Japanese Nursing Faculty's Frames of Reference During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Nursing faculty's frames of reference are likely to have a significant impact on their education methods. Thus, this study aimed to describe Japanese nursing faculty's perceptions of their own frames of reference during the COVID-19 pandemic based on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, as well as how these frames of reference and faculty's teaching-related behaviors were transformed. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 nursing faculty from February to March 2021. The results indicated that nursing faculty's frames of reference seem to be influenced by their own childhood learning, learning about teaching methods, and colleagues' perspectives and practices. No transformative learning experiences were described because the faculty lacked adequate time and space for dialogue. We believe their transformation was still in progress.

Keywords: COVID-19, nursing education, qualitative research, transformative learning

Introduction

In 2020, a new type of coronavirus (subsequently named COVID-19) emerged and spread rapidly; the World Health Organization declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The pandemic forced many educational institutions to entirely transform their educational systems and measures. In accordance with transformative learning (TL) theory, this study is based on the view that these pandemic-related changes were an excellent opportunity for nursing faculty members to further develop themselves as adult learners. We aimed to examine their TL experiences and how their approaches toward education changed as a result.

Although no lockdown was imposed in Japan, people were asked to avoid non-essential outings and traveling across prefectural borders in areas where a state of emergency or quasi-state of emergency had been declared. As a result, about 90% of higher educational institutions postponed the start of classes for the new school year in April 2020. By July, although all schools had started classes, around 60% combined face-to-face classes with distance learning and approximately 20% used only distance learning (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2020). In basic nursing education, approximately 80% of schools and colleges changed from on-site to on-campus training, and approximately 50% changed to online training (Japan Association of Nursing Programs in Universities, 2021). This was a critical situation for educational institutions. Nonetheless, it also provided a good opportunity for teachers to move away from existing frameworks and methods, and to reexamine what should be taught and what abilities students should acquire.

Mezirow (2000), an adult educator and developer of TL theory, used the term "frames of reference" (FOR) to describe the personal frameworks that people use to experience the world and make judgments and decisions. He described adult development as a process of critically reflecting on one's own FOR and acquiring new perspectives, enabling more appropriate decision-making. He

described this process as an example of TL. The trigger for TL is a "disorienting dilemma" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22). When encountering such a dilemma, the "things" and "events" that have been taken for granted lose their self-evident nature; the experience of confusion and conflict leads to a reexamination of one's own values and FOR. This promotes the acquisition of new perspectives and transformed behaviors; thus, TL is initiated by such an experience.

In nursing education, various studies have been conducted to describe TL among nurses and students (Bernard, 2019; Morris & Faulk, 2007; Revell et al., 2022; Ruth-Sahd et al., 2010). Morris and Faulk (2007) reported that nurses who returned to school to obtain a bachelor's degree experienced TL and their professional behavior changed. Cooley and De Gagne (2016) studied novice nursing faculty and found that TL occurred when they had a strong relationship with others and completed teaching-learning activities. However, these studies did not describe how the nursing faculty's FOR changed during TL.

The COVID-19 pandemic greatly restricted face-to-face teaching and on-site training, which Japanese nursing faculty working in bachelor's degree programs (nursing faculty hereafter) had taken for granted; this forced them to introduce distance learning. Numerous surveys by various associations, as well as teaching activities by educational institutions, have reported on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational activities and students (Carolan et al., 2020; Emory, et al., 2021; Michel et al., 2021; National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2021; Revell et al., 2022). We propose that these changes to education methods during COVID-19 can be considered a disorienting dilemma that may have triggered TL. However, although the experiences of nursing faculty have been reported in terms of learning issues related to information and communications technology usage and the burden of student support and class restructuring (Sacco & Kelly, 2021), no studies have described their experiences from the perspective of TL; thus, the nature and transformation of their FOR during COVID-19 remain unclear.

Significance of the Study

To fill the abovementioned research gap, this study aimed to describe Japanese nursing faculty's perceptions of their own FOR (based on Mezirow's TL perspective), and how they were transformed during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how this altered their teaching behaviors. These FOR have a significant impact on the design and implementation of courses and classes, and we believe that investigating them will facilitate an exploration of new educational strategies and cultures. In addition, the findings will add examples of TL during the COVID-19 pandemic which will contribute to research on the process of TL.

Methods

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative descriptive research design (Sandelowski, 2000) to describe Japanese nursing faculty's experiences with TL during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants and Recruitment

The study's participants consisted of 12 nursing faculty with at least five years of teaching experience. The sample size was decided based on the requirements of theoretical sampling and feasibility during the survey period. Nursing faculties were recruited via purposive sampling; respondents were selected considering different fields, teaching experiences, and positions. The location and establisher of the universities were also considered given that the impact of COVID-19 could vary depending on the region and institutional characteristics. Their basic information including years of experience, positions, and areas of specialization are included in Table 1.

Table 1

Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Participants

ID	Type of University	Position	Specialization	Years of teaching experience
A	National	Associate Professor	Women's Health Nursing	27
B	Private	Professor	Child Health Nursing	18

C	Private	Lecturer	Nursing Education	8
D	Private	Lecturer	Fundamentals of Nursing	8
E	Private	Professor	Fundamentals of Nursing	23
F	Private	Associate Professor	Adult Nursing	9
G	National	Assistant Professor	Women's Health Nursing	14
H	Private	Lecturer	Fundamentals of Nursing	11
I	Private	Associate Professor	Child Health Nursing	11
J	Private	Lecturer	Child Health Nursing	7
K	Private	Associate Professor	Psychiatric Nursing	13
L	Private	Associate Professor	Fundamentals of Nursing	20

Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted one-on-one by four researchers using a videoconferencing system; they lasted between 34 and 60 min (mean: 55 min). An interview guide was developed by the research team; participants were asked about their teaching experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, what they had taken for granted, what they realized was unconventional, and what they would retain in future educational policy based on their experiences during the pandemic. Audio data were transcribed verbatim; video data were discarded immediately after the interview. Data were collected between February and March 2021, which is the end of school year in Japan.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed based on a qualitative descriptive research methodology (Sandelowski, 2000). All researchers first analyzed the same two cases and agreed on the perspective of analysis, procedures, and abstraction level of the categories. After that, the primary analysis of each interview was conducted by the interviewer, who carefully examined the context, extracted key sentences where education-related FOR were expressed, and coded them according to the following perspectives: "theme of the narrative," "FOR expressed," "what influenced the expression of the narrative," and "changes in the FOR and behavior." In the secondary analysis, different members examined the extracted sentences and tested the validity of the coding. When opinions differed, they revisited the raw data and discussed until consensus was reached. Categorization was discussed and integrated by all members. The categories were reviewed by returning to the raw data as necessary so that they could be named accurately with respect to the cases.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted with the approval from St Luke's International University's Research Ethics Review Committee (Approval No. 20-A088). First, the study's purpose and methods were explained to the research candidates via e-mail. Then, if they expressed a willingness to participate, we explained the research plan again verbally and in writing, either online or in person, and signed consent forms were obtained. We explained that participation was voluntary, that they did not have to answer questions if they did not want to, that they could withdraw their consent at any time, and that they would not suffer any penalties because of withdrawal. The researchers explained that data would remain anonymous; any materials containing personal information would be stored in a password-secured cloud at the first researcher's university and all research data would be stored for five years and erased completely afterwards. We also explained that the obtained results would be presented at conferences and in papers.

Results

During the analysis, 149 discourses were analyzed, and FORs consisting of five categories and 21 subcategories were extracted (Table 2). They are presented below alongside raw data. We also

extracted four categories relating to the factors that triggered the expression of participants' FORs and three categories that depict how their FORs and behavior changed; these seven categories are discussed in the last two sections below, respectively.

Table 2
Personal Frames of Reference Recognized by Nursing Faculty

Categories	Subcategories
Learning frame of reference	Experience is essential for student learning
	Careful reflection through dialogue promotes learning
	Interaction between faculty and students is essential for teaching activities
	Students are not proactive about learning
	Education-related ethical issues and education quality need to be balanced
Lesson design frame of reference	Teaching activities must suit student needs and readiness
	Education must foster student autonomy
	I must take care of students and set the stage so that things go smoothly
	It's important not to cram too much information into a lesson
	It's necessary to cover what the instructor wants to teach and the information needed for the national examination
	It's possible to achieve goals through innovative education methods
	The same lessons cannot be held in person and online
	Lessons should be held in person
Educational goals frame of reference	It's necessary to acquire critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills
	It's important that education leads to behavioral transformation and practice
Practicum frame of reference	Some things can only be learned through on-site clinical practicums, so students should spend as much time as possible in the field
	On-site clinical practicums expand on the nursing process for patients under one's care
	In-person learning is necessary for nursing skills
Faculty frame of reference	Nursing faculty must learn and change
	Reviews of teaching activities should be done within the scope of one's own field
	It's important to share information and perspectives on education among faculty

In the following, categories are denoted in bold and subcategories in italic font. Factors (e.g., events and experiences) that prompted the expression of each FOR are indicated by ≪ ≫. Raw data are indented, and speaker IDs and verbatim transcript extraction lines are shown in parentheses.

Education-Related FOR and Factors Promoting Their Expression

The five education-related FOR expressed by nursing faculty were: **learning FOR**, **lesson design FOR**, **educational goals FOR, practicum FOR,** and **faculty FOR**. The 21 subcategories are discussed below according to each category.

Learning FOR

Learning FOR consists of five subcategories: *experience is essential for student learning, careful reflection through dialogue promotes learning, interaction between faculty and students is essential for teaching activities, students are not proactive about learning*, and *education-related ethical issues and education quality need to be balanced*.

Experience is essential for student learning was a FOR highlighted by the experience of ≪changing educational methods due to distance learning≫ and ≪modifying educational plans due to the cancellation of or changes to on-site training≫.

For example, in the practice of excretion care, I think there is an opportunity to teach about the sense of shame, right? But, since the explanations are limited to "A toilet bowl is this big

and you have to apply it [to a patient] like this" through the screen, it is difficult to convey how you would feel if you were the patient being subjected to it. (E261)

This FOR was expressed through reaffirmation of the fact that students had previously been taught concepts through simulated experiences and trial-and-error in the field; such learning could not be conveyed by explanations alone. Furthermore, another participant expressed a belief based on the study of instructional design theory:

I know that what students have neither experienced nor practiced does not lead to learning. (F84)

The FOR *careful reflection through dialogue promotes learning* had been reaffirmed through efforts to link limited practical experiences to learning and through situations in which faculty were strongly aware of their original FOR. This occurred during experiences of «revising the education plan due to the cancellation or modification of on-site clinical practicums» and «modifying the education method due to distance learning».

Whether it's practicums or skills labs, we always reflect on what the students actually practiced, rather than focusing on what they couldn't do. I emphasized why they were able to do it and how they can do even better, and tried to draw that out of the students. (F283)

Interaction between faculty and students is essential for teaching activities was recognized in the experiences of «being unable to see student reactions» and «modifying education methods due to distance learning».

Since you're talking to a screen, you can't even tell if there's someone sitting behind it; there's no "I'll rephrase this since it seems like no one understands" or "that side's looking sleepy, so I'll try calling on them" like there would be in a classroom—there's no response. … I really feel like, 'wow, there were interactions happening in the classroom after all.' (B477)

The FOR *students are not proactive about learning* was brought to the forefront by the discovery that students *are* proactive about learning, made through the experience of «modifying education methods due to distance learning».

I asked [students] to write in the chat at the end of class, … and was surprised to find that everyone wanted to ask questions that way. I felt like they had so much to ask when their privacy was protected. (A70)

The FOR *education-related ethical issues and education quality need to be balanced* was provoked by «revising the education plan due to the cancellation or modification of on-site clinical practicums». Two categories of ethical quandary were discussed: conflict between infection control and education quality, and maintaining equality in the quality of learning among students.

It was extremely unique and different from the past because I had to make a decision in which there was a conflict between the education-related ethical dilemma of whether it was okay to go [to conduct on-site education] even though there was a risk of infecting patients, and also education quality. (C231)

There was the fact that I could not ensure equal learning if, by chance, [students] were able to go to one facility, but not another. (J245)

Lesson Design FOR

Lesson design FOR comprised the eight most common subcategories: *teaching activities must suit student needs and readiness, education must foster student autonomy, I must take care of students and set the stage so that things go smoothly, it's important not to cram too much information into a lesson, it's necessary to cover what the instructor wants to teach and the information needed for the national examination, it's possible to achieve goals through innovative education methods, the same lessons cannot be held in person and online,* and *lessons should be held in person.*

First, the FOR *lessons should be held in person* was recognized and then abandoned by all faculty. Then, as they explored ways to hold remote lessons and received information about online

classes from their universities, they gained a new FOR *the same lessons cannot be held in person and online* and implemented a variety of innovations.

> I considered it a given that I could have in-person classes and discussions with my students, and it took quite a bit of trial and error to learn how to hold lessons without disrupting learning when that was completely severed by the coronavirus pandemic. (F442)

Various FOR presented themselves through the unconventional lesson designs that were attempted during this period of trial and error. In several cases, the contents of these FOR were contradictory. For example, participants noticed that they believed *education must foster student autonomy* while simultaneously acting on the idea that *I must take care of students and set the stage so that things go smoothly*.

> I realized now that I was kind of preparing lessons like they were high school students. I felt like I was saying things like "take initiative" and "college students try to learn things on their own," while preparing my lectures so that I would provide them with everything. (B370)

Similarly, nursing faculty believed *it's important not to cram too much information into a lesson*, while also feeling that *it's necessary to cover what the instructor wants to teach and the information needed for the national examination*.

