with substance misuse.

For others, the health of those around them had impacted their ability to realise their potential and their financial wellbeing, as explored in the work of Losada and Alkire (2019), "Being unemployed after caring for my mother for six years and being left with little opportunities other then [sic] menial jobs with little prospect of bettering my financial situation which is dire." Another carer was embracing the opportunity to access education, but for their own fulfilment, "having been a carer for my autistic daughter for twenty years, I wanted to fulfil my dream of studying." There were participants who reported that their health had hindered previous attempts to access education and for others it restrained their ability to work in areas in which they had previously trained. There was a common belief that accessing education would improve general physical and mental health outcomes, but there was also one participant who explicitly reported wanting to use education to try to maintain their health, "my brother got Alzheimer's, so I decided to activate my brain." Accessing education helped to provide hope for some students who had experienced physical and mental health issues, "since developing a health issue I was unsure and quite insecure… being able to return to college and find a more suitable path has improved my physical and mental health and my hopes for the future."

Many students reflected on the impact that their family had on their decision to pursue their education, some positive and some negative, "I felt inadequate with my siblings." There were a number of people who reported having chosen to return to education after raising their family, "life got in the way, but now my kids are in college, so I'm able to go," or having reached a milestone stage in their family, "had two small children so when they both started school I decided to go back to college." There were also a number of participants who identified that they wanted to set an example within their own family, "I am a single mother and I know if I was going to be able to put my kids through college, I was going to need to go back myself" and another, "I felt I needed to go as I could tell my kids I went, and they could not throw it back at me that I did not go." Finally, other participants outlined how their family situations had limited their opportunity to engage in education either through lack of funding or encouragement, while another had dropped out of a previous course to "spite my parents."

Career

For many participants their careers were prominent in their minds when reflecting on the phases of transformative learning. References to careers, jobs, employability and opportunities for progression were dominant throughout the data gathered in a variety of different contexts and this is also reflected in the literature on career progression as it relates to transformative learning (Fleming, 2018). Initially, when considering the disorienting dilemma phase, career was clearly the predominant theme that emerged in response. Many respondents indicated that their decision to engage in education had been initiated due to a change in their employment status, "out of work due to Covid, so wanted to do something valuable with my time," or dissatisfaction with their current employment, "I grew tired of working dead end jobs for bad pay and decided that I wanted a career." Education was identified as the means through which career paths could be identified, "me returning to college is a way of getting a good job," as well as a way through which one could pivot career, "I wanted to change my career path" and gain access to improved working terms and conditions, "improve my quality of life by getting educated and getting a more secure job."

During consideration of the latter phases of transformative learning, career remained a prevailing theme. When asked to consider the process of dealing with guilt or shame, some participants identified that their job options had been limited by circumstances, but social pressure made them feel as though they were not productive members of society, "makes you feel ashamed of your circumstances (non-productive person, lack of formal education). As a woman without studies, I was offered a very limited range of jobs…most of them preconceived to role-gender or social-class status." Others identified that the work they were currently doing was having a negative impact on them and their families, "I was irritable and tired all the time as a result of working nights" and "I became more disillusioned with my job, I became more depressed." Education was seen as the key to escaping low paid, menial work to pursue a fulfilling career not only for the students themselves but also to provide a better life for their families, "working in jobs with lack of progression and unchallenging, as well as wanting a better life for my children."

The tone of respondents when discussing their future career opportunities was extremely positive, with many reporting that they felt they were now better equipped to find employment in a career that they would find rewarding, "I have a challenging and fascinating career ahead of me." Not only did they believe that there were more job opportunities opening up for them as a result of their education, but they had also found the capacity to seize such opportunities, "optimistic about future job opportunities and confident in myself that I can achieve what I want if I put my mind to it." The newfound belief participants had developed in themselves was evident, "I feel more independent, able, confident to take my place in the professional work place," and "I am much more likely to take on leadership roles." In addition, many of the respondents reported having gained skills and changed attitudes, such as improved time management, technical skills, writing skills, verbal and written communication skills, greater levels of patience, more focus, better critical thinking skills and lower levels of judgement of others which may well be transferrable to their new working environments.

As outlined previously, an improvement in career prospects, a redundancy or an unemployment spell were frequently mentioned when students discussed their reasons for returning to education. It is very satisfying to see that many held the belief that these objectives will be met and are looking forward to, for some in their own microcosm "working in an area that I'm interested in rather than working just to pay the bills," and for others at broader levels, "being able to implement change in the world for the better."

Qualifications

This section explores the influential impact that a mature student's lack of formal academic qualifications can have on their willingness to return to full-time education. Nichols et al (2020) explore the concept of gaining formal academic qualifications through transformative learning in an on-line environment. There are a number of significant quotes from the survey which illustrate the importance placed by respondents on having a recognised third-level academic qualification.

The level of engagement with learning was illustrated by one student who stated that he or she, "Was hoping to complete the Level 8 [Honours] degree, along with own commitments."

The acknowledgement of, "not being able to get a desirable job with Level 5 [Higher Certificate] qualifications" highlighted the importance to this respondent of getting a better qualification.

The opportunity to pursue higher level qualifications was also identified by mature students, one of whom stated that they were, "out of work due to Covid-19 so wanted to do something valuable with my time. Going back to college to complete a Level 8 degree had always been a goal of mine." Thus, the unexpected impact of Covid-19 facilitated them in pursuing their long-held ambition.

The limited prospects available to them was a key theme that emerged from the importance of gaining qualifications. Responses in this category included, "Previously [I] went to college and graduated with a L8 hons. No jobs in this field without further study, no security even with further study. Went back to study in field of secure job in the future, i.e. nursing." Similarly, another research participant stated:

> I had done a Plc [post-leaving certificate course] level 5 the year before I started college, this was the first time I was back to education since leaving school in 1990, I found the plc course

> and was advised to further my education which I first thought I could not do, the course I am doing now is very interesting and I am glad I am in college.

This perspective of the importance of qualifications was also reflected in the comments of another respondent, who stated, “I realised how limiting the work landscape had become for an individual with no formal qualification. I reasoned that I would be a more attractive prospect to an employer as a graduate.”

The feeling of regret at not having gained academic qualifications previously also came to the fore in this research. One respondent stated, “I had always regretted not getting a degree when I finished secondary school and because I had been in dead end jobs with little room to grow, I felt it was time to get a qualification” while another stated that they, “only had the leaving certificate as qualification. College was the next step sooner or later.”

Similarly, a number of research participants stated that they had previously attended college and now felt the need to enhance their academic qualifications by returning to full-time higher education, “Having completed my Level 7 [Ordinary] degree, seven years ago, I wanted to upskill while also changing career goals.”

The final sub-category of mature students which came to our attention in this research was those who are currently working in a specific area but wanted or needed to gain a formal academic qualification in that area. Examples of direct quotations from some of those in this category included, “[I wanted/needed] to receive a qualification in the role I’m already working in.” One respondent stated that he or she, “wanted a qualification in my chosen area and had decided it was the right time for me” while another explained, “I wanted a career and going to college was the only way i would achieve a career in my chosen field.”

Personal Growth

Personal growth is a transformational process, in which improvements are made in one’s physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, social, and/or financial state. From a theoretical perspective, such an evolution is reflected in the work of Green et al. (2010). Cranton (2021) also examined how transformative learning, through personal growth, might take place in an on-line learning environment. In exploring transformative learning in on-line learning, Branshaw (2009) identified a multidimensional potential to connect others and create a sense of community of working together. In exploring this theme, we identified a number of inter-connected constructs, namely maturity, shared experiences and the development of a course of action to move forward (Irving & Williams, 1999).

In the context of maturity, and the importance of recognising the power of reflection, one respondent said, “I assumed it would be easier to study from home and on-line, but I found it very difficult to get back into using technology at such a high level of engagement.”

Another stated, “I assumed that it would be a daunting challenge entering third level without any formal higher level of education, however I underestimated how much reading was involved and that it would take a major effort to keep up with the required course work.” This reflection also highlighted the level of engagement and the recognition of the active role that this student has with their own learning.

In a similar vein, another research participant stated, “I didn't think it would take up so much of my down time after lecture contact hours or that I would struggle so much with balancing study time and home life commitments.”

It is important to recognise that not every mature student will have a predominantly positive experience of learning, as described by this mature learner, “I deeply regret it and regret my choice of course. I feel more of a failure now than I did before I started my course.” Equally, it is also significant to acknowledge that the majority of responses received showed a very positive appreciation for mature student learning, “Everything is going according to plan.”

Shared experience was a common perception, with one student stating, “I still find the workload heavy at times but that seems to be a common feeling among my classmates so that makes me feel better that it is not just me.”

In describing their broader shared experiences, one research participant stated, “Yes, I think everyone in the class at the beginning was overwhelmed it was so new for us all. We all had different reasons for going back to college and we did share those experiences with each other.” This showed that while their reasons for returning to full-time higher education may have differed, these students share the common bond of being full-time mature students.

The third element of personal growth described in this section involves recognition of the development of a new skillset leading to the formulation of an alternative course of action. One research participant remarked:

> My motivation and confidence have grown and from this place I face future with the best tools. I am more positive and aware of my potential. I face difficulties with the conviction that it's in my hands and I don't depend of others as before.

This illustrates a strong level of integration between their prior knowledge, what returning to college has taught them and how they intend to apply these new-found skills in future.

The enhanced feeling of self-worth was a dominant element of this section. Examples included, “I’m achieving something for me, and it gives me a sense of self-worth” and “I think my self-confidence has grown. I feel better able to work off my own judgements, and I'm currently working in an area that I am interested in rather than working just to pay the bills.” This feeling of self-worth is, in turn, intrinsically linked to the concept of self-belief as described in the respondents’ statements, for example one who is, “Believing more in myself.”

Confidence

One of the most dominant themes to emerge from the data was that of confidence. Pomeroy et al. (2021) explore the role of confidence as an indicator of transformative change. Bacow et al. (2012) discuss tracking the changing confidence in students, while Bolliger & Wasilik (2009) and Wingo et al (2017), in addition to Wang & Wang (2009), examine the concept of confidence in the context of the use of learning technology.