> When I said, "they don't do this in clinical practice anymore," [interviewee's supervisor] said it's not a problem. They told me what's important is whether it appears on the national examination, so even if it isn't practiced anymore, we must teach it if it's on the exam, and I thought "oh, so that's how it is." (D396)

While facing such dilemmas, the experience of adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic strengthened participants' beliefs that *teaching activities must suit student needs and readiness*, and that *it's possible to achieve goals through innovative education methods*.

> For example, in the third year of university, the students are at the stage of going into practical training, so I ask questions in a manner that encourages them to think as much as possible. … I try to use different types of questions depending on the readiness of the students and their learning progress. (J122)

> I also felt that a strict 90-minute online lesson would probably be impossible. … I narrowed down what I wanted to teach to one or two things. Specifically, I would give them an assignment, and in about 30 minutes I would tell them what I wanted them to learn that day. Then I told them they could use their textbook or go to the library, or search online, to figure out the information necessary to submit the assignment on their own. (G22)

Educational Goals FOR

Educational goals FOR comprised two subcategories: *it's necessary to acquire critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills* and *it's important that education leads to behavioral transformation and practice*. These were FORs held previously that were strengthened by experiencing the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

> I think there has always been a lot of education focused on learning techniques, but when it comes to nursing techniques, there are certain ways of doing things once you get out in the field, … so why are those techniques necessary? … Then, because of this coronavirus pandemic, I focused on fostering thinking instead, … holding alternative practicums online, and evolving my lessons. (F99)
> I would like [students] to personally experience medical techniques for everyday care by any means necessary, even if I must make time for it, but conversely, in a situation like this, things related to assisting medical care like "this is an injection" or "this is an IV" in particular can be cut out …. If they are not used in practicums, [students] don't need to personally experience them, just watch them and understand. (E611)

Practicum FOR

Three subcategories were extracted for **practicum FOR**: *some things can only be learned through on-site clinical practicums, so students should spend as much time as possible in the field, on-site clinical practicums expand on the nursing process for patients under one's care,* and *in-person learning is necessary for nursing skills*. Participants discussed reconsidering these FOR while experiencing on-campus and distance practicums during the COVID-19 pandemic.

> Previously, if clinicals were for two weeks, [students] went to clinicals every day for two weeks, and I felt that the program was too jam-packed. … I came to see that there were things that could be done on-campus and things that had to be done on-site. So, going forward, I think we must reflect carefully on what things [students] should go on-site for if they can. (J445)

> This year's method is completely inconsistent with the practicum goals of an ordinary year. … So for things like collecting information on one's own, … it was fine if [students] actually did it, or if they watched someone do it. It was just changed a little bit to thinking about what they saw. I feel that that's sufficient to satisfy the goal. (D277)

> Even now, I feel that it's best to have practical testing for medical care tasks. … Ultimately, it's impossible to teach deeper concepts like bedside manner and intuition online; without in-person, individualized instruction, it's pointless (rest omitted). (H321)

Faculty FOR

Three subcategories were extracted for **faculty FOR**: *nursing faculty must learn and change, reviews of teaching activities should be done within the scope of one's own field,* and *it's important to share information and perspectives on education among faculty*. The first was derived from comments related to faculty members' various methods of coping with «an environment where learning new methods are unavoidable», such as distance learning and creating videos. Participants discussed reconsidering the latter two FOR—particularly *reviews of teaching activities should be done within the scope of one's own field*—which had been highlighted by circumstances in which «intra- and interdisciplinary exchange of information» and sharing FOR were unavoidable.

> I always thought that if I wasn't good at something … it was natural for me to overcome it, but I realized that there's also the stance that if one can't do something, there's no point in trying. (I302)

> I started to do more research on which professor is an expert in a given subject, and adopting strategic changes like going to a professor who's an expert in a given field early on so that things proceed smoothly. … I also found that good ideas come from dialogue, so I started to really get a feel for how I had to act to help the nursing department as a whole function well, not just my own area. (J582)

Conditions that Led to The Presentation of FOR

The conditions that led to the presentation of the FOR discussed thus far are summarized in the following four categories: «modifying education methods due to distance learning», «experiences of being unable to see student reactions during lessons», «revising plans due to the cancellation of on-site clinical practicums», and «noticing value differences among faculty». The various FOR that have been discussed thus far were brought to the forefront through discussion with others and thinking about factors such as what education means, what one considers non-negotiable, and what elements are indispensable for goal achievement, while simultaneously considering distance learning and alternative strategies due to the cancellation of on-site clinical practicums. Further, holding remote classes in which they could not see student reactions made participants aware of the various skills and values they had been using and the fact that interactions with students form the foundation of lessons.

Experiences Related to FOR and Behavior Transformation

Most experiences discussed in this study pertained to reaffirming existing FOR that were highly valued, discovering the gap between those FOR and one's own behavior in a new environment, and discoveries related to student reactions and new teaching methods. These are summarized in the categories: «personally experiencing the importance of lesson design that does not cram in too much

information and in which students can learn independently», «recognizing the importance of exchanging information and sharing values among intra- and interdisciplinary faculty for high quality education», and «recognizing that practicums can be performed, even if they are not on-site».

Discussion

In this section, we will discuss the factors that influenced the formation of the FOR extracted in the present study, as well as how the experiences of nursing faculty can be interpreted from a TL perspective.

Factors that Influenced the Formation of Nursing Faculty's Existing FOR

Most FOR discussed in this study had been deliberately acquired through the learning theory and educational methods faculty had already studied. For example, we speculate that *experience is essential for student learning* and *careful reflection through dialogue promotes learning* are based on Dewey's (1938) discussion of empiricism. Similarly, the FOR *interaction between faculty and students is essential for teaching activities* has been widely regarded as vital in effective learning (Billings & Halstead, 2016, pp. 35–36). Further, concerning **lesson design FOR**, *teaching activities must suit student needs and readiness*, *education must foster student autonomy*, *it's possible to achieve goals through innovative education methods*, and *it's important not to cram too much information into a lesson*, among others, are fundamentals of lesson design (Billings & Halstead, 2016, pp. 160–161). These FORs have likely been impacted by the full-time faculty training courses that are mandated by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, the required faculty development learning programs provided by colleges, and the recent expansion of interest in education technology, including instructional design theory (Reigeluth et al., 2016)

Meanwhile, *students are not proactive about learning*, *I must take care of students and set the stage so that things go smoothly*, and *it's necessary to cover what the instructor wants to teach and the information needed for the national examination* are not based on theory, but are believed to come from past experiences in the classroom and internalization of the values of senior nursing faculty. Similarly, the FOR *some things can only be learned through on-site clinical practicums*, *so students should spend as much time as possible in the field* and *on-site clinical practicums expand on the nursing process for patients under one's care* seem to have long been shared by nursing faculty. For example, Gaberson and Oermann (2010) claimed that "Most nursing faculty members worry far much about how many hours students spend in the clinical setting and too little about the quality of the learning" (p. 13).

These FOR inherited from predecessors likely have their basis in the pedagogical perspective that faculty themselves had experienced in elementary and junior high school, based on the view that "education is teachers instructing children who have no knowledge" (Knowles, 1988). Further, "Preparing future faculty programs" are not implemented enough for nurse faculties (Han et al., 2022; Oprescu et al., 2017), and it can be concluded that few nursing faculty members will have acquired the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to scrutinize the education methods that their senior colleagues have acquired before they begin to work in the field. Thus, it may be that the values passed on by senior faculty are internalized, and new faculty unknowingly begin to view the amount of content taught and the amount of time spent in the field as important matters. In fact, Yamada (2011) reported that faculty who participated in continuing education experienced "becoming free of what defines them," that is, "the educational methods that senior faculty members had created, and the organizational climate in which those are passed on as 'the right way'" (p. 94).

Although this value system emphasizing the amount of content taught and the amount of time in the field has been changing as education has shifted from educator-centered, content-based teaching to learner-centered, competency-based teaching (Billings & Halstead, 2016, pp. 158–160), it appears to remain firmly rooted among nursing faculty. One reason this educator-centered, content-based outlook persists may be related to the unique features of the medical profession. In medical education, there exists a "hidden curriculum" (Hafferty & Franks, 1994) that conveys paternalistic culture that medical professionals provide professional services to non-professionals (patients), and

this also impacts the relationship between faculty and students (Lamiani et al., 2011). Moreover, the framework created by the national examination criteria may restrict the ability of students and faculty to self-determine learning content. As a result, the teacher-centered pedagogical perspective is likely to be perpetuated by both nursing faculty and students.

Experiences of Nursing Faculty from a TL Perspective

One objective of this study was to describe transformations of faculty's FOR triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, most experiences discussed so far confirmed the appropriateness of existing FOR or pushed faculty to perceive FOR they had previously been unaware of. Moreover, although the FORs *students are not proactive about learning*, *I must take care of students and set the stage so that things go smoothly*, and *it's necessary to cover what the instructor wants to teach and the information needed for the national examination* were reconsidered, the results of that reconsideration were not discussed in the interviews.

There are two potential reasons for this. First, the interview guide did not include a question asking about the results of reconsideration, and thus discussions of such experiences may not have been elicited. Second, it may have been difficult for the faculty to verbalize these experiences because they were still in the midst of the TL process.

According to Mezirow (2000), TL in adults spans the following ten phases: (1) a disorienting dilemma; (2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; (3) a critical assessment of assumptions; (4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; (5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; (6) planning a course of action; (7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; (8) provisional trying of new roles; (9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and (10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 22). Among these, the most difficult phase is the so-called critical reflection phase, in which one critically evaluates the assumptions and beliefs that form the foundation for one's FOR by experiencing a dilemma (1) and performing self-examination (2). Dialogue in a safe environment is important for this critical reflection to occur (Taylor, 2009).

Showing the importance of dialogue, the present study's interviews revealed that the **faculty FOR**, that is, *nursing faculty must learn and change*, *reviews of teaching activities should be done within the scope of one's own field*, and *it's important to share information and perspectives on education among faculty*, were verbalized through experiences of exchanging opinions with other faculty members. Many of these dialogues likely centered on trying to develop new education policies and gain IT literacy. In fact, the FOR *reviews of teaching activities should be done within the scope of one's own field* was renounced and replaced by *it's important to share information and perspectives on education among faculty*.

At the same time, it is necessary to establish psychologically safe and intentional space and time for dialogue to occur. This was a difficult year to ensure such time and space in educational settings, which were extremely busy coping with societal changes, and it is thus speculated that participants were still in the midst of transformation at the time of data collection and had not yet reconsidered their FOR enough to be aware of them. Vipler et al. (2022) reported a similar result; medical residents' reflections relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were not deep enough to alter their FOR.

In future, the impacts of the experiences described in the present study can be confirmed by observing educational activities carried out based on these new perceptions. It would also be possible to identify how the FOR verbalized in this study have changed, as well as the kinds of practices they bring about.

Conclusions

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 nursing faculty members with the aim of describing their self-perceived FOR during the COVID-19 pandemic, experience-derived transformations in these FOR, and associated transformations in education-related behaviors. This resulted in the extraction of five categories—**learning FOR**, **lesson design FOR**, **educational goals FOR**, **practicum FOR**, and **faculty FOR**—and 21 subcategories. Most FOR were recognized and

reconsidered, but TL experiences were not discussed. This may be because faculty lacked the time and space needed to reconsider their beliefs; thus, transformation was still in progress. Therefore, we believe that it is necessary to follow participants' perceptions and behaviors to see if their TL continues. In terms of limitations, our study did not reach theoretical saturation due to time limitations, so the data may not fully grasp the diversity of FOR among nursing faculty.

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Teaching Leadership Through the Lens of Gender as a Practice of Transformative Learning

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Abstract

Leadership education is undergoing a paradigm shift to redevelop and redefine leadership utilizing theoretical lenses as tools to examine and critique traditional, hegemonic narratives. Through an instrumental case analysis of a gender and leadership course, this study examined the phenomenon of transformative learning by teaching leadership through the lens of gender within an environment of critical feminist/engaged pedagogy. Findings include the importance of the learning environment in building affective and cognitive frames for scaffolding student learning, the relevance of engagement in vulnerable storytelling as a peer-to-peer learning device, and the need for strong preparation as a facilitator of the engaged learning environment. We call on higher education educators to transform their learning practice and consider gender theory and critical feminist-engaged pedagogy as tools to facilitate a new learning perspective.

Keywords: gender, college students, critical feminist pedagogy, engaged pedagogy, leadership education

Teaching Leadership Through the Lens of Gender as a Transformative Learning Practice

Leadership learning sits at a crucial juncture. As educators grapple with the challenges of disruptive times, it becomes apparent we must expand our theoretical curriculum and pedagogical tactics when teaching. Guthrie and Chunoo (2021) entreated leadership educators to engage in the imperative of socially just leadership education. The scholars of the updated National Leadership Education Research Agenda (Andonoro & Cilente Skendall, 2020) articulated that leadership scholars, educators, and learners required deeper reflection on systemic oppressions and intersecting identities as integral influencers of leadership development and practice. These calls emphasized the continued need towards updated, critically oriented pedagogy for learning about leadership and identity. Yet minimal attention has been paid to considering the benefits and challenges of teaching gender theory through critical feminist engaged pedagogy within leadership education as a transformative learning practice.

Leadership education literature offers some insights to student leadership learning and development from an identity-based focus (Dugan et al., 2008; Guthrie et al., 2013; Guthrie et al., 2016); however, none of this scholarship offers a gender-specific focus. A multitude of leadership curriculum incorporate gender in some fashion (Alan et al., 2020; Appelbaum et al., 2003; Badura et al., 2018; Billing & Alvesson, 2002; Carli & Eagly, 2001; Crites et al., 2015; Eagly, 2005), but do not utilize critical or postmodern gender theory to inform their examinations of gender. Scholars who do examine leadership and gender through a critical lens denote the need to explore these ideas further but have not examined their use in the classroom (Beatty & Tillapaugh, 2017; Owen, 2020).

Limited understanding of updated gender conceptualizations in scholarship perpetuates outdated perspectives and analysis of gender in relation to leadership, decreasing the potential of teaching gender and leadership through a socially just, critical lens. Frequently, there is an assumption that gender = woman (as in Gender Studies) or gender equates to binary terms. In many instances in leadership scholarship, gender could often be replaced with the words woman/man, male/female, or simply 'woman' (with cisgender, heterosexual, White, and able-bodied implied).

To examine how to address this issue, the purpose of this multi-semester instrumental case study of an undergraduate course on gender and leadership explored the phenomenon of utilizing gender theory in leadership education through the implementation of critical feminist/engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1991). Through the lens of critical feminist theory, the case study examined how an intentional pedagogical lens and multidisciplinary angle influenced the course experience in understanding gender, leadership, and how the two concepts intertwine.

Research questions for the case included: 1.) How did the course structure, pedagogy, and environment influence understanding of gender, leadership, and gender + leadership? 2.) How did the course influence understanding of identity?

Teaching Identity-Based Coursework in Leadership Learning

The instructor(s) took an integrated approach to teaching about the complexities of gender and dove into the intersectional nature of oppressive systems (Catalano & Griffin, 2016). Learning about gender cannot happen without exploration of intersecting identities and systems of oppression around race, class, religion, ability status, and more (Crenshaw, 1991). In creating leadership learning opportunities, it is critical to take integrated approaches to sexism, heterosexism, and trans oppression as they are all related to how gendered systems operate (Catalano & Griffin, 2016). It is not easy to unpack years of socialization around genderism, sexism, and hegemony (Tillapaugh & Haber-Curran, 2017), while also grappling with multiple, complex understandings of leadership.

When exploring the complexities of social identities, it is imperative to understand terminology used to express identities as a foundation for learning (Catalano & Griffin, 2016). As a lens for understanding the educational experience, critical/engaged pedagogy (Friere & Macedo, 2000) acknowledges how students from varying and intersecting identity backgrounds might experience identity-specific (gender) focused content differently based on their social group memberships, identity intersections, and identity salience in gender, race/ethnicity, or other systemically influenced identity categories (Hahn Tapper, 2013).

Guthrie and Jenkins (2018) emphasized the imperative for leadership educators to do self-work on their own identities and positionalities before they show up in leadership learning spaces. In identity-based leadership learning, the educator is a central element of the community while also often learning and wrestling with personal identity development. This is especially important to consider when a significant number of leadership educators are white cisgender women (Jenkins & Owen, 2016). Redon (2009) noted facilitators of identity-based leadership learning must be willing to admit they are still learning, are innovative healers and liberators who can restore learner's self-confidence, see education as a greater good, and be activists who fight for equity and justice for all.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the study employed critical feminist theory (Clark, 2007). Scholars of critical feminist thought emphasize gender as a central lens of analysis to understand inequitable power systems in a patriarchal, misogynistic society. Expanding on feminist theory which emphasizes the radical idea that women are people (Clark, 2007), critical feminist theory employs a lens of intersectional critical theory which critiques historical feminisms that do not go far enough to address systemic inequities in gender identity (beyond the lens of cisgender, white, upper/middle-class women; Collins, 2005) or consider the intersectionality of oppressions in gender, race/ethnicity, social class, and other social positions (Crenshaw, 1991).

Critical Feminist/Engaged Pedagogy

The classes in the case were framed within critical feminist/engaged (CFE) pedagogy. CFE pedagogy disrupts historical acceptances of power in systems (such as the classroom) and centers marginalized (particularly Women of Color, trans, and gender non-binary) voices as experts and knowledge holders in the learning space (Freire & Macedo, 2000; hooks, 1994). This pedagogy features dialogical, participatory, and experiential approaches to the classroom in a fluid and context-aware nature to allow for a transformational process of engaged interaction (Chow et al., 2003). hooks (2009) stated, "Engaged pedagogy begins with the assumption that we learn best when there is an interactive relationship between student and teacher" (p. 19). CFE pedagogy uses education as a liberating force that centers lived experiences of the learners in the space, emphasizes gender and power as the central focus of exploration, and intentionally connects narratives to curriculum (hooks, 1994).

Studying social identities and leader identity as inherently connected and intertwined required a liberatory pedagogy grounded in critical theory and feminist theory (Freire & Macedo, 2000; hooks, 1994). Central to CFE pedagogy is a vulnerable and transparent educator who is willing to learn and offer lived experiences alongside students (hooks, 1994). It also requires a shift from safe spaces to brave spaces, as safety cannot be guaranteed in vulnerable conversation and learning but bravery can be encouraged (Arao & Clemens, 2013). When educators label these spaces as safe, they appear to be comfortable and imply lack of risk, particularly for privileged (white, male, heterosexual, cisgender) identities. Conversations around social identities and oppression are grounded in embracing discomfort and vulnerability, a risk intended to encourage moments of cognitive dissonance that lead to growth (Arao & Clemens, 2013).

Methods

This qualitative instrumental case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008), framed through the constructivist paradigm (Harris & Graham, 1994) and the theoretical constructs of critical feminist thought (Clark, 2007), focused on exploring meaning in experiences (Creswell, 2013) within a gender and leadership course. An instrumental case study focuses on gaining insights into a particular phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). We identified and selected this method because understanding the phenomenon of teaching leadership through a lens of gender within critical feminist pedagogy remained the focus of the study, with the case itself as secondary (Milles et al., 2010). The method allowed the researchers to explore the phenomenon of how the course influenced learning and growth in three different semesters of classroom experiences.

Case Description: The Gender and Leadership Course

The boundaries of this case focus on an undergraduate gender and leadership course. The data represent three separate offerings of an in-person undergraduate leadership course at a large, public research institution in the southeast. Students in the class changed each semester; the instructor remained the same for all three courses with an additional co-instructor added in the third semester the course was taught. This class is part of a leadership studies program that also offers coursework available for all students at the institution. Students who chose to take the course were able to use the credit as an elective in the leadership program; they were also able to use the course to meet a university-wide diversity course requirement.

The *Gender and Leadership* course was designed purposefully to be a *gender* and leadership course, not a *women* and leadership course; emphasizing the idea that gender does not equal only women. The course goals were to intertwine understanding of gender from multiple perspectives and disciplines in interrogating conceptualizations of leadership. The course was structured through a CFE pedagogy lens in three areas—shared power, multiple voices of identities, and varied modalities for students to examine narrative experiences of gender and leadership (Chow et al., 2003; hooks, 1994).

Course structure.

Arao and Clemen's (2013) "brave space" was provided as a foundational expectation for course interaction. These expectations included a collective conversation and agreement to engage in controversy with civility, for individuals to take ownership of their intentions and the actual impact made in their conversations, and to allow for instructive challenging of their ideas (even if it made them uncomfortable). The course was developed to examine, critique, and synthesize current research and narratives on gender and leadership. The curriculum also introduced intersectional voices navigating the gendered experience through multiple identity lenses, including race, socioeconomic status, and religion and introduced critical and postmodern thought on gender with myriad conceptualizations of leadership and their intersections (Butler, 1990; Collins, 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Structured through a CFE pedagogical foundation (Berry, 2010; Chow et al., 2003), the course instructor implemented power-sharing techniques including relationship and trust building, purposeful emphasis on marginalized experiences, and inclusion of diverse voices through course readings, discussions, and guest speakers. The instructor also employed experiential learning activities and dialogical interactions (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). In order to mitigate implicit bias built into the course, reflection on how the instructor's positionality influenced course content, discussions, activities, and interactions was shared. Discussion included consideration of the instructor's social identities and experiences of power, privilege, and oppression as a White, cisgender, straight woman; these considerations were shared in the class and through her reflexive journal. This allowed a process of praxis-weaving between theoretical foundations in critical feminist thought with direct application and reflection.

The course learning outcomes aligned with this collaborative, praxis-oriented perspective: Describe perspectives, concepts, and theories used to understand gender and leadership; Critically evaluate the perspectives advanced by concepts of gender and describe how they can influence leadership practice; Communicate effectively about the nature and complexity of gender and leadership; Reflect on and come to an understanding of one's own development in gender and leadership identity; Analyze the human experience of gender and leadership from multiple lenses, and their intersection of gender with other social identities including race, class, sexual orientation, and religion; and Explore one's own norms or values of gender and leadership in relation to other perspectives.

The instructor also explained that the course's foundational design was influenced by critical, feminist, queer, and postmodern thought on power, privilege, and authority as well as her role as a co-creator of knowledge and learning in the class experience. She noted in her teaching and learning statement in the syllabus

We can only learn more and further our understanding of ideas and concepts if we are open to teaching and learning from each other. This requires our classroom to be founded on relationships (I believe we need to know each other in order to best learn from each other); rooted in critical theory (we should critique and question systems of power that create inequity); and open to discourse in a brave space. We will be embarking on an exciting, and at times uncertain and uncomfortable adventure together.

Course content.

Gender and Leadership was an exploration of the intersections of the complex social construct of gender and the intricacies of enacting leadership. Participants were encouraged to consider gender as a socially developed and enacted concept (West & Zimmerman, 1987) and explore the historical inequities in which this construct has progressed and influenced our understanding and enactment of leadership. The course content included the experiences of transwomen, ciswomen, genderqueer, transmen, and cismen leaders as well as concepts of gender expression and the intersections of identities, including race, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status as influencers on leadership access and practice. To address these perspectives, the course reviewed research from a variety of disciplines, including education, social psychology, sociology, economics, and management and organizational science.

One of the first course interactions after establishing ground rules through brave space was to offer students introduction to research paradigms as tools to analyze and critically consider theory in gender and leadership. Paradigms presented included 1.) positivism/post-positivism, which posits we are capable of analyzing concepts through a controlled, objective truth (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). 2.) Scholars of social constructivism/interpretivism suggest there are multiple truths that can be studied and therefore subjectivity must be a factor in understanding phenomenon (Harris & Graham, 1994; Karataş-Özkan & Murphy, 2010; Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). 3.) Critical theory, is a form of social constructivism that emphasizes the need to make inequality/inequity explicit as a form of understanding multiple truths and dismantling power imbalances (Agger, 1991; Karataş-Özkan & Murphy, 2010). 4.) Post-modernism/post-structuralism scholars introduce a lens of fluidity and disruption to concepts of knowing, questioning the ability to pin down or study "truth" as a means of understanding the world (Agger, 1991; Bellwoar, 2005; Karataş-Özkan & Murphy, 2010).

Key course assignments included a relationship building storytelling project titled, *Our Stories, Our Voices*, where students, through whatever creative means they wished, told the story of their identities, upbringing/background, and past in relationship to their understanding of gender and other salient identities to their peers in class. Students were also required to create a personal statement paper at the beginning of the course reflecting on their understanding of gender and leadership based on socialization from family, friends, education, and location. Finally, students submitted a leadership synthesis paper detailing an analysis of their original personal statement paper with updates and reflection based on course content to review their current understanding of gender and leadership.

Participants

Study participants were first-year through fourth-year undergraduate students at a large, public, predominately white, research-intensive institution in the southeast. Thirty-six students consented to participate in the study out of 69 students in the three classes; 34 participants' data were complete and utilized for the study. Participant demographics were collected through the electronic consent form; data were collected on race/ethnicity and gender identity, but not sexuality. This was due to concerns for students' privacy if they were navigating exploration of their sexual orientation. Participant demographics were majority cisgender, White women (n = 18). There were a greater number of cisgender women (n = 24) participants overall, with cisgender men (n = 7) as the next largest group, and trans or genderqueer students (n = 3) as the smallest number of participants for the study. Students of Color were a smaller representation (n = 8) compared to White students (n = 26). Specifically, Students of Color included Latinx (4), Black/African American (1), multi-racial (1), and Asian/Pacific Islander (2). Due to this small number, People of Color (PoC) was chosen to maintain the confidentiality of participants.

Data Collection

The study was approved by institutional IRB and study data were collected over three semesters of the course. In the first class meeting, students were informed of their option to participate in the study by consenting to allow their written course assignments to become data points and that their participation in the study would not impact their experience or grade in the course. All data were collected after grading culminated for each semester to inhibit ethical concerns for the faculty-researcher. Data were de-identified and participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality.

Data collected included students' discussion board responses, written class reflections, mid-semester and final course assessment, and two papers – the personal statement paper written at the beginning and the leadership synthesis analysis and reflection paper submitted at the end of the semester. The data points were collected to examine how students in each individual assignment expressed understanding of intersections of gender and leadership throughout their course experience, connecting to the research questions exploring how the course influenced understanding of intersections of gender and leadership and in context of social locations.

Data were downloaded in electronic copies from the learning management system site after grading culminated. Additionally, the researcher-instructor completed a reflexive journal (Anfara &

Mertz, 2014) for each course considering the experiences after each class. The reflexive journal served as a touchpoint of learning for the instructor across three iterations of teaching the course and as a reflexive praxis of theory, reflection, and application to examine for the study.

Data Analysis

We analyzed the data through the qualitative software, NVivo 12 (Bazeley & Jackson, 2014) and examined through three rounds of coding processes using the constant comparison method of data analysis (Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2012). The first round of coding was completed by the first author. The second and third rounds of coding were collaboratively analyzed across the research team. The first round of coding examined high-level themes in all units of data including personal statement papers, synthesis papers, course assessment, and instructor's journal. Data sources were compared for specific words and phrases, and similar and distinct experiences articulated. Aligned with the research questions, high level codes were determined through seeking examples of learning in the course, discussion of the course environment, reflection, and references to social identities in connection to course content, and perspectives offered on the connections between gender and leadership throughout the course.