Several students reported feeling increased levels of confidence having undertaken their education, particularly when asked to reflect on the final stages of transformative learning theory. As one respondent put it, “I am finding little nuggets of gold… ‘confidence.’”

Many participants reported increased confidence in themselves generally, “It has boosted my self belief and my confidence in myself,” and also confidence in specific skills “I am much more confident in my ability to write creatively.” Furthermore, they are feeling more confident in the process of their education, “I am more confident to answer questions, even if the answer is wrong, because it still teaches me and others.” Individuals have reported greater levels of confidence in their ability to interact with people around them and feel more empowered to stand up for what they believe in, “I now have the confidence to challenge situations I see as oppressive towards other groups and more likely to speak up.”

Other respondents identified that their confidence and their belief in their academic ability has increased, “I’m more confident that I can complete my college work to a high standard” and that they have been able to employ this in a professional capacity while on work placement, “I’m more competent while out on placement and more confident talking to other nurses and patients.” One participant outlined how they had “no confidence in first year” but became more confident with every assignment and exam that they completed and reached a point where, “I wasn’t afraid to ask for help and I wasn't afraid of failing.” Many students reported simply having more confidence and, “believing more in myself” and having more confidence in their mental capacity, “I have more confidence in my intelligence”and in their ability to secure a meaningful future for themselves, “I feel more independent, able, confident to take my place in the professional workplace.”

There were some participants who believed they had always had confidence and that it has been their life experience rather than their education that has given them that confidence, “I am very confident and also competent. I did not need to go to college to achieve this. I learned these skills in the school of hard knocks and would not have it any other way.” However, students who articulated this were very much in the minority compared to those who believed that their confidence had

increased as a result of their engagement with education, and many outlined their sense of achievement "when I started, I had zero confidence in my ability to achieve academically or socially. I have achieved both" and their belief that they are now better prepared for employment, "I think I have gained confidence in myself... I feel better equipped in the work environment as I did previously have experience but now, I have a lot more knowledge."

For some students their increasing confidence has manifested itself in a belief that they can achieve more now than they would have thought possible:

> my dream is to become a network engineer I always felt it was out of reach or I would not be clever enough to achieve it but college is really helping me get more confident and helps me think why not me, with each passing week.

The students are becoming empowered to initiate change in their lives through their increased confidence.

Having discussed the findings from this research, the final section draws a number of over-arching conclusions.

Conclusion

Transformative learning offers mature learners the opportunity to create new meaning schema and challenge the existing assumptions they have of themselves, and their world, based on habitual expectations familiar to everyone. This transformation allows the learners to question their expectations of "how things are supposed to be" (Mezirow & Associates, 1990, p. 4), thus helping them to change expectations they may have of themselves based on their previous life experiences. Mezirow argued that the experiences in the classroom itself are as important as the academic material and qualifications that they will have access to (Mezirow et al., 2009). Given the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the learning environment, we wanted to investigate whether transformative learning could still occur for mature learners who were forced into a virtual learning environment, despite having registered for an on-campus programme of study. Fortunately, this research has established that mature learners did experience transformative learning in this new learning environment.

The use of a reflective account allowed us to understand how the mature learners related to the ten phases of transformative learning. Despite initial concerns that mature student participation in this research might be difficult to secure, we were very much heartened by the number of mature learners who chose to share their experiences with us for this research and we believe that this reflects the willingness of mature learners to reexamine their existing assumptions and engage in transformative learning. This critical reflection is what Mezirow believed was fundamental to allowing students question their perspectives and assumptions and increase their capacity to transform and create new meaning schema (Brookfield, 2000).

In this research we saw how some learners did not have the opportunity earlier in their lives to access higher education, and some described feelings of guilt and shame associated with that lack of opportunity, although not all felt this. For some, it was merely a case that the "time was right" and they now had the opportunity to study due to a change in their employment, health, relationship, or family status. Many of the respondents outlined how they believed education and formal qualifications would provide the key for them to escape menial, low paid jobs and embark on more rewarding careers that would provide financial stability for them and their families.

As outlined in the literature review, the process of transformative learning is an integral part of ensuring active citizenship in participatory democracy. It helps the learner navigate ambiguity and develop their deliberative decision-making capacity. Participants in this research reported having more confidence in themselves and their abilities. Many have found self-belief and dispelled doubts that they had about themselves or believed society attributed to them due to their lack of formal education. Our research supports the contention that transformative learning continued to occur for this cohort of mature students in a transformed learning environment.

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Critical Reflection, Asking Better Questions: Understanding the Phenomenon of Critical Reflection through the Experiences of Three 4Cs Educators

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Abstract

Critical reflection is a vital 21st-century capacity required by students to navigate their increasingly complex world, yet many educators experience uncertainty when attempting to conceptualize this phenomenon. This study originated in response to this need and the need to elucidate the relationship between critical reflection and questioning, achieved through the experiences of 4Cs educators working within an Australian primary school. A phenomenological case study involving three teacher participants was designed to explore their experiences as they implemented Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) teaching tool, the critical reflection crucible, in their respective classrooms. Qualitative data was collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings in this sample reveal a strong correlation between teacher questioning and students' ability to critically reflect during learning. Although participants encountered difficulty when defining critical reflection, a clearer image of how this phenomenon manifests during learning emerged from the appraisal of their transformative classroom experiences.

Keywords: critical reflection, critically reflective learning, questioning practice, transformative learning, the 4Cs approach, hermeneutic phenomenology, primary education

Introduction

This research posits critical reflection as a complex phenomenon, which is captured and expressed through the teaching experiences of Australian, 4Cs educators in the primary classroom. A key dimension of this phenomenon is questioning, which through a dialogic model of teaching and learning catalyses critical reflection through the active process of "problem-posing" by both teachers and students in schools (Freire, 2005, p. 83). A phenomenological case study was used to grasp the fundamental "essence" of critical reflection (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 258), as an observable phenomenon that occurs during teaching and learning in a primary school that adopts the 4C approach (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) 4Cs are distinct from the 4 C's approach adopted by organisations like Project Zero, as the 4C approach (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 48) adopts critical reflection in place of critical thinking to cultivate a sense of "critical agency" for students that offers them hope, purpose, and autonomy over their learning. This study traverses the experiences of three 4Cs educators within the context of a south-western Sydney primary school. This school implements the 4C approach coined by Jefferson and Anderson (2017), which focuses the organisation of the school's leadership team and the design and delivery of pedagogical experiences around four, interrelated capabilities (the 4Cs), namely: creativity, critical reflection, collaboration, and communication. Since adopting the 4Cs, the school's teaching staff is undergoing professional learning to understand the transformative education practices that inform the 4Cs and how they can be used to transform learning and leadership.

Robert and Rose are 4Cs educators who presently oversee professional learning for 4Cs primary teachers, and therefore offer a lived knowledge of how the critical reflection crucible (the crucible) is recognised and used by teachers as a pedagogic tool that can foster critically reflective learning. Sally is a stage three language teacher working within this 4Cs school, who has used the

crucible to foster critical reflection in her classroom for over two years. The selection of teacher participants for this study was purposive, as it enabled us to capture the reflective way that primary students intrinsically learn, whilst being immersed in a schooling environment where their discovery of knowledge is framed in a multidisciplinary manner (Boix-Mansilla, 2016). A hermeneutic phenomenological methodology was used in this study, since critical reflection is conceptualised as a lived phenomenon that occurs and can be experienced through dialogue and questioning in the classroom (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This approach was chosen as it aligns with the interpretive nature through which educators can derive meaning from critical reflection through their evaluation of the crucible, which is a pedagogic tool closely bound with this phenomenon (Henriksson & Friesen, 2012; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). A prevalent gap that arose in the literature highlights the dichotomy between educators’ aspirations regarding critical reflection, and what this tangibly looks like at the classroom level (Giroux, 2011; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Although few qualitative and multidisciplinary studies have endeavoured to bridge this gap, they still reveal a lack of definitional clarity regarding critical reflection and the shape it takes during learning in primary schooling contexts (Fook & Gardener, 2007; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Roche, 2011).

Research Questions

Our first research question informed this study and guided us as we came to comprehend the “essences” or underlying meanings that distinguish critical reflection, when analysing participants’ first-hand experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 252). This first question is framed by a hermeneutic phenomenological view of experience as something that can be consciously discerned by an individual (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Furthermore, the second research question enabled us to affiliate questioning as a dimension of this phenomenon, with how critical reflection is experienced by these educators in their respective classrooms.

1. How do educators recognise and experience the phenomenon of critical reflection in a primary classroom?

2. How can teacher questioning engender the phenomenon of critical reflection in a primary classroom?

Review of the Literature

Finding a place for Critical Reflection and Questioning in Education

Since the late 20th-century, educators and academics alike have problematised the way education continues to authorise the practice of “unquestioned truths” (Apple, 2004, p. 12) in schools, rather than cultivating a culture of critical reflection that stimulates students to critically question their assumptions (Giroux, 2011; Fook et al., 2016; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Today’s learners are propelled into a 21st-century society that is enveloped by a zeitgeist of uncertainty and confusion, where political instability, rapid global change, and chaotic behaviour has become normalised and there is little discernment of a sustainable future (Sardar, 2010). To begin to conceptualise *how* and *why* our society is functioning in this manner, educators must develop a common language for learners to cogitate these issues. This can be achieved through a critical pedagogy which applies both teacher and student questioning as a method to engender critical reflection (Giroux, 2011). A way that educators can begin to implement a transformative, discursive, and agentic form of teaching is by aligning their pedagogy with Jefferson and Anderson’s (2017) 4C approach. The 4Cs situates learning through a critical pedagogy lens, where Critical Social Theory [CST], Transformative Learning Theory [TLT], and reflective pedagogies intersect to represent education as a “social structure that transforms” and dismantles the hegemonic systems of power that authorise *what* and *how* students learn (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 20). The transformative potential that critical reflection wields is acknowledged in the work of several seminal scholars including Apple (2004), Brookfield (2016), Freire (2005), Mezirow (1990; 1998), and Giroux (2011), yet its application as a dynamic, speculative, and imaginative tool through questioning methods has seldom been explored. Only a handful of qualitative studies have attempted to investigate critical reflection as a transformative and

questioning practice, yet the majority are multidisciplinary studies conducted within healthcare settings, preservice teacher education, and adult learning contexts (Fook & Gardener, 2007; Fook et al., 2016; Fook et al., 2016; White et al., 2006). Although Jefferson and Anderson (2017) affirm the importance of asking questions that can engender critical reflection, a stronger evidence base that situates this research in Australian primary schools is needed to validate such theoretical claims.