The second round of coding employed open coding (Saldaña, 2012) to deepen thematic understanding across data points. Researchers sought examples of learning connections, moments of cognitive dissonance, and levels of change from within the course. Following open coding, axial coding allowed the researchers to develop categories and groupings (Saldaña, 2012) and finally emergent, overarching themes. Data triangulation (Creswell & Miller, 2010) occurred using participant data over three subsequent semesters, multiple forms of assignments, and the instructor's reflexive journal.

Credibility and trustworthiness were achieved by applying member checking (Creswell & Miller, 2010) through multiple sources. Four student member checkers (two from the first course and one from each subsequent course) consented to review the analyzed data for confirmation of findings from their own experience in the class, affirming trustworthiness of the analysis process. Additionally, the theme analysis was member-checked by the co-instructor of the last course taught in the study. Methodological limitations include the similarities in researcher positionality (see below), the research site as a predominantly white institution with restrictions on access of a diverse participant group influenced by students' choice to register for the course, and the singular case site.

Researcher Positionalities

The three co-authors identify as cisgender, straight, white women. All three work in leadership education within higher education; one is an established researcher in the field, one is an early career faculty member, and one is a manager of a leadership program. We contemplated our similarities in social locations in the analysis process through reflexive consideration of our positionalities, particularly considering privileged identities in whiteness and heterosexual, cisgender status. The first author was the primary researcher, developer of the course curriculum, and the instructor for all three courses. As participant-instructor-researcher, she possessed deep knowledge of the intentions and goals of the course. In each iteration of the course, she learned and adjusted from the experience to better implement the content for the following semester. The two other authors served as critical friends, processors, content creators, and editors within the analysis and writing process.

Findings

Participants exhibited growth in their abilities to describe gender, leadership, and gender + leadership through an intentionally framed environment. Students' identities in gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, and religion were salient factors in the courses' theoretical content. Through these highlights we show the importance of intersectional identity-focused leadership coursework but also reveal the need to appropriately structure such curriculum with scaffolded pedagogy and preparation of the educator.

Build the Frame

Scaffolding coursework to appropriately progress students through the curriculum provided important development for the course experience. The two emergent themes of these building materials were cognitive and emotional/affective frames as intertwined, crucial factors. For the emotional frame, purposeful structuring included emphasizing relationship building and storytelling as a core element in the class. The focus on relationship building opened the space for vulnerable authenticity and truth-sharing about each student's story. For the cognitive frame, we found the introduction of research paradigms prior to the presentation of gender and leadership theories allowed for a broader individual and collective understanding of complex ideas.

Affective frame: Relationship building, multiple perspective-taking, and vulnerability.

In two-thirds of the final papers and throughout feedback from mid-semester and final evaluations, students identified the unique nature of the class as a profound experience in transformative learning. In both mid-semester and final course evaluations, a positive classroom environment was mentioned over 50 times. Students described appreciation for being "treated like equals." One student shared, "The learning environment was healthy and organic. It taught me that having an opinion is important and okay. What was positive was the engaged conversation that took place every class." Students noted discussion 41 times as their most engaging element of the course and over 20 students stated the importance of guest speakers to their learning experience. Thirteen out of the 34 students mentioned in their final synthesis papers direct examples of learning from specific peers. Overall, students identified learning from guest speakers, discussion with peers, and being encouraged to share their own stories as primary factors in feeling comfortable to tackle difficult topics in the classroom.

The examples students gave regarding listening to and learning from guests and peers relates to the pedagogical framework of the course in critical feminist thought by including validity for all voices and experiences as key elements of the learning process. These elements of relationship building and making space for understanding others' perspectives built the emotional connections students recognized as important to the dynamic of the class. In a mid-semester assessment exercise entitled "stop, start, continue," one student requested what to continue in the course for establishing this open classroom environment: "Continue everything. [Continue] creating a space where people can express their opinions, grow and learn."

In intentionally framing the course to allow for powerful connections, students approached difficult topics with a deep vulnerability. However, this was not true in the initial weeks of the course; a vulnerable connection was achieved as students became more comfortable with each other's stories. The *Our Stories, Our Voices* assignment particularly supported this growth. The researchers were able to observe a distinct shift in student relationships comparing the first semester when the assignment was at the end of the semester to the second and third offering of the class, where this assignment occurred mid-semester. The students who were in the two semesters when *Our Stories, Our Voices* occurred sooner identified the assignment as a clear moment of connection to their fellow peers. The instructors observed greater vulnerability and willingness to share personal stories with their classmates. Holly, a white, cis-gender woman, shared:

> the Our Voices, Our Stories [sic] assignment gave me an entire [sic] new perspective. I have always been one to not judge people, however, this was really eye opening. It is definitely going to help me to focus more on the fact that you never know what a person has been through or is going through... It was incredible to see how strong all of my classmates are.

Bridget, a cisgender white woman, shared:

> When we did Our Stories, Our Voices we really got to know one another, and it showed us that we all have a vulnerable side but also that we want to be heard and understood. [The instructor] made our classroom welcoming and open which made all of us comfortable enough to be our genuine selves.

In addition to this course assignment, students shared a variety of examples where they learned from peers. Specifically, they appreciated hearing alternative perspectives which allowed them to broaden their understanding of the topics discussed. This aligned with Aurora's experience, a cisgender Latina, who described how peers changed her perspective on an assignment where she initially held one viewpoint but broadened her understanding after hearing from peers and ultimately shifting her position.

Candace, a white, ciswoman, clarified how learning from peers through personal storytelling helped her understand the course concepts:

My favorite aspect of this class was listening to everyone's personal stories and viewpoints on the issues that we discussed… I was not very knowledgeable about some of the situations and problems that are prevalent in our society as most of the others in the class, so having the opportunity to talk to them and find out what they know and how their past experiences have shaped their opinions on these things is an opportunity that I would probably have never had without this class.

Bridgit summarized how the course environment, peer learning, and relationship building through assignments brought about a change in her experience and appreciation of the topic:

Throughout the semester we have encountered all sorts of information and perspectives and I think that the way the classroom was set up, really fueled the conversations. The space that we were in felt very safe and inviting and it made us, as students, want to be open and vulnerable. I was able to hear from people from all walks of life. Whether they were gender queer, trans, Hispanic, African American, gay, male or female we were all able to find things that we had in common and I thought that was the coolest part of class… I was able to discover what my identity was more than I ever have before.

Throughout the students' reflections and evaluations there was a clear connection of how feeling trust in the emotional and relational environment of the classroom allowed students to be vulnerable enough to hear and share multiple perspectives across difference. This emotional framing progressed identity development, learning, and application of intended new behaviors throughout the course experiences.

Cognitive frame: Teaching paradigms and critical analysis.

The instructor constructed course content to overlay critical and postmodern perspectives on gender to examine theoretical and applied considerations of leadership. This construction imposed a heavy load on undergraduate class participants. Students were expected to learn various paradigms of research then apply those lenses to other scholarship and identify complexities and holes in the conversation around leadership and gender. Many students shared initial feelings of confusion surrounding the new concepts and identified longer, more complex readings as difficult to navigate. This was affirmed in students' initial reflection paper on gender and leadership, where most participants showed little to no comprehension with theoretical foundations. However, by the end of the course, most students showed progress, particularly around concepts and terms related to gender. Students noted in-class discussion and active, engaging class activities that broke down more complex theoretical ideas allowed for greater learning and growth.

Another theme showed how the introduction of paradigms allowed a shared language of understanding about theory to critically analyze ideas and apply them. The synthesis papers, completed at the end of the semester, revealed several powerful instances of student analysis across multiple paradigmatic levels, offering graduate-level work for an undergraduate 2000-level course. Adell, a cisgender Latina, presented a cogent assessment of positivist framing to dissect the perpetuation of binary perspectives:

As humans, we simplify the world with the use of heuristics to save cognitive resources and create a false sense of understanding; our discomfort with uncertainty leads to this simplification in the form of a binary to not deal with the complexities of gender.

She furthered this examination by considering an example from her own life, using her understanding of paradigms to analyze an occurrence of structuring gender expectations and restrictions:

> *My brother and male cousins were also held to strict norms, evident in the instances when they would do anything labeled not masculine or associated with women, like wanting to paint their nails or helping in the kitchen. They would be met with the response "you want to be a woman? You better not be gay!" In this phrase we see the intersection of gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as my cousins were being called gay because of their desire to express "feminine" characteristics, assuming their gender identity as men. The positivist paradigm is evident in this statement because it implies one truth of what is correct for men; that men are not capable or should not be allowed in these spaces because they have been deemed for women. Thus, seeing gender through a dualistic lens creates limitations for people because it establishes rules for what gender can do what; gender is being used to restrict access.*

Kloe, a cisgender Asian American woman, offered an intensive dialectic engagement of Judith Butler's (1990) intimidating work on gender through allusions of performative practice. Butler posited gender not as an identity to be prescribed or owned by a person, but rather as an act, a perpetual and obligatory performance. Kloe's capacity to interact and employ complex gender theory offers an example of how teaching paradigms and then allowing students to get hands-on with theory can have a positive and surprising outcome. Kloe's final synthesis paper tackled theory at an impressive level of complexity. She painted a picture with the concepts, describing:

> *A man performing his masculinity is a magician performing his magic show. Every trick, the magician reinforces and proves to the audience that he is his title and every performance, every learned "masculine" characteristic reinforces to his peers that the identified male performer is his title of male. By not having his identity questioned, he is a normal and fine member of society.*

In both these examples, there were clear indications that the cognitive structuring of introducing research paradigms and the integration of interdisciplinary gender theory as an analytical lens led to deeper student understandings of how leadership may be accessed or enacted.

Student Co-Created Learning

In analyzing the data on a classroom environment where power-sharing and co-learning are at the forefront, factors of challenges, learning, and application emerged. As the instructor applied the tenants of critical feminist pedagogy, the learners became influencers in how the space developed. The identities and development of the learner, reflection of the learning, and application of new ideas were key findings of the co-created space.

Environment + theory + reflection = intended application.

Students' framing of their learning offered comparative examples of how students reflected on their shifts in understanding concepts from the beginning of the course to the end. These reflections included considerations of how they were influenced by external sources (family, education, religion, etc.) and how the experiences in the course broadened their perspectives beyond their original understanding. Student learning was deeply represented in the data, with over 350 participant references to learning from the course experience. Students mentioned significant shifts in understanding leadership, gender, the intersections of gender and leadership, and the broader implications of their learning within their worlds outside the classroom. James, a white cisgender male, summarized this focus on learning, "I learned how I can use all of this knowledge that is new to me to assess how gender plays a role in my life in terms of demonstrating good leadership."

Many of the synthesis papers offered examples of students stating intentions to apply their learning to future situations. This finding provides a way to consider how the course could be sustainable in its impact beyond the time spent in the semester. Students shared plans to be more thoughtful about pronouns, avoiding labeling people based on gender (or other identities), how they will apply leadership

concepts addressed in class in future leadership positions, and how they want to shape their worlds for better understanding based on learning from class.

The finding of intentions for application beyond the course clarifies the importance of classes where students are motivated to take their learning outside the course semester in question. Through addressing the topics of gender and leadership and giving the students tools and language to challenge inequitable systems, the course helped drive leadership of individual action. Coursework on theory can be disassociated with real-world issues. The finding of intended action reflects a direct outcome of students synthesizing theory and abstract data to shift their approach to everyday issues in gender and leadership. Students noted their own ability to change the problems presented in the course content – affirming their roles as leaders in creating a new construction of leadership from an equitable lens on gender.

Complexities of co-learning.

While having an open, brave (Arao & Clemens, 2012) classroom offered a host of positive outcomes, we also revealed some complexities to applying the pedagogy for a broad array of students with various developmental levels and identities. First, although in the minority, in the student evaluations, five students over all three courses noted they preferred a lecture-style, more highly structured classroom environment compared to the more power-shared critical feminist pedagogical application. One student noted, "The learning environment was very safe and interactive, but I do not feel like there was much of a teaching environment. [The instructor] said [she was] a facilitator but I think I would have enjoyed the class more if there was more of a structure." In these instances, students who are unaccustomed to being knowledge holders or co-learners/facilitators may retain a preference for direct instruction as a more appropriate way of "teaching."

Identity also played a factor in how students received the classroom environment and content. Specifically, the student reflections and evaluations as well as instructor observations highlighted challenges for students who identified as non-binary, genderqueer, or transgender as well as for cisgender, white, men and women students and students with strong religious backgrounds. Each of these identities presented unique experiences in growth and struggle for students. It was apparent cultural contexts highly influenced students' understanding of gender as well as its intersection with other identities. Danielle, a cisgender Asian American woman, expressed this well in stating, *"The definition of gender varies from culture to culture; different times and places define it uniquely."*

The broad variety of identities and perspectives in the classroom allowed for significant learning, but also did at times serve as a barrier. As students came into the class with identities that are both privileged and marginalized, as well as with an array of backgrounds where they may or may not have had these types of conversations, the overall environments of the courses were impacted. For example, while students were presented with information to critically examine a variety of viewpoints, the degree to which students were open to expanding their worldview varied. Cai, a multiracial, transman described how his perspective changed in understanding others but was also validated in being concerned with peoples' biases. This helped him process his own leader identity development:

> *I've been shoving my peers into a place of understanding without outing myself, for fear of "bias"... as recently as the last week of class, I've been around people who still don't understand how invasive it is to be... interrogated about... your identity.... this class has made me learn that people will have their own perspectives on the reality of gender and leadership, but that people can be taught that what they learned isn't necessarily the truth. What has been advertised as the one and only truth maybe [sic] just be one of many. All I can do is offer my wisdom and experiences and hope people understand the problematic points and injustices in some of these truths, helping us all understand each other one bit at a time. By trying to understand other people's truths, I can more soundly solidify why I exist in the truth I live in.*

As examined by Cai, students in the courses who held privileged identities such as white, cisgender, and/or straight were at times resistant to the information presented about experiences and identities outside of the gender binary or regarding racial/gender privilege. The instructor(s) observed

varying degrees of discomfort with examples of discrimination, oppression, and inequality in the course content.