The Threat of Postnormality and the Significance of Possibility Thinking

To examine the conditions that render critical reflection necessary for 21st-century learners, we must first address the subject of postnormality and its impacts on the Australian education system. The proposal that our world has entered "postnormal times" was first postulated by Sardar (2010, p. 435). This period of postnormality is marked by transition and uncertainty, as the conventional doctrines underpinning our society have become untenable and multiple and concurrent political, economic, and financial crises have generated a global climate of fear and unpredictability (Sardar, 2010). Scholars like Cairns (2017) repudiate the absolutism of this paradigm. Cairns (2017, pp. 414–415) suggests that what we consider as "normalcy" when interpreting historical phenomena can in fact be characterised as "postnormal," thereby arguing that society never really entered "postnormal times" but perpetuated an existing *Geist* of confusion. Whilst acknowledging this argument, it seems that the societal transformation we are currently experiencing is far more rapid and unprecedented than the gradual change experienced over the last century. For example, as observed through the uncertainty and devastation generated by the COVID-19 global pandemic. What is propelling the present epoch are three distinct, yet interdependent forces known as the 3Cs, namely: chaos, contradiction, and complexity (Sardar, 2010). This research is significant as it equips primary educators with the reflective capabilities to unpack and confront this postnormal world with students by questioning *why?*

According to Greene (1995), an individual's social imagination is a dynamic and humane capability that empowers them to conceptualise new beginnings by articulating what they believe to be deficient in society. This requires perceptiveness, agency, and curiosity from the learner to want to transform their world to imagine a more fulfilling and democratic social order (Greene, 1995). However, although the literature posits this as a hopeful endeavour for renewal and social change in schools, it will be challenging for learners to adopt this creative disposition and contest traditional forms of knowledge that have been normalised by the same institution that now seeks to disrupt them (Morgan & Saxton, 2006). Although learners demonstrate a developmental predisposition to curiosity from an early age, educators must implement scaffolded modes of questioning that will guide them to contemplate these pressing issues and go further to conjecture, "really why?" (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 78; Sawyer, 2012). To inspire the curiosity required to critically reflect, educators must first adopt a paradigm of open-ended questioning that "ponders possibility" (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 96) through the verbalisation of new ideas (Fook & Askeland, 2006). This necessitates that teachers support their students to ask better questions, so that questioning practices progress "from lower-order questions such as *what* and *when* to asking the deeply emphatic question *what if?* (Grove O'Grady, 2020, p. 48). The critical reflection model developed by Fook and Gardener (2007) frames critical reflection through such questioning methods. Although this model is generally targeted towards corporations, it can be used to encourage primary students to critically consider their assumptions about knowledge by asking "why" questions. The power of asking "why" is significant to the success of transformative learning, as it encourages deep learning that provokes students to consider new perspectives and possibilities (Fook & Gardener, 2007).

Framing Definitions of Critical Reflection

As Giroux (2011, p. 41) affirms, an examination of critical reflection necessitates a "hermeneutic understanding that is historically grounded," as the interpretive dimensions of this practice are steeped in notions of knowledge, democracy, and power. This implies that educators must comprehend the way that systems of power influence what students learn, to identify how student agency can be strengthened in schools. As a productive and progressive movement, critical pedagogy takes as its theoretical foundation key assumptions derived from CST (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2007; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Leonardo, 2004). This theory frames the acquisition of knowledge

within the context of education as both enlightening and empowering, yet it defines critical reflection in quite broad terms (Leonardo, 2004).

The notion that students must be taught *how* to read their society unifies this philosophy, yet is problematic, as it only serves as a surface approach for how educators can comprehend the magnitude of critical reflection as a creative and collaborative capability (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017) and an inquisitive "way of being" (Roche, 2011, p. 340). Thus, critical reflection can be both embodied and exercised by learners across primary classrooms. An action-research study conducted by Roche (2011) validates this assertion. Roche (2011, p. 329) observed that aspects of her pedagogy were inhibiting students from becoming critically reflective learners due to a "didactic" model of instruction. Our epistemological values regarding knowledge align with Roche's (2011) here, as it appears that many schools are still dominated by what Freire (2005, pp. 91–92) theorises as a "banking-model" of education. As Freire (2005) concurs, instilling a predominately lecture-style form of instruction in schools inhibits active learning, as it considers students as objects that are spoken about but are seldom offered the opportunity to speak for themselves. Students in Roche's (2011) classroom were initially regarded as such empty vessels into which knowledge was deposited, hence the transaction of information could only ever be static and detached and remained uncontested. By adopting a questioning stance to critical reflection, Roche (2011, p. 331) challenged this notion of passive learning through the implementation of what she coined as "thinking time" discussion groups. Notably, the qualitative findings revealed how learners who were rarely afforded the chance to speak in class, began posing thoughtful questions and developed a meta-awareness concerning the construction of knowledge as a prescribed "truth" (Roche, 2011). However, when scoping the field of qualitative research conducted around critical reflection and questioning in education, it seems that Roche's (2011) study stands alone. The gap presented by the literature became an important impetus for this study, as the theoretical basis for critical reflection in primary schools cannot be legitimised unless a stronger evidence base is constructed (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

Transformative Learning and the 4Cs

Aligning their pedagogy with the principles of transformative learning offers educators a radical and thought-provoking way of nurturing a generation of learners skilled to meet the needs of our 21st-century world (Mezirow, 1997). To achieve this, learners must modify what Mezirow (1997, p. 5) terms as their "frame of reference," to re-evaluate the experiences, beliefs, and assumptions that define their lives. As Jefferson and Anderson (2017, p. 22) affirm, "transformation in the 4C approach is charged emotionally and cognitively because it involves a complete change in a person's 'frame of reference.'" Critical reflection enables such transformations to occur, so that students can begin to adopt a frame of reference that is more inclusive, self-reflective, and discriminating (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Mezirow, 1998). It is assumed that the outcome of quality learning would ideally be transformation, for example, as evidenced by the transformative process of acquiring a new language. However, the reality is that change is slow in the Australian education system, and this resistance to change becomes problematic when we consider the rapid pace at which our society is transforming both locally and abroad (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017).

Fostering Critical Reflection through the 4C Approach

The 4C approach (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017) is foundational to this research, as it foregrounds how an understanding of critical reflection rests in the learner's ability to interrogate knowledge in terms of agency and power (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). To implement this effectively, schools must understand how the 4C approach is supported by the 4C capabilities, the coherence makers, and the Learning Disposition Wheel [LDW]. The term "4Cs" organises the four capabilities that bind this approach (creativity, critical reflection, communication, and collaboration) (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Jefferson and Anderson (2017, pp. 31–32) created the coherence makers to "illuminate and harmonise the complexity of learning the 4C capabilities" and explain how each capability can be understood and taught in practice. The critical reflection crucible (the crucible) is one of these coherence makers that attempts to portray the intricacy of the critical reflection process, through the more simplistic analogy of a scientific crucible that is heated to test the purity of a substance (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 34). When applying this analogy to the process of critical reflection, the crucible acts as a blueprint that allows learners to test the veracity of their knowledge

by exposing it to questioning and dialogue, so that this knowledge is made stronger and more transparent to others. The four stages of the crucible are listed below and can be used by teachers as a pedagogic tool to foster critical reflection when adopting the 4C approach (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 98):

1. Identifying assumptions
2. Why this? Why so?
3. Contesting, elaborating, and adapting
4. Re-solving

To use the crucible effectively, educators must be well-versed in the theoretical underpinnings of this coherence maker, so that they understand its capacity to transform learning through a critical pedagogy lens. Most importantly, the crucible is reinforced by a questioning framework, where learners are first encouraged to "identify assumptions" about the information they are pondering, and progressively consider "why" to contest, interrogate, and substantiate their interpretations in order to "re-solve" these preconceived truths (Jefferson & Anderson 2017, pp. 98–99). Since the 4C capabilities are deeply interlinked, critical reflection therefore becomes a collaborative, creative and dialogic enterprise between teachers and learners in schools (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). As the implementation of the 4Cs in Australian primary schools is still in its inception stage, this research offers valuable insight into the use of the crucible as a pedagogic tool and its implications for critically reflective learning.

The Role of the Learning Disposition Wheel [LDW] in the 4C Approach

The LDW was conceived by Jefferson and Anderson (2017, p. 38) as a type of diagnostic tool used to better grasp and aid how the 4C capabilities are taught when using the 4C approach in schools. Any school that adopts the 4C approach must become familiar with the LDW both on a personal and pedagogical level, so that they foster a common meta-language to talk about each competency and how it can be imagined during teaching and learning. Conceptually, the LDW draws upon the principals of Self-Determination Theory [SDT] proposed by Ryan and Deci (2000) to foster agentic and self-regulated learners who are better equipped to face the challenges and complexities posed by our modern world. Nine interconnected competencies join to form the LDW and are categorised into three domains: the intrapersonal, the interpersonal and the cognitive (cognition). As Jefferson and Anderson (2017, p. 42) argue, these three domains "develop a disposition for deeper learning" and correspond to the domains of competence outlined in the US National Research Council's report titled *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century* (Pellegrino & Hilton, 2012). Notably, a reciprocal relationship exists between the LDW and each of the 4C capabilities. For example, the LDW helps foster critical reflection through its competencies, whilst practising critical reflection can simultaneously allow students to develop and demonstrate competencies on the LDW including "empathy," "grit," "curiosity," and "build new ideas" (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, pp. 39–40).