At times, there were challengers who did not believe there was a direct correlation between gender and leadership. Candace, a cisgender, white woman, reflected in both her personal statement paper and final synthesis paper the disconnect she saw between leadership and identities, including her belief that anyone could rise to be a great leader if they put in the work:

> *The class talked about how the ideas of gender and leadership intersect with each other, which is something that I have always pictured as two separate things… I truly believe that if someone, of any gender, puts in the effort and dedication, regardless of which obstacles that they will most definitely have to face, they can become a great leader. Regardless of how "privileged" one person may be, every person will face obstacles of some kind, with varying levels of challenges and discrimination.*

The difficulty of balancing students' developmental levels influenced how the instructor(s) could support different students in the course. While some students connected deeply with the subject matter and at times were personally impacted by the content presented (as in Cai's example), other students served as barriers and/or committed microaggressions against their peers. These instances were handled in the moment if appropriate and followed up with after the class. In this complex environment, the foundational theoretical framework of co-learning, emphasis on marginalized experiences, and relationship building were crucial factors in the courses' success.

In addition to the challengers and students in progression, each course included one or more "clarifiers" or students from both targeted and privileged identities who, through various means, expressed their understanding of grappling with privilege in complex and nuanced ways. These students served as instigators of learning for their peers, allowing for a co-creating of knowledge through their own identity development experiences. Lisa, a white ciswoman, explicated, "Privilege and leadership go hand in hand. Unfortunately, people who have privilege are the leaders in our society and because of this, they only think about helping people on their level." In each class, certain students pushed their peers to deeper learning through their own processing of the content and personal experience. The depth of this knowledge sharing connects with engaged pedagogy and leadership development scholarship on understanding through narrative storytelling.

Discussion

Gender and leadership-focused coursework as investigated in this study can offer intensive, focused identity development within the container of leadership learning in higher education. The intertwining exploration of gender theory, reflection on foundational experiences of gender and leader identity development, and examination of socialization and positionality within inequitable systems allowed students to process complexities within the leadership present and possibilities of leadership for the future. While direct findings from the qualitative data cannot be generalizable, it is important to consider how elements of these outcomes can inform practice in leadership learning and development in higher education. Primarily, these factors can be considered through a lens of building a purposeful environment (research questions one and two) and training leadership educators to facilitate leadership development content for students from varying identities (research questions two and three).

Build the Environment

The study explored the impact of a learning environment curated through CFE pedagogy and purposeful theoretical grounding. It is important to consider how the findings inform our understanding of the skills to build an environment for deeper learning.

Focus on foundations of CFE pedagogy.

Fully integrating foundations of CFE pedagogy allows students a space to engage authentically and vulnerably. This is emphasized in the findings where students noted a deeper learning from peers and across the course content and assignments. Educators who seek to create a brave space in their classrooms must become well versed in these tenants in order to recreate the outcomes of this study. This will be a shift for some students who expect more structure or lecture styles, as noted in the findings as students are accustomed to the "banking model" of education and socialized to understand teaching and learning in restrictive structures (Freire & Macedo, 2000). Re-formulating these expectations to construct a more collaborative space also builds the foundation for collective buy-in to engage in difficult conversations across different identities and experiences.

Integrate paradigms + theoretical foundations.

Although not all students incorporated illustrations for paradigms or metaphors for applying philosophical gender perspectives, Adell and Kloe's depths of understanding are examples of why it is imperative to incorporate foundational tools for students to dissect and understand theory. Students may meet the challenge at varied levels, but avoiding the difficulty because of a fear that students will not be able to grasp the concepts would only hinder learning.

Highlight marginalized voices by de-centering dominant narratives.

In structuring the course, it was imperative to bring in voices not represented by the instructor(s) or (at times) the students. The instructor purposefully curated guest speakers, varied readings from disciplines across academia and outside of higher education, assigned TED Talks, podcasts, and mainstream media articles to include narrative experiences from a multitude of perspectives—eschewing normative leadership narratives (i.e. White, male, western, cisgender, heterosexual, positional, hierarchical) in favor of underrepresented (i.e. queer, transgender, women of color, collective) stories.

This de-centering of the dominant narratives aligns with critical race theory foundations (Brunsma et al., 2013) as well as culturally relevant leadership learning pedagogy (Guthrie et al., 2016) and had a clear outcome of broadening students' understanding of others' experience through introducing them to people's stories they would not have otherwise encountered or considered in standard leadership theory curriculum.

Do the Work: Educator Preparation

Findings addressing research questions on the student learning experience and environment offer implications for the process of learning to create and facilitate the space. In order to create a transformative learning environment, educators must be prepared in teaching an identity-based course such as gender and leadership to meet students "where they are at" and balance the co-learning and co-creation of engaged pedagogy with reasonable expectations of students' individual identity development (Meriwether; 2018; Spencer & Guthrie, 2019).

Student development theorists in higher education outline how students from different identity backgrounds in race, class, sexuality, religion, and gender might arrive in classrooms at varying levels of preparation to engage with difficult conversations about social identities (Patton et al., 2016). This was a clear finding of this study, with a range of student learning across identities. Finding balance between students' cognitive dissonance (blowing their minds) and supportive environment (allowing for paced growth) is the dance of teaching both leadership and identity-focused coursework. Educators should prepare for this dance through training in their graduate programs in student development theories, leadership educator development (Guthrie & Jenkins, 2017; Teig, 2018), and through personal work in grappling with their identities in relationship to systems of power, privilege, and oppression that influence leadership understanding and access (Guthrie et al., 2013, 2016). Educators can also rely on a network of critical friends to process with and receive feedback in this work (Owen, 2020).

The incorporation of theoretical lenses of gender and intersectionality as frames to view leadership necessitates preparation from the educator to create a balance in expectation of the learning

space. This requires being a skilled facilitator, navigating encouraging students to be peer co-learners and expand their worldviews by hearing other's stories. However, this peer learning cannot be to the detriment of marginalized students; it is not the job of LBGTQ+ students or students of color to teach their peers (Mahony, 2016; Melaku & Beeman, 2020). Furthermore, allowing this work to fall on these students will perpetuate microaggressions (Nedal et al., 2014; Seelman et al., 2017), trauma, and harm in the learning environment, undermining the sole purpose of an engaged learning space (Ospina & Su, 2013).

Implications

Through this case study, we offer indications of successful learning outcomes for a course on gender and leadership revealing the complexities of teaching identity-based transformative learning. The examination of the implementation of CFE pedagogy clarified how purposeful pedagogy can produce deep community in a course and offer a tool to deconstruct expert power in the classroom. The research also highlights the continued need towards updated, critically-oriented curriculum for learning about leadership and identity as well as the need to develop educator capacity to teach identity-focused courses. CFE pedagogy should be considered by educators to purposefully co-create a brave (Arao & Clemens, 2013) community. The use of narrative assignments, the relevance of taking time to focus on course environment, and the centering of marginalized voices in the course content all can be foundational grounding for developing a co-learning community in the classroom. This aligns with leadership scholar's encouragement towards culturally relevant (Guthrie et al, 2016) and critical leadership pedagogy (Pendakur & Furr, 2016).

The framework of critical feminist thought offered a base for emphasizing relationships to deepen cognitive and affective learning. This purposeful foundation allowed for powerful learning outcomes on understanding constructs of gender, race, intersectionality, and their interactions with and deconstruction of dominant narratives of leadership (Dugan, 2017; Fletcher, 2004; Owen, 2020). Higher education educators should examine where in their curricular or co-curricular structures an identity-focused class, workshop, or training may be implemented and where and how a comprehensive discussion on gender arises as a topic (or is glaringly absent) when exploring concepts. Identity-focused coursework offers a deeper dive into identity-specific issues in understanding leadership. Educators should consider where their curriculum is missing critical feminist perspectives on gender if the topic of gender is only added as an addition, rather than a central lens of focus.

To successfully implement coursework and co-curricular programing that integrates gender and leadership, higher education professionals tasked with facilitating student leadership development need competencies in navigating the complexities of teaching systemic inequities perpetuated in patriarchy and sexism, white supremacy and racism, heterosexism, genderism, and intersectionality. Furthermore, educators must acquire skills in the facilitation of individual identity work. Educators must reflect on their own socialization and engage in self-work to bring their whole selves to educational spaces (Landreman, 2013; Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018). These competencies align with calls for the formalization of leadership educator training in higher education and student affairs (Andenoro et al., 2013; Guthrie et al., 2013, 2016; Priest & Seemiller, 2018; Chunoo & Osteen, 2016; Seemiller & Priest, 2015, 2017; Teig, 2018) and among leadership scholarship in other disciplines (Ospina & Su, 2013; Sinclair, 2010).

Conclusion

Leadership cannot be fully understood or developed without considering individual identities and their contexts in larger systems. The reconstruction of the leadership narrative has been created in recent years to be process and identity-oriented (Guthrie et al., 2013; 2016; Komives et al., 2011; Ospina & Su, 2009) and considered from a critical lens (Dugan, 2017).

Higher education must reformulate learning so students can grapple with the difficult nature of addressing social inequities, including those focused on gender in transformative ways. Educators must implement critical pedagogies to co-create space for these students to come to their own understanding of

complex ideas and challenges facing our society. This work can serve, as we have seen in this case study, to engender purposeful action for meaningful change in learning through critical feminist, identity-focused content.

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(Re)considering Writing Pedagogy in the Wake of AI

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Abstract

A student-centered, metacognitive, process-oriented approach to AI Writing. For teachers, scholars have argued that ChatGPT can assist in developing lessons, assignments, assessments, and other course materials. By generating and refining content, ChatGPT can free teachers' time from repetitive tasks and allow them to focus on higher-level instructional strategies.

Introduction

ChatGPT is a powerful Large Language Model (LLM) developed by OpenAI that utilizes natural language processing to have human-like conversations and assist with tasks, such as composing text (Siegle, 2023). Since its public release in late 2022, ChatGPT has sparked intense debate regarding its potential impact on education, with some hailing it as an innovative tool and others viewing it as a threat to academic integrity (Rudolph et al., 2023; Siegle, 2023). Within just days of launch, over 1 million users had experimented with ChatGPT, demonstrating its extraordinarily rapid adoption (Siegle, 2023). The capabilities of ChatGPT have prompted a range of reactions in terms of its classroom applications. Policies range from bans on district devices to actively integrating ChatGPT into lessons with clear ethical guidelines (Halaweh, 2023; Siegle, 2023). As this disruptive technology becomes increasingly ubiquitous, educators face challenging questions regarding if and how to implement ChatGPT to enhance, rather than hinder, student learning outcomes. The classroom integration of ChatGPT remains a complex issue entangled with concerns over plagiarism, privacy, and the changing nature of writing and assessment. It is a disruption that we all have to contend with. If we are interested in the potential of learning to transform our students' lives, we must be able to transform ourselves.

I argue that this technological disruption has invited us—compelled us—to think paradigmatically to stay afloat. Here I evoke Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1996): There is a pattern to the shifts in our understanding of the nature of the world. It is worth realizing that the "old ways" never really were static. This is true for most disciplines and certainly true in writing studies. It might be useful, then, to weave a thread through a selected history of how we developed our understanding of what it means to teach writing, paradigm by paradigm. By exploring these debates and tracing shifts in pedagogical values, we might then be able to fully consider the contours of the paradigm struggle we currently find ourselves within in light of the onset of ChatGPT and other LLM tools.

Shifting Paradigms

We begin with "current-traditionalism," the stasis of assumptions about what teaching should look like and how writing should be taught. In current-traditional writing pedagogy, the focus is on the *product* and not the *process* of writing. Prewriting exercises are employed only through the creation of outlines that form the unchanging skeleton of the final piece. The things they write do not change through meditation, development, or context. This approach has certainly found critics: In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paolo Freire describes current-traditionalism as an "essayistic literacy" that relies on a standardized, one-size-fits-all concept of education (Freire, 1970, p. 72). Freire traces how the assumptions of the dominant pedagogical paradigm fail not only to educate but function to reinforce

power inequities: education becomes an "instrument of oppression." This, Freire argues, is by design: the holders of this paradigm have no desire to subvert it and the power it offers: "The capability of [this form of] education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed" (Freire. 72). Davidson and Goldberg (2010) argue that we have to reconsider the traditional prioritization of "individualized performance in assessments and reward structures," which serve only to "wade down and impede new learning possibilities" (p. 52). If we do not heed the call for change, we "continue to push old, uniform, and increasingly outdated educational products on young learners at their—and, by implication, society's—peril" (Davidson & Goldberg, 2010, p. 24). More recently, Naghdipour (2021) argues that the current-traditional prioritization of rigid structure and grammar-drills impedes the development of higher-order writing tasks or "real-life workplace communication" (p. 2). Still, it should be made clear that current-traditional rhetoric is not a single, encapsulable position. Robert Conners (1981) argues that current-traditional rhetoric is a force, a "palimpsest of theories and assumptions stretching back to classical antiquity" (p. 208), which carry with them both pedagogical potential and risk. It will never "wither away" or be overthrown. It must be "supplemented," because it will never be "supplanted" (Connors, 1981, p. 219-220). Myhill et al. (2018), for instance, find evidence that "a functionally oriented approach to grammar, meaningfully embedded within the teaching of writing, can secure growth in writing."