The Significance of Researching Critical Reflection as a Phenomenon

Critical reflection offers teachers interpretive versatility in the way they posit knowledge as something that can be critically questioned by learners. This premise poses significance for both the scholar and the educational practitioner in two decisive ways. Firstly, critical reflection ceases to exist as a conceptual entity framed in theoretical terms as expressed in the prevailing scholarship, but instead is understood as a lived experience that emerges in the classroom. Across phenomenological research, an experience is outlined as an event or 'happening' that can be witnessed through observation or understood through the stories that participants tell about their lives (Kafle, 2011, p. 188). Critical reflection is interpreted as a "human experience" in this research, as it can arise through an individual's speech, questions, or actions (Kafle, 2011, p. 191). As opposed to other phenomena, critical reflection can be described as both an intentional and unintentional experience*,* since it can be intentionally cultivated in classrooms by using the crucible or can sporadically occur through the discussions or questions that people pose (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Unlike traditional phenomenological studies, this research is equally concerned with the first-hand descriptions of the phenomenon and

values how the participant interprets the phenomenon during the interview process (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Methodology: Overview and Limitations

An important distinction was made to concentrate on the disciplinary field of phenomenology, and in particular the hermeneutic branch of this school of thought in this study (Smith, 2003). This decision ensured that the research was rooted in knowledge about phenomena as they are experienced by individuals, which was then applied to examine the participants' experiences of critical reflection. Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to understand an individual's "subjective experience" in relation to phenomena, by heightening the role of interpretation in unveiling this experience (Kafle, 2011, p. 186). Framing the research questions through a hermeneutic approach recognised the meaning that could be sourced from both the participants' and the researchers' interpretations of critical reflection (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Hermeneutic phenomenology has received considerable criticism from supporters of Husserlian phenomenology for the limitations of its interpretive method, which rejects the process of reduction by which the researcher "brackets" their own predilections, to prevent unconscious bias from distorting the validity of the data (Kafle, 2011, p. 182; Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 102). Whilst upholding the fidelity of a hermeneutic approach, our participants' experiences of critical reflection remained at the forefront of the study and took precedence over our own experiences during the data analysis process (Finlay, 2012).

A collective case study design was adopted to critically examine the experiences of the three teacher participants (Stake, 1995). This research took place in a government primary school located in the south-western suburbs of Sydney, Australia. The school has an ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Education Advantage) value of 1,087, signifying that a moderate number of students reveal a level of socio-educational advantage. At least 97% of students from this school also come from a language background other than English (LBOTE). Our 4Cs educators, Robert and Rose, have overseen professional learning at this primary school in the recent years and have worked with Sally, who has adopted a leadership role alongside her teaching load to lead 4Cs transformation in this school. The choice of this setting allowed for a deeper examination of the phenomenon through the participants' diverse experiences of critical reflection, in a manner that also limited the possibility of receiving a surplus of qualitative data that could lead to the superficial reporting of the results (Yin, 2003). The names of the teacher participants included in this study have been de-identified and replaced with pseudonyms to ensure their confidentiality.

Data Collection Methods

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 4Cs teacher participants were the primary means of qualitative data used to answer the research questions. Each interview ranged from 30 to 45 minutes in length and was conducted at a pre-arranged location off-site. The interviews were informed by a selection of guiding questions that directed the conversation yet remained flexible enough to permit each participant to define this phenomenon and vocalise diverging insights about their experiences of fostering critical reflection (Yin, 2003). Each interview began with the question, "could you tell me about your experiences with teaching critical reflection in the classroom?" Encouraging participants to relate to their own pedagogical experiences to begin the interview generated rich discussion about their teaching strategies and helped prime their responses to the resulting questions. Participants were also asked how they would define the term critical reflection, what would demonstrate to them that a student was critically reflecting during learning, and to describe their experiences of using the crucible as a teaching tool. To explore the connection between critical reflection and questioning, participants were asked to consider if posing questions can encourage students to reflect more critically about knowledge, and if so, the types of questions that would help foster this. Two interviews were conducted using audio-recordings and transcribed as written data, whilst the third was initially transcribed through notetaking.

Data Analysis Methods

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) endeavours to closely understand how a phenomenon is perceived from the participant's perspective (Smith et al., 2009). An important

limitation is illuminated by Smith and colleagues (2009, p. 33), as they confirm that "experience is never accessible" as it is only witnessed after the event. Therefore, this research can only ever be "experience-close," as the 'root' of critical reflection can never completely be unearthed (Smith et al., 2009, p. 33). This analytical method is entrenched in a hermeneutic approach, which applies an ideographic strategy to richly detail the nuance of an individual's experience as they encounter the phenomenon, thereby entering what Smith and Osborn (2003, p. 53) term as a "double-hermeneutic."

Once the interviews were transcribed into written data, analysis was undertaken case by case, to read and revise each transcript meticulously and annotate recurrent themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Themes in each transcript were then collated under apparent "theme titles," and corresponding themes were grouped into clusters (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 74). Each cluster was assigned at least one identifier (an example) from the transcript to support analysis. For example, in interview one the cluster titled "Multimodality" included the themes, "it's maker-focused," "it's an active process," and "critical reflection is not form bound." The clusters apparent in each transcript were then tabulated and transferred into a "master table of themes" that were visible across all three semi-structured interviews (Smith & Osborn, 2003, pp. 66–76). Thirteen theme categories were included in this master table and are presented in order of recurrence below:

1. The LDW
2. What is critical reflection?
3. The critical reflection crucible
4. The importance of questioning
5. The assumption landscape
6. Agency in schools
7. Social and emotional learning
8. The social imagination
9. Deep learning
10. Explicit processes
11. Engaging with power
12. Re-solve to create action
13. And Multimodality

Results

Four predominant themes and associated findings emerged from this study, namely: defining critical reflection, the importance of questioning, the LDW, and social and emotional learning. These themes were evident across the experiences of all three teacher participants, as described in their semi-structured interviews. The interview data reveals a strong correlation between questioning and the process of critical reflection as enacted and experienced by 4Cs educators through the crucible. The inclination to question-pose can be seen as both natural and necessary if a learner is to identify and challenge their assumptions during the critical reflection process. However, asking the right questions that encourage introspection and elicit empathy is vital. Although critical reflection is still an inherently complex phenomenon, its critical nature is strongly linked to students' ability to derive agency from their understanding of power. Furthermore, critical reflection cannot be genuinely nurtured in the classroom unless all students possess the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and cognitive competencies that enable the crucible to operate within a 4C approach. The subsequent discussion will evaluate these findings further and consider each theme in light of the research questions that have guided this study.

Discussion

What is Critical Reflection?

The notion that students should be trusted to "bring the learning" (Sally) into the classroom encompasses a crucial dimension of how educators define critical reflection. Since Sally has been engaged in the practical side of teaching critical reflection to her students, her definition was more pragmatically informed by the question, "what do I bring to the learning?" This question resonates

closely with what Robert termed as the "assumption landscape," where learners begin to identify their assumptions about knowledge within the first stage of the crucible (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Similarly, Rose drew upon the second phase of the crucible to suggest how critical reflection involves "challenging assumptions." Participants recognised and experienced critical reflection as a "making process," where learners forge their own understandings by unpacking the perspectives and uncontested beliefs that they bring to school. As Robert and Rose expressed, both "agency and action" should result from critical reflection.

However, agency is also afforded to students throughout their engagement with the crucible, in the way they perceive their role in directing and "bringing" the learning to fruition. When assessing what makes critical reflection truly "critical," the term "assumptions" is a recurring motif that explicitly links this phenomenon with the concept of power (Fook & Askeland, 2006; Fook et al., 2016). As contended by Foucault (1980, p. 93), the dissemination of power in a society depends upon the production of "discourses of truth." The manufacture of such "truths" directly influences our students' assumptions, and questioning those assumptions generally unsettles learners as they find it challenging to believe that other possibilities may exist (Foucault, 1980). When speaking about the crucible's potential to challenge assumptions, Robert considered the link between assumptions and power, since the assumptions we form as adolescents generally dictate our actions as adults. Since Robert is well-versed in the theoretical underpinnings of the crucible as a facilitator of 4Cs professional learning, he termed critical reflection as "the way you recognise power and navigate systems." In Sally's stage three language class, recognising the influence of the media (as a system of power) on students' assumptions concerning Mexican people was pivotal to re-solving their understanding of Mexico as inherently multicultural. Therefore, critical reflection can be defined as a process of understanding the complexities of power and the way it influences our students' beliefs, assumptions and actions.

Another way that educators can identify and experience critical reflection is by exploring its intrinsic multimodality. When reflecting upon the form critical reflection takes in the classroom, Robert noticed how "it's not form bound, but what I would say is that critical reflection often works best when it is spoken, because it means you're in dialogue with somebody else."

Robert affirms the usefulness of a dialogic approach to critical reflection here, to demonstrate how educators can facilitate oral modes of reflection through spoken class or group discussions about a topic. Contrastingly, Rose described the importance of affording learners various opportunities for embodied reflection as a method of communicating their assumptions "giving people opportunities to physicalise their reflections…to explain things that they haven't necessarily developed a capacity in the language of reflection yet."

By offering students different ways to explore their assumptions, Rose captured how her use of the crucible facilitated a form of critically reflective learning that is simply not attainable through traditional instructional approaches (Greene, 1995; Robinson, 2001). Sally, in turn, presented a more holistic view of what critical reflection could look like during learning; "it's a bit of everything…you cannot do it just through writing…artistic elements are also reflected in it…students can represent it through an image or a painting."

Sally continued to explain how she used images as forms of provocations to enable students to generate emotional responses towards the content. Sally achieved this through a "gallery walk," an activity derived from drama pedagogy where students observed various images of people along the Mexico-United States barrier, yet were not given the context for these images. By initially concealing this information, Sally cultivated her students' empathy towards these problematic scenes in an attempt to make their assumptions apparent once this information was revealed. Therefore, educators in this research experienced the power of critical reflection as an accessible and multimodal capacity that can be used to re-solve misconceptions held by their students.

The Importance of Questioning

The interview data reveals a strong relationship between teacher questioning and students' ability to critically reflect within each stage of the crucible. When asked to relate her experiences of teaching critical reflection, Sally made explicit reference to questioning, despite not being asked to comment on the role of questioning in the interview. This was evidenced by her recurrent use of phrases such as, "I asked" and "answering questions like…" This finding was curious, as it reflected

how teachers cannot escape using questions to instruct the teaching and learning of critical reflection in 4Cs schools. Sally consistently mentioned how she posed diverse questions, such as "could it be multicultural in Mexico?", so that her students could demystify their assumptions about Mexican people and begin to question-pose themselves. Furthermore, Sally quoted examples of the types of enquiring questions she communicated to her students, such as, "what do you know about Donald Trump?" What is crucial about these questions is their open-ended nature and specificity to the crucible. When asked about the importance of questions when teaching the crucible, Robert strongly concurred that "questions are critical at every component." Thus, questioning must be recognised as the impetus that drives critical reflection, by acting on the assumptions that students bring to their learning. As Fook and Gardener (2007, p. 85) assert, questions are not only used to "aid reflection" but to simultaneously "unearth [and challenge] assumptions." Yet, the key to fostering deep and meaningful reflection noticeably stems from asking 'why' questions (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017; Fook & Gardener, 2007).

When challenging assumptions in the crucible, educators must keep asking "why" to push beyond a surface response to their questions. As Sally asserted in her interview*,* "the more *why's* and the more *why so's,* the better!" When interpreted through a critical pedagogy lens, Freire's (2005) standpoint on the importance of problem-posing education is relevant for educators here. It is only by posing "why" questions that individuals are empowered to break free from the systems of power that seek to oppress them, as "no oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question *why*?" (Freire 2005, p. 86). As educators, we have unconsciously created a culture of "yes and no questions," where pre-determining the answer has become so engrained in our praxis that our students anticipate this and frequently disengage when asked provocative and probing questions (Lindfors, 1987, p. 419). This reality is something which Sally poignantly observed, as she discerned how some students don't answer "why" questions because "they think you (the teacher) can fill in the rest of the information." Not only does this prevent learners from engaging in deep learning, but it increases their disinclination to pose challenging questions themselves (Chin & Osbourne, 2008). Questioning is intrinsic to the process of critical reflection, regardless of whether it is experienced by educators through Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) crucible. Nevertheless, as Robert urged, educators must develop the skills to "question better" and "question deeper" if this is to successfully transform how students learn.

The Learning Disposition Wheel [LDW]

All three participants acknowledged the importance of the LDW as the foundational knowledge for understanding the function and power of the crucible (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Robert and Rose distinguished the LDW as a useful tool for framing assumptions during critically reflective learning. The complexity of the LDW was underscored more prominently by Robert, having spent more time overseeing professional learning for 4Cs teachers around the cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal competencies that it develops (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Robert recalled how it takes schools "at least two years to get their head around the LDW." Although I initially expressed consternation at this statistic, Robert later revealed that once schools begin to grasp the complexity of the LDW, they are better able to understand the context in which these coherence makers function. Crucially, Robert identified the connection between the LDW and its capacity to facilitate schools to "engage with" and "speak to power." By nurturing an inquisitive disposition that supports learners to ask "why" and "how," the LDW prepares teachers and students to engage in a process of critical reflection that questions the regulation of power throughout their world. Rose similarly validated the LDW's expediency as a "useful tool," through its capacity to "frame assumptions" against its "structure and schema." When reflecting on the most notable examples of action generated by teacher engagement with the crucible, Rose noted how one educator based their assumptions regarding a student's proficiency on their supposed "laziness," without considering whether this capability could be measured and enacted against the competencies that form the LDW. Thus, the LDW facilitates the critical reflection process, as it contains the "cognitive, intra and interpersonal competencies" required to promote self-regulation in learners (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 39).

There is a distinct correlation between the competencies nurtured by the LDW and the forms of "action" that teachers reported were created through the process of re-solving in the crucible. Educators recognise the phenomenon of critical reflection through the behaviours observed within the

LDW. As Robert discerned, the re-solving component of the crucible is a process of "bringing to bear" all the new knowledge that has been gained, to "generate meaningful action" from the learning. Significantly, when asked if she could recall tangible action that resulted from the process of re-solving, Sally revealed how her stage three class developed in three noteworthy ways: students gained new knowledge, student questioning expanded the project, and learners nurtured their curiosity and empathetic development. Although these actions are not as concrete as initially intended by Jefferson and Anderson (2017), they do represent moments of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997). These transformations all connect to associated competencies on the LDW, including "empathy," "curiosity," and "build new ideas" (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017, p. 39). Sally noticed how the mini unit on the construction of walls that separate communities "was not a part of [her] intended plan for the unit," as it was spurred by a question from one of her students. Sally's noticing here exemplifies how her student exercised their curiosity to "expand the project" into something that was markedly "bigger" and "better" than she had first imagined through their understanding of the LDW. Sally's reaction affirms the importance of stepping into this learning process with the expectation that through critical reflection, increased "awareness will lead to change" (Gardener et al., 2006, p. 231). In this case, change was experienced on a personal level through increased student agency and the realisation that their questions can have meaningful impacts on their learning.

Social and Emotional Learning

It is clear from the data that expressing empathy is indispensable to an individual's capacity to critically reflect (Boler, 1999). In her recent publication, Grove O'Grady (2020, p. 14) discusses "how empathy can be distilled into a tangential and teachable pedagogy and thus a habituated practice." This conceptualises empathy as a productive, "deeply cognitive and deliberative act" that is closely tied to how we recognise another's individuality and lived experience (Grove O'Grady, 2020, p. 45). In this research, Sally notably accentuated the value and challenge of nurturing her students' "empathetic development" whilst using the crucible. Sally was noticeably moved by the "profound empathetic response" that the mini unit had on both herself and her students, confessing that it left many students "in tears." Sally's response identifies the display of observable emotion as a step toward empathetic development, as this emotional response illustrates how students developed an understanding of the psychological hardship endured by these communities. In one instance, Sally instructed her students to respond to Donald Trump's comments about the construction of the US-Mexico border wall. Sally distinguished how it was important for students to push beyond the conventional "that's sad" response and realise that even though these quotes upset them, they could not simply "let it be." Encouraging students to critically consider their emotions is vital, as learners could decide whether this issue affected them personally and question *why* it was meaningful (Grove O'Grady, 2020). Yet, by taking this a step further and utilising emotion as a productive tool to prompt action in her students, Sally created an environment where critically reflective learning could occur. Crucially, the connection that empathy shares with critical reflection runs far deeper than this. If students are to understand the how systems of power sway their assumptions, they must first recognise power as a tool for dehumanisation (Freire, 2005). The process of understanding the way communities are dehumanised by powerful people or institutions requires empathy and lies at the heart of what it means to critically reflect. To do this, students must cultivate empathy as a disposition that enables them to adopt the perspective of both "the oppressed" and "the oppressor," to question how power is exercised in ways that are potentially harmful or undemocratic (Freire, 2005, pp. 44–47).

Demonstrating empathy during critical reflection simultaneously involves social learning, so that students can "talk out" these perspectives and emotions with their peers in a respectful manner. Sally's experience was unique here, as she noted how as a class their "social and emotional learning intermeshed" to the point where she required two crucibles to illustrate how she underwent this learning journey alongside her students. The power of such transformative learning cannot be mistaken here, as Sally transitioned from "teacher" to "teacher-learner" through her deep engagement with the crucible. This pivotally illustrates how schooling is enriched when students are given the agency to direct their learning and educators are flexible and open to such opportunities. What Sally has demonstrated from her experience is a greater understanding and commitment to a culturally responsive pedagogy, which places students' empathetic development at the forefront of teaching and

learning (Warren, 2014). However, Sally encountered challenges during this process. Sally remarked how some students "did not like to be questioned or challenged." She believed that learners were "holding onto their feelings" and were not psychologically willing to "open up" about their assumptions. Although engaging with these students was testing, Sally attempted to cultivate a safe and courteous classroom environment that encouraged learners to be open and honest with their feelings. A major implication for 4Cs educators here is the ability to exhibit a willingness to experiment and embrace the challenges that come from teaching critical reflection. Without her own passion and perseverance, Sally believed that her students would have simply "cooked some Mexican dishes and danced." Instead, students developed a form of social intelligence by fostering critical empathy towards the content.

Conclusions

Critical Reflection starts with the Learner

Assumptions are foundational to critically reflective learning as they stimulate deep and meaningful conversations about knowledge (Fook & Gardener, 2007; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). By unpacking and demystifying these assumptions, primary educators can better unearth the hidden systems of power that influence what learners know, thereby facilitating students to cultivate a greater awareness about and agency to change their world (Gardener et al., 2006). For educators like Sally, critical reflection could not be separated from the notion of assumptions, as it begins by asking, "what do I bring to the learning?" In the future, 4Cs research must expand to employ classroom observation as a viable data collection method, to concurrently allow the researcher to closely connect with this phenomenon and see its occurrence in the classroom (Van Manen, 2016).

Questioning is the Impulse that drives Critical Reflection

This research has illustrated that posing the right questions and progressively asking "why" provokes learners to act upon the assumptions that they bring to the classroom (Freire, 2005). If education is to become truly transformative, the questions posed during the primary stages of learning must foster curiosity, open-mindedness, and possibility thinking (Greene, 1995; Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). As Rose urged, educators need to ask questions "that elicit deeper thinking in others, but also don't make presumptions [about] what's in other people's heads." For future 4Cs research, the task will be to investigate the questioning nature of Jefferson and Anderson's (2017) crucible, so that the types of questions used during this process are accessible to all educators. Furthermore, a greater focus on student questioning will better inform future research when assessing how primary students become agentic learners.

Cultivating the Competencies in the LDW is necessary for Critical Reflection

The LDW lies at the crux of all 4Cs learning. To ensure that critical reflection leads to transformative learning and is taught explicitly and meaningfully, learners must be given the time and space to foster these competencies (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). This finding is especially significant for primary educators, as it is through the LDW that young learners will develop the confidence to share their assumptions openly and honestly, whilst respectfully unpacking the perspectives offered by their peers. Prospective 4Cs research should concentrate on the transformative potential of the LDW when used to develop critical reflection and what this tangibly looks like at a classroom and whole-school level. Professional learning that affords teaching staff the opportunity to deeply unpack and apply each of the nine competencies to their own classes and student cohorts should be undertaken on a regular basis. This should be an ongoing and iterative process that is directly linked to each school's strategic plan, so a common language is developed around the LDW and 4Cs approach amongst the teaching staff and leadership team.