An early antithesis to current-traditional pedagogy was "process pedagogy." The process-oriented approach to composition pedagogy emerged as a response to the limitations of product-oriented approaches, which focused primarily on grammar, mechanics, and the final written product (Peary & Hunley, 2015, p. 34). Process pedagogy emphasizes the development of students' writing skills and strategies as well as their ability to think critically and reflect on their writing processes. In process pedagogy, the focus is on the student's "real," "authentic" voice, which comes to be known through an extended and deep process of prewriting, freewriting, reflection, and revision. Found under the umbrella of process pedagogy is "expressivism," the value of discovering one's "expressive" voice. Expressivism values the unique voice and creativity of the writer and sees writing as a means of self-discovery and self-expression (Pierre, 2014, p. 375). It emphasizes the personal and subjective aspects of writing, encouraging students to tap into their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences when composing texts (Elbow, 1998). However, in later decades, critics have argued that an exclusive focus on personal expression may neglect important aspects of writing, such as rhetorical awareness, audience considerations, and the social and cultural contexts in which writing occurs (Scarbrough & Allen, 2014). Post-process theorists argued that expressivism offered no content; a student could think and reflect all they wanted, but without research, communication, and interaction with real societal conversations, the student will not develop or contribute meaningfully with their writing.

A branch of these criticisms later helped form a writing pedagogy that endeavored to expand the writing process beyond the limited scope of the writing classroom. Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) is a pedagogy movement that emerged in the 1970s to address writing skills in higher education (Bazerman & Russell, 2020, p. 12). WAC advocates for the integration of writing instruction and practice as a study of genre across all academic disciplines, rather than confining writing instruction to English or composition courses (Wardani et al., 2021). By teaching the genres of different field expectations, students practice multiple forms of authorship and learn to contextualize them in conversations with one another without privileging one form of discourse as "right." Doing so situates students in an active process of rhetorical negotiation through specialized and even contradictory procedures in a pedagogy that endeavors to function not like the traditional educational apparatus but like the modern workplace (McLeod & Soven, 1992, p. 165).

The rise of computers and the networked age brought about new conceptions of text, communication, and education. In 1996, The New London Group put forward a "pedagogy of multiliteracies" (Cazden et al., 1996, p. 63) that would mark the exigency and foundational values of new compositional approaches for decades. The New London Group called for education that helps students participate fully in the multimodal and networked forms of "public, community, and economic life"

(Cazden et al., 1996, p. 60). In light of this, the rise of 21st Century Digital Literacies recognizes that literacy is no longer limited to reading and writing, but also includes the ability to navigate and critically engage with various forms of digital and multimodal texts (Bell, 2019). Digital literacies encompass the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to engage effectively with digital technologies and information in various contexts. They go beyond technical skills to include critical thinking, information literacy, media literacy, and ethical considerations. Students are encouraged to explore and utilize various digital tools and platforms to compose texts that incorporate multiple modes such as text, images, audio, and video (Smith et al., 2020). Digital tools and platforms enable students to collaborate and co-create written texts in real time, regardless of geographical boundaries (Akoto, 2021). The pedagogy of digital multiliteracies emphasizes the synergy of multiple modes and communicative expression (Wargo, 2018).

Having traced these threads, I will explore how LLM technologies, such as ChatGPT, might interplay with these pedagogies, but first I will return briefly to Tobin. In explicating the movement from process to post-process, Tobin (2001) warns about the dangers of encapsulation (p. 15). Indeed, most of the scholars explored in this chapter would be, and in some cases, explicitly were, uncomfortable with being lumped into a single pedagogical position. The writing process is varied, vast, and complex, and an effective teaching process should be even more so. Tobin writes, in fact, that as a teacher he pulls this and that from multiple sources all across the "timeline" of composition:

> In most respects, I still remain clearly committed to a process design: I allow students to choose most of their own topics and forms and to work on essays for long periods of time punctuated by frequent feedback and revision. And I devote most class time to workshops, group work, writing activities, and discussions of invention and revision strategies. But I am no longer as rigid or as pure about teaching by not teaching. I have gone back to my earliest days by reinserting some of my old minilessons on how to identify your audience, how to establish a credible ethos, how to cite sources, and even how to write a five-paragraph-essay . . . at the same time, I find myself borrowing post-process language and methods to help students see how text and writers and readers are always and inevitably embedded in multiple contexts and cultures. (Tobin, 2001, p. 16)

Here, I agree. I argue that a teacher should be a *bricoleur*, weaving a tapestry of important pedagogical ideas and teaching what is found to be important and revelatory while keeping in mind the cautions and limitations of each system. The stage is now set to explore ChatGPT as the precipice for yet another writing paradigm. First, I provide an overview of how others have explored and conceptualized the potential role of ChatGPT in education. Once we have a sense of this thread, we can see how we might weave it into this "bricoleurean" pedagogy.

ChatGPT in The Classroom: The Research

For teachers, scholars have argued that ChatGPT can assist in developing lessons, assignments, assessments, and other course materials. By generating and refining content, ChatGPT can free teachers' time from repetitive tasks and allow them to focus on higher-level instructional strategies. Several authors have highlighted the productivity benefits of using ChatGPT to support content creation for educators (Azaria et al., 2023; Mogavi et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2023). As Mogavi et al. explain, "Educators, students, and researchers have used ChatGPT to write and proofread research papers, prepare lecture notes, create class presentation slides, and compose literature reviews" (2023, pp. 18–19). In my own experiments with the tool, I have found that when paired with my own pedagogical instincts, it is quite good at producing discussion questions from class readings or other materials. It can summarize, produce talking points, suggest approaches, or build outlines. It has been able to inspire a day's plan or lesson, flesh out an assignment prompt or rubric for me, or otherwise give me more material I can bring to my classroom.

For students, scholars have explored how ChatGPT can provide individualized learning paths tailored to each student's needs, interests, and pace. This type of personalized instruction has been shown to increase student motivation and promote mastery of the material. Mogavi et al. (2023) describe how ChatGPT was used in an educational math game to adapt explanations and feedback specifically for one

student's learning style (p. 22). This dynamic scaffolding helped students to stay engaged and develop problem-solving skills. Serving as an always available virtual tutor, ChatGPT can provide on-demand explanations, answers, and guidance to students' questions anytime and anywhere. Rather than waiting for the next class or office hours, students can query ChatGPT and receive immediate personalized support. This provides continuity between classes and supplements teacher availability, as discussed by Azaria et al. (2023), Mogavi et al. (2023), and Qadir (2022).[1]

Given the potential of these educational approaches, it is not surprising that mine is not the only voice here that conceptualizes this technology as an opportunity, if not an impetus, to think about this tool paradigmatically. Authors call for corresponding policy and pedagogical changes in education, and updated policies should address the appropriate classroom uses of ChatGPT, according to Chan & Hu (2023), Mogavi et al. (2023), and Qadir (2022). The authors suggest that rather than rote information retrieval, learning goals should focus on creativity, critical thinking, and the collaborative use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. Fayyad (2023) echoes the sentiment that traditional memorization methods are outdated. Instead, the focus should be on fostering creative thinking and integrating information. For individuals to effectively leverage these tools and add value, a modern skill set tailored to our evolving society is necessary (p. 4). Consequently, curricula and assessments may need to be redesigned for an AI-integrated education model, as noted by Chan & Hu (2023) and Rudolph et al. (2023). Kasneci et al. (2023) and Mogavi et al. (2023) recommend teacher training on best practices for incorporating ChatGPT while retaining creative pedagogy. Halaweh (2023) predicts that ChatGPT is poised to transform the field of writing in a manner similar to the transformative influence of calculators and computers on mathematics (p. 2). He argues for a shift in universities' approach towards AI adoption in education, learning, and assessment, suggesting that they should be proactive rather than reactive, and encourages a full revamp of their perspectives on education (p. 3-4). Milano et al. (2023) agree that adjusting and accepting LLMs might be the only lasting approach, mirroring the sentiments from their journal editorial and the International Baccalaureate's recent changes to their qualifications (p. 333).

What do we do with this in the classroom, then? Rather than attempting an entirely new paradigm in light of this technology, we must seek to understand it, and then, using that understanding, weave it through the tapestry of our own long-developed pedagogical frameworks.

Understanding ChatGPT

First, it should be recognized that aversion to ChatGPT in the classroom often stems from a misunderstanding of what a LLM such as ChatGPT really is. Characterized as an "Artificial Intelligence," teachers and students alike are primed to see ChatGPT as a thinking entity, a brain that can do the work for them. This prompts teachers to attempt to implement widespread bans that only serve to characterize the tool as a 'forbidden holder of all answers,' and prompts students to approach the tool as a crutch, lazily, and uncritically. Researchers have noticed this: Kasneci et al. (2023) warn, "Learners may rely too heavily on the model. The effortlessly generated information could negatively impact their critical thinking and problem-solving skills" (p. 7). Thus, the education of both teachers and students on LLM tools is essential if we aim to create a space for careful, critical, and transparent interaction with the technology. ChatGPT is not actually *thinking*. It generates language based on the linguistic patterns that it has detected across all of its training data. In repeating the language algorithms found across the wide array of discourses it has scraped across the Internet, it may often output information, but will not know what that information is. It simply repeats word patterns, and does not actually know what this information means or if it is true. Indeed, for this reason, authors warn against depending on ChatGPT alone for information without verification (Azaria et al., 2023; Fayyad, 2023; Kasneci et al., 2023; Mogavi et al., 2023; Qadir, 2022). ChatGPT is thus more usefully thought of not as an intelligence—artificial or otherwise—but as an algorithmic language tool, a tool to play with the ways that words often

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[1] Here, however, I would warn that LLM output can be inaccurate. My vision of pedagogical exploration of this technology, which I detail below, involves a critically mediated and supplemental approach.

connect across varying discourses. This is suggested in the conclusion of Ian Bogost's (2022) essay, "ChatGPT is Dumber Than You Think":

> GPT and other large language models are aesthetic instruments rather than epistemological ones. Imagine a weird, unholy synthesizer whose buttons sample textual information, style, and semantics. Such a thing is compelling not because it offers answers in the form of text, but because it makes it possible to play text—all the text, almost—like an instrument.

ChatGPT is best thought of as a language "synthesizer," a way to explore the different ways one might think through their own ideas, research, and rhetorical intentionality. In doing so, we create a framework for ChatGPT not as a cheating tool but as a way to further think about and work with language. Students should be led to this conclusion by showing them that the writing that the tool produces, when created without a heavy and thoughtful rhetorical hand by the student, is generic, general, surface-level, predictable, and prone to hallucinations/inaccuracies. This can be the topic of classroom discussion, hands-on collaborative testing, or the practice of critical evaluation. The goal is to understand that the tool is not thinking, so if they want thoughtful work, they will have to provide the thinking themselves. I acknowledge that this approach may not be entirely future-proof, and that we are placing trust in some things that are beyond our control with regard to our students, specifically the intrinsic motivation needed to claim ownership of their evolving authorial voice and process. But I've found this lesson and hands-on activity to help, and I think it will stay useful even if/when the quality of the writing that the technology can produce by itself improves. To get students to value their own rhetorical sovereignty, to grapple with what it means to produce *good* writing with and without the tool, is to push them in the right directions, where the 'blanket ban' approach does not.

Weaving The Threads

If ChatGPT is correctly approached as no more and no less than a language synthesis tool/play-space, it can speak to, supplement, or be part of elements from all of the paradigms explored here. From current-traditionalism, we have the call for structure, rules, steps, and the consideration of grammatical rules and conventions. LLM tools such as ChatGPT can help with this. With algorithms forged in thousands of examples of structured academic prose, we can ask an LLM to offer examples of sentence and paragraph revisions, or recite any structural, grammatical, or genre-dependent rules, conventions, or definitions. Rahman and Watanobe (2023) explain that LLMs can "provide suggestions (e.g., syntactic and grammatical)" (p. 5) to assist with writing conventions. I take this idea and extend it: the LLM can delve into these rules and definitions as far as a student would like in order to extend understanding. LLMs can be asked for their reasoning. In follow-up prompts, one can ask, '*Why* was the sentence revised this way? What is the impact? How does this change help the writing conform to one convention or the other?' When we ask an LLM to explain a grammar rule, students who do not fully understand can drill further, ask follow-up questions, ask the LLM to break the explanation down more, or ask for more examples of the rule in application. What we keep from this paradigm is the discourse knowledge of important conventions and rules that empowers us to write within and for the genres and discourses that demand it. What we change in this paradigm is that we give these rules to the students; we enable each student to engage in discussion about the rule, understand it, see it in action, and consider its rhetorical value.

From expressivism, we find value in copious and free exploratory writing. We let the student's writing wander about the page; at this stage unconcerned with grammar and structure: we want to let the student explore, find their voice, and unpack ideas. We see writing as thinking, and value the act of generation to create spaces for that exploratory work. If we hone in on the concept of 'generation,' LLMs can be immediate boons here. LLMs can be asked to produce unlimited amounts of writing. Students can ask LLMs to explore any range of topics and get a sense of what the general discourses have been saying. This might be akin to searching social media or Wikipedia about a topic as a cursory activity to get a sense of the conversations. But this goes further as LLMs react to student queries and follow-up

questions. LLMs can engage in dialogue with students: through the back and forth, ideas may be formed, honed, tested, and challenged. Through this back and forth, the student might be inspired by a certain argument, connection, or take. I'll state again here that, yes, a LLM only algorithmically predicts the next word from a giant library of language, but that does not preclude the LLM from producing novel constructions: LLMs, by their nature, are excellent at knitting words, sentences, ideas, or even genres together in potentially brand-new ways. When we ask LLMs to take on certain writing tasks informed by a range of personas—write as a doctor, a poet, a professor; moods—write melancholically, excitedly, angrily, argumentatively; genres—write as a poem, write as a proposal, write as a memo, write as a sonnet; we might get any range of potentially inspiring output. If the purpose of expressivist teaching is to generate, explore, and see where we end up, LLMs are more than capable tools to supplement this process.