Nurturing Empathy creates a Critically Reflective Learning Environment

Social and emotional learning forms part of how students critically reflect (Jefferson & Anderson, 2017). Since critical reflection is a collaborative and dialogic capability, students must be encouraged to work together to articulate their beliefs and questions about knowledge (Freire, 2005). By fostering an empathetic awareness towards curriculum content, students will build their emotional

learning to see the world through different perspectives and critically consider how complex problems implicate different communities (Grove O'Grady, 2020). Educators can facilitate this by asking empathic questions such as, "what other perspectives are there?" and "what if?" (Grove O'Grady, 2020, p. 48). Future 4Cs research should strive to investigate the relationship between empathy and critical reflection and examine how primary educators and students can ask more empathic questions during their engagement with the crucible.

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Becoming an Autonomous Learner: Building the Skills of Self-Directed Learning

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Abstract

The COVD-19 pandemic caused a shift in education at all levels. As school moved to online and virtual environments, educators across the globe had to assess and cultivate a sense of autonomy in learners that worked from home. Schools are beginning to re-open for in-person learning, but the conversations about learner agency and autonomy are here to stay. This article uses a meta-analysis of research literature in the field of self-directed learning. Attention is paid to the characteristics of a self-directed learner as articulated by Guglielmino's (1978) Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) and the Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) created by Confessore and Confessore (1994), Meyer (2001), Carr (1999), Derrick (2001), and Ponton (1999). The goal of this article is to advance the argument that self-directed learning (SDL) is a transformative learning pathway open to all and that the skills of SDL are learnable and can be developed over time. This article is a survey in research over the past few decades, particularly of research around creating instrumentation to assess a learner's self-directedness. A deeper understanding of the characteristics of SDL will equip educators to better navigate the changing landscape of education—from other-directed school experiences to self-directed (potentially virtual and asynchronous) learning.

Keywords: self-directed learning, autonomous learning, self-efficacy, initiative, motivation, persistence

Becoming an Autonomous Learner: Building the Skills of Self-Directed Learning

In 2018, I co-founded a self-directed learning environment in Georgia. The school, a prek–12 micro-school of about 135 learners, does not focus on *teaching*, but rather on equipping each learner with the skills to learn for themselves. Whenever I tell someone about the school, the usual replies range between *"Wow, what an innovative way to do education!"* and *"But does that really work?"* These replies and the underlying assumptions that led to them—that the traditional, teacher-directed approach is obviously the way to do education—served as a sort of catalyst for this research project. Unspoken in these assumptions is that alternative learning approaches may work for some learners—those who are already well-behaved, self-regulated, responsible students—but this pedagogy is not for everyone. Most students, these assumptions hold, need to be told what to do and how to do it.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given further credence to these assumptions. Some learners were able to successfully transition to remote learning environments while others struggled. Why was there such disparity in learner success in remote environments? There are many answers. The move to remote learning highlighted many of the inequities that exist in the education system. Not all learners and school districts had the technological infrastructure to successfully implement virtual learning, so the pandemic disproportionately affected rural districts, indigenous learners, and communities of color. In this way, the pandemic has prompted conversation into how to create more equitable learning environments. Beneath this conversation, though, lay the wider assumptions of learning already mentioned: some learners are self-directed learners, others are not. The purpose of this article is to critically examine these assumptions.

The claim made in this article is that self-directed learning is a transformational learning pathway open to all learners. That is not to say that all learners *will* become self-directed learners, but rather all learners possess the capacity to build the skills of self-directedness. To argue this claim, this article will survey research literature from the last few decades in the field of self-directed learning (SDL) that has sought to explore the characteristics and skills required to be a self-directed learner. This article is a meta-analysis of the literature seeking to answer the following questions: What are the characteristics of SDL? How have these characteristics been defined and assessed? Are these characteristics fixed traits, or can they be learned over time? To answer those questions, specific attention is paid to researchers who sought to develop quantitative instrumentation around the skills of SDL.

Defining SDL

Multiple terms have been used to describe this education theory, like *child-centered*, *learner-led*, *inquiry-based* and *alternative/progressive education*. There have also been movements—*free schools, unschooling*, *deschooling*, *democratic schooling*—and models, like Montessori and Waldorf, that claim some semblance of this stance as education for the individual and for society. Van der Walt (2019) pointed to the confusion around the definition of *self-directed learning*. This confusion around the ambiguity of SDL was mentioned early by Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), who recommended instead the phrase *self-direction in learning.* For the purpose of this study, the term *self-directed learning* will be employed as an umbrella term tangentially connected to these broad (and sometimes conflicting) theories and models. The rationale is to use consistent terminology throughout the article, focus on the role of the learner in the education experience as self-directed rather than other-directed, and connect to current research in the field of self-directed education.

The most recognized definition of *self-directed learning* (SDL) comes from adult education theorist Malcolm Knowles (1975) who defined it as:

> a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (p. 18)

This is the definition that will be utilized for this article, though further clarifications are needed. Learning according to Knowles is seen as a "process." It is an unfolding action of experience and reflection. It is not tied to a course block or an activity dictated by a lesson plan. Also, what differentiates SDL from other pedagogical approaches is the positioning of the learner as the *agentic center* of this process. The learner takes the initiative in their own learning. That is not to say that there cannot exist prompts or provocations from *without*—from the teacher, environment, or situation—that draw the learner forward, but the decision to move into the experience, to *initiate the process*, rests solely with the individual. The learning cannot be forced. Also notice the inclusion of "with or without the help of others" in the definition. To Knowles, SDL can be solely an individual effort, or it can incorporate the guidance of a mentor or the help of partners. One could teach themselves the art of woodworking, or they could apprentice with a master. It is the opinion of this author, though, that education always exists within relationships.[1] This is in line with other SDL theorists (Candy, 1991; Peters & Gray, 2005). Knowles's definition also speaks of the individual's responsibility in identifying appropriate resources, implementing strategies, and participating in the evaluation of their work. All of this exists on a spectrum—some SDL environments may give learners complete control on every step of this process, others may have more structure (a type of *freedom within limits*). For the purpose of this article, SDL is viewed as a process where the initiative and some level of responsibility rests with the learner.

[1] To use the woodworker example: even if a person were to learn this craft *on their own*, they would be dependent on the knowledge, tools, and processes developed by other people over the course of centuries and passed on to the current learner in some form.

Ready to Learn: Cultivating the Skills of SDL

Long and Agyekum (1983) argued that "there are some rather clearly identifiable behaviors and abilities associated with self-direction in learning. They include intelligence, independence, confidence, persistence, initiative, creativity, ability to critically evaluate one's self, patience, desire to learn and task orientation" (p. 78). They go on to identify self-directed learning as possessing "tolerance of ambiguity, ability to discover new approaches, prior success with independent learning, preference for working alone, knowledge of variety of resources, ability to plan, [and the] ability to carry out a plan" (p. 78).

Over the past decades, researchers have sought to identify and assess for such SDL skills. It should be noted here that this strand of SDL research derives from positivist traditions that seek through quasi-experimental research design to view learning as a science that can be parsed into distinct, defined variables. That conflicts with the philosophical viewpoints of this researcher, who sees such attempts at reductionism as potentially problematic. However, this research tradition has provided valuable insights into the innerworkings of SDL and helps advance the basic argument of this article that the skills of SDL are not fixed personality traits, but rather learnable. Also, this era of SDL research was influential in moving SDL from a niche education philosophy to a respected subunit of education research. This is due in large part to the influence that quantitative, positivistic research has in the field of education research. Perhaps the most impactful development from this strand of research came from Guglielmino (1978), who developed the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale (SDLRS) to provide quantitative measurement to these rather abstract ideas of motivation, initiative, and persistence. Her work led her to identify the following characteristics of self-directed learners:

> A highly self-directed learner, based on the survey results, is one who exhibits initiatives, independence, and persistence in learning; one who accepts responsibility for his or her own learning and views problems as challenges, not obstacles; one who is capable of self-discipline and has a high degree of curiosity; one who has a strong desire to learn or change and is self-confident; one who is able to use basic study skills, organize his or her time and set a pace for learning, and to develop a plan for completing work; one who enjoys learning and has a tendency to be goal oriented. (p 73)

The SDLRS is an instrument that gauges these characteristics in an individual and postulates whether they are "ready" to take on their own learning. The question, then, is whether these characteristics are fixed traits that an individual either does or does not possess, or whether, instead, these traits are malleable, able to be cultivated in any learner. This led to the creation of even more quantitative instruments.

Confessore and Confessore (1994), along with Confessore and Park (2004), Meyer (2001), Carr (1999), Ponton (1999), and Derrick (2001), developed a battery of instruments used to build a Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP).[2] The researchers identified four key constructs in building the LAP: 1.) a desire to learn, 2.) learner resourcefulness, 3.) learner initiative, and 4.) learner persistence. Each of these constructs is made up of three to seven components. A discussion of these constructs and components informs the discussion on the skills of SDL and whether or not these skills are fixed. Each of these constructs are analyzed in turn. It should be noted that the argument in this article is not that concepts like someone's *desire to learn* or *learner resourcefulness* can truly be measured. Rather, the aim is to address how these concepts have been discussed in the research literature and to further the claim that SDL is a transformative learning pathway open to anyone, not just those who exhibit certain prerequisites.

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[2] This is a quantitative instrument, but the following discussion will purposefully omit specifics of numerical measurements. The goal in this section is to look at how SDL skills are theorized, categorized, and defined. For greater understanding of the instrumentation, read the work of Confessore and Park (2004), Meyer (2001), Derrick (2001), Ponton (1999), and Carr (1999).

Desire to Learn

How does one develop a desire to learn? Jean Jacques Rousseau (2018) argued that “present interest is the motive power, the only motive power that takes us far and safely” (p. 81). For Rousseau, motivation had to be intrinsic, stemming from some deep interest, some desire to learn. Researchers have sought to drill down further on this desire. An advisee of Confessore’s, Meyer (2001) broke down an individual’s desire to learn into the following components:

1. *Circumstances*: Our perceptions of who we are and our place in this world. These are beliefs an individual inherits from family, environment, and life experiences.
2. *Expression*: A person’s ability to make themselves known and articulate their own thoughts, goals, and needs.
3. *Group Identity*: One’s place within a group (family unit, work group, or society at large). A person’s belief that they have skills and talents that are productive to the group as whole impact their desire to learn.
4. *Growth and Balance*: Similar to Aristotle’s *eudemonia,* this is the ability to make wise, informed decisions based on the options available. This trait is developed through trial and adversity.
5. *Love Issues*: One’s ability to experience peace, serenity, and power simultaneously.
6. *Communication Skills*: The ability to create spaces of open communication, places where one can be one’s self while also welcoming others to give and share.
7. *Change Skills:* One’s ability to adapt to new problems that arise.

This is a rather interesting take on the concept of *desire to learn*. Meyer’s (2001) components are more accurately seen as background, experience, or context—the things that individuals gain from their environments and familial interactions that shape their own concepts of freedom, power, and change. Park and Confessore (2002) argued that Meyer’s formulation of *desire to learn* should rather be seen as “precursors to the development of intentions related to learning” (p. 289). This conceptualization builds on Bandura’s (1977, 1997) concept of self-efficacy, where motivation is derived from an individual’s belief and confidence in their own abilities.

Bandura (1977) argued that there were four main sources of influence that affected an individual’s sense of self-efficacy. The first is past experience, or what Bandura terms *mastery experiences*. Past failures and/or successes are, in Bandura’s view, the most influential sources of whether an individual feels confident in their ability to accomplish a similar task in the future. The second source of influence is *vicarious experiences*—examples set by friends, peers, siblings, and others. People can build (or lose) confidence in themselves by witnessing the successes (or failures) of others. The third area of influence is *social persuasion.* The encouragement or discouragement that comes from parents, teachers, or peers impacts a person’s sense of self-efficacy. The final influencing factor identified by Bandura was a person’s *emotional state*. An individual’s mood, as well as propensity for depression or anxiety, greatly influences their sense of self-efficacy.

Bandura’s concept of self-efficacy led to his development of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which grew out of his earlier work in Social Learning Theory (SLT). With SCT, Bandura (1985) posited a “triadic reciprocal determinism” in regard to human behavior (p. 1). Human activity is influenced by the triadic interplay of environment, cognition, and behavior. What people believe about themselves and their abilities (cognition) is shaped by their social context, experiences, and relationships (environment). This impacts their choices and actions (behavior), which in turn shape their beliefs about themselves and their abilities, which in turn influences their environment and social relationships.

For Bandura, it is possible to change one’s sense of self-efficacy by intervening in the triadic interplay of environment, behavior, and cognition. If someone is lacking in self-confidence toward a task, an environmental change (social pressures in the form of encouragement and/or vicarious experiences in the form of observing others succeed at the task) may influence behavior (one’s choices and actions) which would then change one’s view of self and ability (cognition). Bandura’s SCT was further

developed by Lent et al. (1994) into Social Career Cognitive Theory (SCCT) in an effort to understand why people have the interests that they do and make the career choices they make.

SCCT posited that there are five determinants to a person's interest, goals, and actions. There are *person inputs*, these are the things one is born into the world with that they neither choose nor control. (i.e. race, gender, ableness). Then there are *background environmental influences*, the socio-cultural contexts of one's own situatedness (i.e. family contexts, economic status, culture). An individual has little to no control of their *person inputs* and *background environmental influences.* Then there are the *learning experiences* a person encounters, both in formal and informal learning settings. These learning experiences shape one's *self-efficacy* (what a person thinks they are capable of) and their *outcome expectations* (what will happen if they fail or succeed). The interplay between *learning experiences, self-efficacy,* and *outcome expectations* influences the interests one has, the goals they set, and the actions they take. According to Lent et al. (1994), a change in a person's *learning experiences, self-efficacy,* and/or *outcome expectations* will then directly influence their interests, goals, and actions. They argue that it is possible to undergo new or different learning experiences, change one's sense of self-efficacy, and alter one's outcome expectations.

Meyer's (2001) instrument that measures one's *desire to learn* looked at precursors to motivation and intentional action. Bandura (1977, 1985, 1989, 1997) has argued that these factors, even the environmental influencers like familial interactions and social context, are not static determinants. Lent et al. (1994) have argued that it is possible for a person to change the interests they have, the goals they set, and the actions they take by altering their learning experiences, their belief in their own capabilities, and their predictions of outcomes. Self-efficacy and a person's desire to learn, therefore, can be built and shaped over time. It is not a pre-requisite that a learner enters into an SDL space already possessing motivation toward self-directedness. These skills can be developed. Research in the fields of psychology and neuroscience has also shown that a person's motivation to learn is greatly impacted by whether or not they have had key needs met, like feelings of safety, continuity, competence, and meaning (Deci & Flaste, 1996; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hammond, 2014; Raab, 2017). In order for a learner, then, to find motivation and move toward action, care must be taken to cultivate an environment and levy resources to meet these needs and tackle chronic stressors like scarcity, identity threats, and shame (Brown, 2015; Csikszentmihalyi, 1979, 2008; Mullainathan & Shafir, 2014; Raab, 2017; Sandi et al., 2001).

Learner Resourcefulness

After desire to learn, the second category of Confessore and Park's (2004) Learner Autonomy Profile (LAP) was *learner resourcefulness.* Carr (1999) developed the following components of learner resourcefulness for instrumental measurement in creating the LAP:

1. *Learner Priority* – How likely is the learner to choose learning over another activity?
2. *Deferred Gratification* – How likely is the learner to delay gratification by choosing a learning activity against a more pleasurable activity?
3. *Resolving Conflict* – How likely is the learner to prioritize a learning activity when it conflicts with another activity?
4. *Future Orientation* – How aware is the learner of future outcomes or benefits of the learning activity?
5. *Planning* – What preparations has the learner made that will influence a successful outcome of their learning project?
6. *Evaluating Alternatives* – Has the learner identified other alternatives to their current strategy and weighed their merit?
7. *Anticipating Consequences* – How aware is the learner of the consequences of their actions and how does that influence their learning project?

This builds off of Rosenbaum's (1989) work on *learned resourcefulness,* or one's ability to develop self-control strategies. Rosenbaum identified three types of self-regulation. The first is a biological function,

maintaining homeostasis in one's mind and body through automatic and unconscious activity. The second is *redressive* self-control, referring to one's ability to return to normal functions after a disruption. The third is *reformative* self-control, which is an individual's ability to break destructive or ineffective habits and create new ones. According to Rosenbaum, a person can develop skills of redressive and reformative self-control, allowing individuals to cope with stress (by building redressive self-control) or develop healthier, more effective habits (reformative self-control). Together, building this skill set is what Rosenbaum called *learned resourcefulness*.

Ponton, Carr, and Derrick (2004) referred to *resourcefulness* as well as the other categories tested in the LAP, *initiative* and *perseverance,* as "conative factors" because "they represent intentional behaviors based upon the presence of motivation and self-efficacy" (p. 62). These researchers argue that, in developing learner autonomy one begins with a desire to learn (which they refer to as a combination of motivation and self-efficacy), then develops the skills of resourcefulness and self-regulation. From there, the next stage of growing into an autonomous learner is building the capacities that the LAP puts under the umbrella of *initiative.*

Learner Initiative

Ponton (1999) looked at how learner initiative influences SDL. He identified the following components of *leaner initiative* and developed the instrument to measure these qualities in the LAP:

1. *Goal Directedness* – The ability of a learner to set long- and short-term goals, measure growth against those goals, and revise goals as needed.
2. *Action-Orientation* – The ability of a learner to quickly implement a learning plan. Confessore and Park (2004) argued that "action- orientation is facilitated when the learner is able to perceive the presence of opportunity, time, importance, urgency, and/or means in planned learning activities" (p. 46).
3. *Overcoming Obstacles* – The ability of a learner to persist with a learning activity in the face of obstacles.
4. *Active Approach* – The ability of the learner to realize their own responsibility and agency in overcoming obstacles in their learning rather than waiting on help from other.
5. *Self-Starting* – The ability of the learner to initiative (or resume after a break) the learning activity.

Where does this initiative come from? Spear and Mocker (1981) surveyed triggering events of SDL and found that initiative is usually contextual, provided by the environment. An individual needs to learn something for some reason, and therefore they initiate the learning process. Long (1989), however, argued that there was a strong psychological link for SDL, that the initiative to learn came from within. Combining these ideas, the claim can be made that *initiative* has both internal and external qualities. A person may possess some sort of *drive*, or innate motivation to undertake a learning task. Another possibility is that the invitation comes from an external source: a problem to solve, a job skill to master, or a treasure to seek. In either case, the subskills of learner initiative are habits that can be formed through strategic practice.

Learner Persistence

Derrick (2001) analyzed the concept of *learner persistence*, or the ability to stay with a learning project from initiation to completion. She identified the following components of learner persistence:

1. *Volition* – An individual's will to learn and their ability to stay committed to learning through distraction and discouragement. Confessore and Park (2004) argued that volition "can be characterized as the mediating force between one's intention to learn and one's motivation to learn," (p. 47).

2. *Self-Regulation* – The learner's ability to orient their thoughts, feelings, and actions toward their learning goals.
3. *Goal-Maintenance* – The ability of the learner to set goals that engage and motivate them to learn and to revise goals that are ineffective in accomplishing their learning projects.

While Ponton (1999) included *goal directedness* in his instrument in building the LAP, Derrick's criterion of *goal-maintenance* is aimed at measuring an individual's ability to persevere toward accomplishing a goal.