From post-process theory, we engage in the study and practice of writing to, within, along, and across a range of discourses and genres, as well as learning to understand and navigate the socially constructed knowledge that forms the languages, methods, values, and procedures of the community. Here, too, LLMs can help us with their algorithmic knowledge of language across genre and discourse. If post-process pedagogy was enacted as a backlash to expressivism's aggressive internalization, LLMs can help us externalize and connect our thinking, writing, and process. We can ask LLMs to help explain to us the differences in language, discourse, and genre conventions across communities. We can ask LLMs to speculate on examples of how one rhetorical act might be executed according to the expectations of one discourse or another. We can ask for a range of examples for most genres and ask the LLM to break down and explain why and how the writing works in that discourse's light. Similarly, WAC pedagogy asks that we think outside of the boundaries of the writing classroom and consider communicative acts across audiences, genres, discourse, and class subjects. An LLM can be made to translate language from one discourse to another; stitch and weave ideas, conventions, and elements of varying conventions together; respond to ideas from the viewpoint or light of a discourse or a blend of discourses; and unpack its choices and reveal its reasoning, all of which could be excellent fodder for the students to analyze, evaluate, and rhetorically consider.

I want to stress here that the way I have talked about the use of LLM technology in the classroom has been very deliberate. LLMs can be very useful as supplements but not as replacements. In this approach, both an LLM's strengths and weaknesses are valuable in our classroom: that which it does well it can explain and exemplify, and that which it does poorly can be fodder for a range of evaluative and critical classroom activities. What functions as a bug in the technology becomes a feature when critically addressed in the classroom. The key here is that interaction with the LLM must be brought into the light: students should practice reflection and metacognition as they work with the technology by engaging with it live in collaborative group projects, record and document the back-and-forth of their conversations with the tool, and engage in copious journaling where they record their prompts, results, and rhetorical reflection and evaluation at play while considering both the input and the output.

Finally, we weave our LLM thread through the pedagogies of 21st century literacies. Here the match is at its most intuitive. This paradigm sounds a call to embrace the shifted values of a technologically influenced and mediated society. By learning how to productively, ethically, and transparently work with the LLM, we teach our students to interface critically with digital writing and digital technologies. When we guide our students to explore how the tool can bring ideas, examples, and language to the table alongside the theory and practice of the tool's strengths, limitations, and risks, we set up our students with tremendous advantages as they continue their education and careers in an increasingly digitally mediated professional work environment.

Becoming Bricoleurs

I believe our highest ideals as writing teachers are emancipatory and transformative. Our goal is to teach our students to write, and in doing so, we teach them to navigate, assess, read, analyze, and critically evaluate the forces that structure and run the discourses within the world. Here, we teach our students new perspectives: we invite our students to understand not just the expectations of the genres and

discourses they are writing for and within, but also what purposes those conventions rhetorically and discursively serve. So too we can—and we should—transform our students' understanding and perspectives of LLM technology, both through hands-on use and experimentation with the tool directly to help us interrogate these genres, conversations, and discourses, and as the subject itself of deep and critical classroom discussion. These tools will continue to grow in ubiquity and power, and are being widely used (Siegle, 2023). However, if our students gain practical, critical, and ethical experience with the tool in their classrooms, they will carry these approaches out into the world.

It is a strange, dynamic, and challenging time for teachers. It is a time that demands transformation, both of us and our pedagogies, and of the students who must learn how to develop, think, work, and write within a fast-transforming world. I have proposed viewing ChatGPT through a paradigmatic lens as the latest development inviting us to reconsider assumptions about writing and learning. Tracing key paradigms in composition history illustrates the field's continual evolution to match changing technologies, discourses, and values. Current-traditionalism, process pedagogy, expressivism, post-process theory, collaborative writing, multiliteracies, and 21st century digital pedagogy each foreground different priorities. A bricoleur teacher can weave the most effective elements together. ChatGPT aligns with yet redirects aspects of prior paradigms. It necessitates upholding humanistic educational values while harnessing AI's potential. My framework suggests integrating ChatGPT as a supplemental tool for personalized learning, discourse immersion, genre exploration, and critical reflection. This interaction fosters metacognition and ethical technological literacy vital for their futures. As new paradigms continually emerge, teachers must analyze their implications for writing studies and strategically determine how to weave each thread into an ever-evolving pedagogical tapestry.

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The Transformational Teacher's Caring Presence

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Abstract

We regularly stray from honoring the centrality of our own humanity, and that of our students, in the teaching process. We become distracted by our routine tasks, preparations, meetings, tests, technological tools, and myriad other elements embedded in the teaching profession. Yet to respond to the call to teach is to accept the invitation to become an ever more Caring human being, and to communicate this ongoing Caring so that it is richly experienced by our students, especially at this point in time when stress, anxiety, confusion, and fear are at record levels among our students. To reclaim our personal sense of agency and more fully emancipate our human Caring for our students can be restorative, revolutionary, and transformational. This paper is a reflection and a call.

Keywords: teaching to transform, teacher presence, teacher immediacy, person-centered approach, dialogue-based learning

Introduction

Teaching at its highest is more than a profession: At its best, it's a life "calling" to which we respond (Buskist et al., 2005). Pursuing the art of truly transformational teaching is a lifelong endeavor we never totally master but can certainly get better at along the way as we further refine our classroom practices, and, even more importantly, ourselves.

For over a half-century now I have offered what I have considered to be person-centered (Rogers et al., 2014) and dialogue-based (Gordon, 2020) transformational courses. I currently teach courses in Interpersonal Communication, Leadership and Communication, Communication and Love, the Art of Mindful Dialogue, and Seminar in Listening, fulltime and on a highly multicultural university campus., For more than a decade prior, I served as an instructor and visiting assistant professor at over a half-dozen other colleges and universities across six states in the U.S.

In these pages I offer some of my own cumulative personal reflections and learnings, which are also consistent with a strong base of mainstream evidence-based research. For this reflective essay I ask myself: *What have I most learned about the art of effective transformational teaching across this half-century span of place and time?*

An Ethic of *Caring*

Mayeroff (1971, p. 1) offers this simple conception of *Caring*: "To care for another person, in the most significant sense, is to help them grow and actualize." A *Caring* teacher today fully recognizes that our students are under tremendous pressures and uncertainties in this contemporary era. Based upon student data obtained by the American College Health Association (2019), we can predict that during a given academic year the majority of our students are likely to feel anxious (around 66%), depressed (60%), sad (72%), lonely (67%), emotionally exhausted (85%), psychologically overwhelmed (88%), traumatized (70%), hopeless (60%), and some will be suicidal (27%). When we provide a safe classroom space for our students to speak into, we clearly hear them speak about how extremely difficult at times their lives can feel. The *Caring* teacher seeks, as did Hippocrates, to impose no further harm, but rather to

tend, comfort, nurture, support, and develop. We personify hope, and even help heal the damage inflicted by our surrounding world and encourage our students to continue forward.

 Much of our development in the art of teaching is spiral in form. As Mary Catherine Bateson notes (1994, p. 31), "Spiral learning moves through complexity with partial understanding, allowing for later returns." As our learning spiral lifts and widens across time, we increasingly want to communicate our *Caring* for our students ever more authentically (hooks, 1994; Palmer, 2017; Rogers, 1995). I have come to finally realize that *Caring* is at the central core of our teaching craft (Mayeroff, 1990). *Caring* deeply not only about our subject matters, but also *Caring* about our individual students. This *Caring* is not superficial or shallow, it's full. There are levels and layers of *Caring*, and the more engrossed we become with the art of teaching the deeper our *Caring* extends to our students and our topics, and we come to outwardly emanate this inner *Caring*. As Denton (2004, p. 105) has suggested, "Resisting institutional dogma and authority, we must listen to our own hearts . . . we presence a pedagogy of feeling that restores the human contours of experience to everyday life." Our passion for our disciplinary themes, our students, and catalytic interaction between them, becomes palpably authentic, comes from deep within, and excites, invigorates, and yields positive consequences (Buckner & Frisby, 2015).

 Each of us follows our own process of phenomenological progression within this art of teaching to which we have committed. I remember clearly as a graduate teaching assistant periodically standing in front of the class in a three-piece suit and tie, solely calculated to enhance my credibility and authority. That attire soon went by the wayside, but for many years was replaced by an invisible suit of psychological armor designed to continue to protect me from these "Others" whom I repeatedly had to face, and who sat in judgment of me, as I did of them. This self-protective armor mostly dissolved as decades passed, though even now occasionally an invisible shield of presumed "protection" momentarily rises and must be addressed mindfully in order to relax it, since this barrier is not in fact protective but counterproductive.

 On the whole I have learned to make myself more "real" with my students, more "authentic," down-to-earth, humanly, and emotionally accessible. This, of course, means becoming more emotionally and socially vulnerable, which students often recognize and appreciate. As bell hooks (1994) expressed in *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, "Professors must practice being vulnerable in the classroom, being wholly present in mind, body, and spirit." Movement into vulnerability is a prerequisite for creating a classroom climate of authentic sharing, daring, and *Caring*. I remember once asking a new colleague some years ago, in about the fourth week of their first semester of teaching in our program, "How's your relationship with your students going?" This colleague at first froze in place with a startled and even frightened facial display, then took a definite step backward, and finally warily asked, "Relationship?"

 Making ourselves vulnerable enough to slow down, and to truly get to see and know our students is the first step in learning to *Care*. As William Blake famously observed over two centuries ago, "A fool does not see the same tree that a wise person sees." Nor does a detached, distant, and dominating teacher see the same student that a *Caring* teacher is enabled to see. De-centering from ourselves and compassionately re-centering from within the realm of students, and connecting with them, is among our continuing challenges. Slowing down and taking the time to become more fully receptive to our students, to sense who and how they are before us, and from where they might be coming, this is to begin to enter into meaningful relationship with our students (Frymier & Houser, 2010). To be here with them, to come to sense and know them, and to gather with our students in friendly and exploratory dialogue around our subject matter while *Caring* for it, them, and our process together (Palmer, 2004).

 I'm aware of three guiding foundational conceptual models that provide direction in my own person-centered and dialogue-based approach to a *Caring* pedagogy. These will next be briefly summarized.

Communicating Classroom *Caring*: Guiding Models
The Person-Centered Approach

The first foundational theoretical model upon which I call in my dialogue-based coursework is the "person-centered approach" of the late eminent psychologist Carl Rogers (Rogers, 2004; Rogers & Farson, 2015; Rogers & Russell, 2002; Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1989). Rogers famously identified three "core conditions" for creating productive, satisfying, and growth-promoting interpersonal communication: *Unconditional Positive Regard* (colloquially referred to as *Warmth*), *Empathy*, and *Genuineness.* Those of us intending to serve as person-centered facilitators of learning will benefit from consistently returning to practicing these three sets of interpersonal behaviors. We will exude a *friendliness* in which students' nervous systems can relax as we attempt to *understand* them from both our head and heart and be *genuine* and open with them. We mean no harm, we bring only goodwill; and to human organisms on a quest for safety in this 21st century world, this is appropriate and wise communication action (Kurtz & Martin, 2019; Porges, 2017). Whether we use a dialogue-based approach, a lecture-based style, or any pedagogical method, striving to create *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* is worthwhile and wise (Bockmier-Sommers et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2017; Anderson & Guerrero, 1997). As we choose to do so, we are enacting "the person-centered approach" to teaching and learning, and our students will benefit (Rogers et al., 2014; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994; Rogers, 2004) from this solid and conducive foundation.

Our humane and heartfelt goodwill, when we sustain it, impacts our students' lives. With our *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* we help them rise to their potential as people and learners, and this touches their hearts. They come to hold us dear. Sometimes our contribution is singular: we give them something that few others do in their world. We lift them, draw them forth, fire them up, and enable them to reach toward their best potential (Johnson & LaBelle, 2023). Students sense our passion for them as human beings, as well as for what we're teaching. With our overall *Caring* presence, we assist them to awaken to possibilities, we support the further evolution of their humanity (Virat, 2022).

We call upon our *Empathy* when we resist writing our students off when they do something other than what we would have preferred and we cut them some slack. We return to "looking again," we seek to respond helpfully rather than automatically "react" (Tausch & Hüls, 2013). We open our heart's most compassionate inner chambers and come from a place of human *Warmth*; not always perhaps, but when we can wisely manage ourselves. We seek to act out of the knowledge that our kindness heals and teaches more effectively than our harsher judgments ever could, and with far less collateral damage (Weger, 2018). We learn to gracefully give the benefit of the doubt more often, while still honoring our reasonable standards. We allow our students to bring out their best, and our best, even more of the time. We more often catch our students making progress. We learn when to be silent and when to speak. We learn to laugh; we learn to love.

Our *Caring* for our students manifests as our understanding, accepting, respecting, and prizing them, and they can see and feel this rich quality of our *Caring*. They clearly sense that we recognize and honor their personal uniqueness and immeasurability (Buber, 1970), and they feel validated and confirmed as human beings. This is something they are not necessarily getting in some (or even many) of the other contexts in which they function in daily life, including within certain other unidirectional classrooms and asynchronous online deliveries (Tausch & Hüls, 2013; Levering, 2000). But by their genuinely *Caring* transformation-oriented teachers, students are affirmed as worthwhile people who matter (Wilson et al., 2010). When we are at our best, our students receive our *Warm* friendliness and safety, our *Empathic* understanding and compassion, and our *Genuine* open presence in their lives, and we serve them well.

The WEG-VIBES Model of Dialogue

Secondly, I call upon guidelines for generative and reflective human dialogue from across the decades (Baxter, 2006; Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Bohm, 1997; Cissna & Anderson, 1998, 1994, 1990; Goodall Jr. & Kellett, 2004; Gordon, 2024, 2006, 2000; Isaacs, 1999; Johannesen, 1971; Matson & Montagu, 1967; Poulakos, 1974).