Bringing It Together

These four categories—desire to learn, learner resourcefulness, learner initiative, and learner persistence—compose the Learner Autonomous Profile and show that the skills of SDL can be developed over time. These researchers view these SDL skills through the lens of development, meaning that each category composes skills that a learner must master before moving to the next stage. Ponton, Carr, and Derrick (2004) found that individuals who move in a linear progression in their skill development from *desire to learn* to *resourcefulness* to *initiative* then to *persistence* are more likely to be autonomous learners. Individuals who try a direct path from *desire* (which includes the subsets of motivation and self-efficacy) directly to the skills of *learner persistence* listed out above are more likely to struggle in their ability to autonomously complete their learning projects. In their work, Ponton, Carr, and Derrick identified a causal pathway that moves from desire > resourcefulness > initiative > persistence. They argued that learners need to build capacity in motivation and self-efficacy before they effectively develop their learned resourcefulness, and that the subset of skills that comprise *learner initiative* serve as a mediating factor for a learner to develop the skills and habits identified in *learner persistence*.

Ponton and Carr (1999) draw a distinction between a *learner's self-directedness* and *self-directed learning*. Self-directedness refers to a learner's thoughts, feelings, and affectations toward learning, which manifest themselves as motivation toward learning and self-efficacy beliefs (see *desire to learn* discussion above). This self-directedness must be cultivated before the subsequent skills of self-directed learning (see *learner resourcefulness, learner initiative,* and *learner persistence* discussions above) can mature.

Conclusion

Instruments like the LAP and SDLRS provide insights into the skills that comprise SDL and clearly show pathways that learners can take to grow in their self-directedness. Educators can use this research to help design experiences that empower learners to cultivate the skills of SDL over time, which is to say that becoming self-directed is a process of transformative learning. The journey to self-directedness is challenging and requires a lot of *unlearning*. Many people have spent large portions of their lives being conditioned to be other-directed learners. Taking the reins of one's own learning can be fear-inducing. Many learners (and many facilitators of learning) may question whether or not SDL is for them. The research surveyed in this article argues that the skills of SDL are *learnable*. Each of us has the potentiality to be a self-directed learner. It just takes the right combination of learner choice, environmental supports, time, and patience.

That being the case, there are still critiques of this quantitative research that must be considered. The first is to question whether or not SDL can actually be divided into such discrete skills as those outlined in this article. This overly scientific approach seeks to remove the messiness that is inherent in SDL, which is problematic. The *messiness*—the intersection between a learner's own learning journey, that of their peers, and the learning environment itself—is actually the place where true self-direction happens. To consider this process a *ladder of skills* to climb is to oversimplify a complicated process. The next major critique lies in the demographic breakdown of participants in these studies. These instruments were designed for adult learners and participants tended to be white and middle class. How would these instruments perform with younger, more diverse learners? How do cultural expectations play into the

development of the SDL skills as listed above? A lot of work is being done to address these questions by scholars in the field, but additional research is needed.

That being said, the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education highlighted the importance of developing skills of self-directedness in all learners. As schooling moved to remote environments, educators at all levels had to grapple with how to empower students to take more ownership and responsibility of their education. The research surveyed in this article shows that self-directedness is a set of learnable traits. To cultivate these skills in learners, educators will need to transform learning design to guide learners through the process. First, learners must build their capacity to desire learning (which includes building up their own sense of self-efficacy). Next, they must grow in their resourcefulness to be self-directed learners. Then, they must grow in their ability to take initiative. Finally, learners must develop the skills of persistence, the set of learned habits that enable learners to see a project through to completion.

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"Like a Family": Fostering a Sense of Belonging in a Minority Majority University Classroom

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Abstract

This teaching note, co-authored by nine university students and their peer mentor and professor at the end of a year-long course, argues that the growing socio-cultural gap between students and faculty requires pedagogies that foster a sense of student belonging by faculty becoming "more receptive than authoritative." All of these students are from immigrant families, and most felt very anxious upon arriving at Portland State University, fearing that they did not belong. Co-creating a space of mutual vulnerability enabled students to feel both cared for and confident.

Keywords: belonging, student-focused teaching, pedagogy of listening, Third Space

Though situated in perhaps the whitest city in the United States, Portland State University (PSU) is undergoing the same sort of demographic transformation reshaping so much of higher education in the United States, particularly for R2, urban universities: its undergraduates are increasingly made up of students who are of color, from immigrant or low-income families, or are first-generation. The great majority of their faculty are not. There is a growing gap between the experiences and lifestyles of undergraduate students and the people who teach them.

This socio-cultural chasm between students and teachers poses severe risks for student success. Gándara and Contreras (2009) find that even "high-achieving Latino [college] students tend to have less confidence in themselves as students and see themselves as less capable than their white or Asian peers" (p. 247). Balcacer's (2018) study of Latinx undergraduates at PSU found the same attitudes, stating that "All participants related white culture to college culture and privilege" (p. 258). They believed that they lacked the sort of cultural capital that university required, feeling both lonely and out of place. What can universities such as PSU due to disrupt this deeply embedded pattern of students of color being and feeling marginalized?

In this collaboration between members of a year-long Freshman Inquiry course, Immigration, Migration, and Belonging (IMB), nine students from immigrant families and their white peer mentor and professor explore how we created an interactive classroom in which students felt a strong sense of belonging.

The first-year students who came to IMB in the fall of 2019 shared deep anxieties about being at university. Jennifer Marquez Marquez "was so nervous that I wanted to leave" the first day of class. Tony Vo, who had emigrated with his family from Vietnam, "always worried about people judging me for how I speak, because I usually have a difficult time expressing my thoughts clearly when in front of a large audience." Estefani Reyes Moreno, the daughter of immigrants from Mexico, was "really anxious," as she "had heard from other college students that professors were very strict and the student's only job was to do the work that was asked of them." Other students veiled their anxieties. Raya Alkharroubi, a Muslim Palestinian, had learned that "[p]eople don't like…something they are not used to." So "it's always easier for me to leave a mask up than go ahead and be myself." Arina Borodkina was one of the few students whose parents had attended college, but since they had done so in Russia, "they weren't able to give me straightforward advice about how credits worked, how to join clubs and organization or what required classes I was even supposed to take." She "thought that I was supposed to know these things already, and felt embarrassed asking for help."

A wide range of scholarship argues that disrupting this deeply embedded sense of alienation requires pedagogies that embody the cultures and values from whence students come. Bartolome (1994) urges teachers to "utilize students' existing knowledge bases" (p. 182), invoking Hawaiian students' capacity to "talk story" (p. 184). Yosso (2006) urges a sensitivity to the "cultural wealth" that students commonly bring to the classroom, skills that facilitate "community well being" and resilience (p. 79). If education is understood and practiced more broadly, as "*educacion*," of "caring, coping, and providing" (p. 79), it will encompass students' families and communities, their social and emotional lives as well as more esoteric knowledge.

In sum, classrooms should honor and incorporate the very socio-cultural particularities that [professors] have often ignored and marginalized. Gutiérrez's (2008) cosmopolitan Third Space foregrounds "the ideals and practices of a shared humanity, a profound obligation to others, boundary crossing, and intercultural exchange in which difference is celebrated without being romanticized" (p. 149). This sort of framework requires ceding much control of the class—to student narratives, for example. Campano (2007) writes of how he learned to cultivate a "pedagogy of listening" in the face of his fifth-graders' compelling lives, a receptiveness that gave them permission "to inscribe their own individual stories into the collective text of the class" (p. 18). As unfamiliar and unsettling as it may be to faculty, part of their work is to vacate discursive space that student values and narratives can then reshape.

Peer Mentor Laihha Organna and Professor David Peterson del Mar in fact found that their students brought abundant skills and knowledge to the class. Organna learned that "a classroom can and

should be a space where everyone teaches, everyone learns, and everyone belongs," that much of her work consisted not only in "making space for students to feel comfortable and supported," but also in "turning the stage over to the students, allowing them to speak their truth." This process bred not just "a new sense of confidence," but also to students "finding others with stories like their own, creating long-lasting friendships and support systems." She and Peterson del Mar joined this process by "openly sharing vulnerable stories about our paths to college, our failures, and our fears," for "we wanted the students to see themselves in us, in our successes, in our failures, and in our humanity." Peterson del Mar, with a quarter century of teaching and publications, learned that

> I had perhaps the most to unlearn. I had thrived, after all, in the same hyper-individualistic system that most of my students found so alien and alienating. My teaching shifted from authoritative expert to become more of a facilitator. We spent more time with guest speakers and story exchanges than with lectures, and outside of class I spent at least several hours a week reading and responding to personal reflections or listening and supporting in one-to-one meetings.
> The instructors' attempts to be more receptive than authoritative fostered student confidence.

"This class proved to me how professors and students are able to build close, valuable connections, with effort coming from both ways," remarks Han Tran, recalling that it had been "nerve-wracking to be around a campus with hardly anyone I recognized" after the "familiarity of…my high school community." "By being vulnerable, both my mentor and instructor created a safe place," remarks Daira Maldonado Ortega. What "helped me build relationships with my classmates was that both David and Laihha were vulnerable with the class," adds Reyes Moreno. Kenyn Davila Samayoa cites Peterson's del Mar's "one-on-one meetings with us" for "building a connection with our professor." Vo remarks that "getting to know and befriend a professor/teacher makes me want to try harder and be more active in the class."

But it was the mutual vulnerability students offered each other that most affected them. Marquez Marquez, the student who had wanted to run out of class the first day, found that "meeting new people and talking about myself was hard," but over time, from sharing stories, the class eventually "felt welcoming and comfortable." "Getting out of my comfort zone, being friendly and vulnerable" was instrumental in "creating a comfortable place for myself and others," remarks Maldonado Ortega. The class became "a safe place to share some of our struggles," adds Davila Samayoa. "I have never felt like I belonged more than in this class," concurs Brianna Tuy. Learning each other's stories "was a beautiful experience" that taught us "that you are not alone on this journey." Alkharroubi, the student who felt it was necessary to put on a mask outside of her family, found that our work together created "a place I belonged to." In fact, "the class kind of felt like a family."

Given the opportunity to shape the nature of their learning spaces, the very students who so often experience college as an alien place are able to transform classrooms into familial places of belonging and support, for "*educacion*" as well as education.

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