Synthesizing previous dialogue scholarship, the recent *WEG-VIBES* model presented by Gordon (2020) includes the PCA model of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* as summarized above, plus incorporates the dialogue values and practices of *Vulnerability*, *Imagination & Improvisation*, *Being Present*, *Equality of Participation*, and *Suspending* (i.e., the relaxing of premature labels, judgments, and conclusions). As a dialogue facilitator, the teacher using the *WEG-VIBES* model attempts to repeatedly return to honoring and presencing these eight core dialogue values and practices.

The teacher first remains aware of the quality of the "safe container" at any given time, recurrently attending to the quantities and qualities of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* present as a session unfolds. The teacher also coaches students to consider finding their genuine and personal "voices" by not permanently fleeing from *Vulnerability*. Students are asked to become periodically playful and spontaneous, to be open to hearing and expressing the inspirations of *Imagination & Improvisation* and letting these more freely flow whenever possible. Students are also asked to give their undivided attention to one another and our class session itself, since *Being Present* affects the quality of our overall learning climate. There is an attempt to gently strive for balanced *Equality of Participation*, giving all students fair opportunities to find and express their voices. If certain students say too much too often, and others share little, the dialogue facilitator gracefully then draws the silent members into the unfolding dialogue with a question, or simply by inviting them into the mix. Lastly, *Suspending* has to do with the facilitator inviting class members to practice "relaxing your grip" on automatic mental labelling and premature cognitive closure on all arising content. Rather than steering toward vigorously "defending" our judgments, we lean into *Suspending* as best we are able, in our shared journey into greater inquiry (Gordon, 2020).

In a dialogue format we not only *talk with* our students, we also amply *listen to* them (Andolina & Conklin, 2021; Rogers & Farson, 2015). We create a safe space for them to discover their "voices," and allow them to practice using their "voices" to share and explore what they're thinking and feeling. With our attentive present-centered listening we bring them into the world anew: *we listen them into being*. Whether in the classroom or synchronous online, we bring our students to life; we empower them to participate, to find their voice, to be heard (Lispari, 2010; Tienken, 2020). We enable them to feel more alive and energized by the end of a class session than at its beginning. And our underlying *Caring* is clearly communicated, understood, and well-received.

The Exemplary Leadership Model

Integrational perspective is provided by the model of "exemplary leadership" offered by Kouzes & Posner (2023). Teachers who aim at fostering classroom dialogue would ideally be aware of the broad leadership practices that empirical research repeatedly demonstrates are important to trans-contextual "exemplary leadership": (1) *Modeling the Way*, (2) *Inspiring a Shared Vision*, (3) *Challenging the Process* (i.e., innovating), (4) *Enabling Others to Act*, and (5) *Encouraging the Heart*. The teacher who hopes to foster class dialogue will themselves need to exhibit the *WEG-VIBES* practices in action, and therefore *Model the Way*. Valuing and enacting these practices becomes a key part of the *Shared Vision* that gets inspired in the dialogic learning community. To be offering a dialogue-based student course is to already be *Challenging the Process*. And by empowering students to speak, self-disclose, and share their voices and stories with others in class, the dialogue-based teacher regularly *Enables Others to Act*. Lastly, *Encouraging the Heart* is transpiring within the "safe container" of the dialogue context permeated by an ongoing tone and texture of *Warmth, Empathy,* and *Genuineness*. Having this efficient and integrative leadership model at hand to accompany the overall *WEG-VIBES* dialogue model (which itself subsumes the PCA model) can provide further overall useful conceptual clarity and direction for the transformational teacher.

Communicating *Caring* in the Physical Classroom

I have been asked to provide direct personal examples of what it means in actual practice to communicate *Caring* to our students in a person-centered and dialogue-based setting and will now attempt to give some flavor of this approach.

Throughout my teaching career, whenever room architecture and chair re-arrangement would permit, I have had my classes sit in a circular format. This has been so that we all have visual access to one another, feel seen, and share space equally within our circle. Since my classes are never unidirectional lectures delivered from a podium, and since I am seeking active student participation, equality, and engagement, the circle format has worked well. More important than its facilitative spatial configuration is what the circle communicates to the students: "You all have an equal seat at our transparent 'table,' and our communication can be multi-directional. I the teacher stand not above you, all eyes straight ahead on me, but sit with you at the same level, ready to engage our subject matter with you, all of us together in our learning community." Keltner (2016) has shown that operating from within an elevated "power" position often leads to empathy deficits and self-serving impulsivity, incivility, and disrespect; conversely, research indicates that "true" power (i.e., influence) results from extending empathy, showing gratitude, and sharing personal stories that unite. Minimizing explicit power divisions can be advantageous to the smooth functioning and well-being of a learning community.

Most frequently three books are used in each of my classes, and each week one chapter from each of our three books is assigned to be read by all students in preparation for our dialogue-based two hour and forty-five-minute session. At the session itself I will typically welcome each of our class members by first name as they join our circle and will often engage in small talk and friendly banter ("phatic communion") with individual students as we begin to settle-in for our session. Any spontaneous humor that arises is usually welcomed, and is helpful in relaxing moods, minds, and bodies (Appleby, 2018; Segrist & Hupp, 2015; Wanzer et al., 2006).

After preliminary class housekeeping, I will typically begin a session by asking students if they have had any personal experiences with any of our class topics and themes from our previous week's session. Did our subject matters intersect with their lives in any way, and if so, when and how? We usually go for ten to fifteen minutes or so of this preliminary voluntary sharing, re-instantiating our prior week's themes. Then a transition is made into our current session's topics. I will typically ask something like: "Who wants to start us off now in one of our chapters for this session, and what you found there that caught your attention, and energized you in some way?" Other times the phrasing might be about like this: "What caught hold of your attention and wouldn't let go?" or "Tell us about something in this chapter that has significant meaning for you" or "What in this chapter could you definitely learn from, and maybe use in some way?" or "What in this reading gave you added insight?" or "Was anything in this chapter written in such a way as to really stand out to you?" If no one responds within about a half-minute to this invitation, I'll call on someone by their first name, and we begin.

On occasion I will tell classes that we are going to be experimenting with accepting silences as they arise and having them be "okay" even if they feel awkward. We will let our contributions emerge naturally from these silences, rather than forcing ourselves to break them. This relaxation into silences slows a session down considerably and is not our consistent practice in my classes since there are course materials with which to engage; but periodically, they are worthwhile in altering the rhythm of a session.

We as transformational-oriented dialogue-based teachers rise above a limiting conception of our role as primarily "information transmitters" and, when we're able, also offer our humanity and personhood in our more ancient role as "wise elders" (Ferrari & Kim, 2019). We know that education at its best is not about just pouring in more information, it's about setting and stoking inner fires of curiosity, wonder, and discovery. It's not primarily about cramming-in, it's about teasing-out and facilitating synergistic exploration, creation, and reflection (Schwartz & Sharpe, 2019).

Rather than student passivity, wiser education is about eliciting student generativity. In a dialogue-based class we are asking students to not only exchange (trade) thoughts, but to discover more energetically what it means to in fact be "thinking together" such that the "whole" often does in fact become greater than the sum of its parts (Isaacs, 1999, Part. I). Dialogue is "shared inquiry" into a theme region, and within a "safe container" created and sustained by its participants. We at times share aspects of our histories and imperfections and allow our common humanness to be felt. Self-disclosure is inevitable, desirable, and useful in building classroom connection and intimacy ("in-to-me-see"). As much as reasonably possible, the dialogue-based educator will be emulating dialogue values and practices

of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, *Genuineness*, *Vulnerability*, *Imagination & Improvisation*, *Being Present*, *Equality of Participation*, and *Suspending.* The teacher gives hope that these are attainable for all. The teacher who attempts to facilitate classroom dialogue is a vital component in the process of catalyzing "shared positivity resonance" (Fredrickson, 2014) and productive dialogical pursuit.

A substantial body of quantitative "teacher immediacy" research has for decades made it clear that when we sincerely smile and laugh with our students, let our friendliness and enthusiasm show, use our students' names, chat with our students and learn about them, share our personal stories together, interact more and lecture less, validate our students with verbal and nonverbal praise and encouragement, make warm eye contact and use a supportive tone of voice, that we are creating a positive and nurturing learning atmosphere (e.g., Baringer & McCroskey, 2000; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Wilson & Ryan, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010). The teacher's caring, friendly, and supportive presence contributes measurably and significantly to student motivation and persistence, affective learning, cognitive learning, overall student satisfaction, and the creation of a transformational learning environment (Liu, 2021; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Mazer, 2013; Segrist & Hupp, 2015; Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010).

These outcomes are fostered within a person-centered and dialogue-based approach, and the facilitator attempts to set the tone and tempo for this to occur. Interweaving course materials, students, and teacher is a primary challenge, striving to harmoniously bring these components into confluence. This entails dialoguing over subject matter instead of the instructor endlessly lecturing about it and providing multiple opportunities for students to find and exercise their voices rather than having them suppressed. This past week in class a student said that he metaphorically thinks of me as a "gardener" tending our class members, our subject matter, and the soil of our learning environment. This was synchronistic with my saying to my wife earlier that very same day, as she was working in her garden right beside where I was preparing for class, that she and I were doing the same work: tending carefully to creating a good foundation within which growth can occur, and then be nurtured toward its maximum.

Communicating *Caring* in the Synchronous Online Medium

For just over three years now my courses have not been offered in the physical classroom (originally due to Covid-19), but instead as synchronous live sessions on Zoom, one evening per week per course, with those sessions lasting nearly three hours (including a twenty-minute break in the middle). Surprisingly, the transition to the electronic channel for creating a dialogue-based learning community (with no dark screens) has worked incredibly well.

As for the person-centered "safe container" elements of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness*, we continue to do quite well even within the online delivery medium. This is more possible than I would have imagined; it would be fair to say that the transfer to the synchronous medium has been successfully made (Motschnig-Pitrik, 2005). As always, students are reminded of the importance of our foundational core interpersonal communication practices of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* (the "*Big 3*" as I often refer to them in class), and these core conditions are periodically publicly reflected upon as to their operation within our learning community.

Session agenda and procedure has been the same as in the physical classroom: Students and professor gather around our assigned core readings and engage in human dialogue in response to them, while surrounded by a supportive psychological-emotional container. My role is to keep the dialogue moving, and to paraphrase what I am hearing some students share to make it clearer for myself and others. I also at times ask questions of clarification to tease-forth more complete responses, giving students practice in developing their thoughts.

In each session two or three Zoom breakout rooms will also be used, typically with four to five students per room. These breakouts allow for structural variety, greater personal connection, and enable the quieter students to speak more comfortably. Each breakout period is followed by a return to our larger group and a processing of some of what arose in our breakout rooms. The facilitator simultaneously monitors the clock, our rate of progress with course materials, equality of class participation, and overall presence of psychological comfort and safety.

Students are asked to be self-aware as to what they might be doing not only with their words, but also with their own bodies as they listen to others speak, including becoming aware at times of their supportive or non-supportive facial behaviors (their smiling, frowning, laughing, eye contact with screen); the presence or absence of their head nodding; their supportive or non-supportive tones of voice as they speak; and their sustained attention to each other and our themes of the session (Burgoon et al., 2021; Knapp et al., 2013).

These suggestions are shared with students in an effort to remind them that they "cannot *not* behave," that everything they are non-mindfully doing with their bodies can be construed by various others as having message value and constituting "communication." Students are simply advised to become self-aware at random moments, knowing that not only are they perceivers of others' nonverbal behaviors but that they too are unconsciously "giving off" stimuli that can be perceived and interpreted by those others. To become ever more self-aware of the quality and tone of our personal presence is to increasingly assume responsibility for contributing to a supportive learning atmosphere. Dark screens are permitted only in exceptional circumstances and are not our norm.

We practice manifesting *Warmth*, its safe and friendly elements, in our electronic classroom, including acceptance, respect, and prizing. We seek to bring *Empathy* from our minds and hearts, and to let our *Genuineness* be felt, especially as accompanied by our *Warmth* and *Empathy*. And we are encouraged to dare to risk vulnerability at moments; to yield to improvisational discourse emerging from our own mouths; to be highly attentive and present, to give everyone the opportunity to be heard; and to practice suspending premature attachment to firm judgments (the *VIBES* elements of our dialogue model). To this we aspire. Our class is framed as a learning laboratory, a place to mindfully practice putting into action what we study as we study it, moving from knowledge "about" to knowledge "of," and within a high-quality learning environment.

When I look at my computer screen and the frames where the students can be seen, I mentally, imaginatively, psychologically, and affectively "project" myself into their space, into their location. My mindset is to "enter" my students' worlds, their realms, to transcend the limitations of the plastic screen and create felt connections in a spirit of *Warmth* and *Empathy*. I want to see them and be with them and make this my operative mindset.

The students spend the majority of our class time sharing their responses to our class readings. I will also share messages and lines from our readings to which I personally am drawn but will typically do this in three minutes or less, so as not to crowd out student contributors from equal and open access to our dialogue. I attempt to give most such comments with an air of "to-me-ness," and not as final pronouncements of Truth. The purpose of our dialogues is not to reach pre-determined conclusions, but to have the experience of exploring our subject matter together. We stimulate curiosity, wonder, speculation, imagination, and application.

Creating opening and/or closing class rituals can also help in providing a sense of meaning and class unity. When in the physical classroom at the end of each session we would regularly stand up in our circle, join hands, and share silence for a half-minute or so. Next, we would huddle together in the center and stack up our hands, much as an athletic team might do. I would count "One, two, three!" and we would solidly yell out our course title together: "Interpersonal!" or "Dialogue!" or "Leadership!" or "Love," or "Listening!" This activity loses much in translation here, but in person it invariably had an energizing and bonding effect, and sent us off on a strong note, and smiling and laughing (often the shortest distance between hearts).

Synchronous online classes render impossible this former closing ritual, but an equally worthwhile substitute closing ritual has emerged just this semester. Again, much will get lost in translation here, but this risk will be taken. After our substantive session has drawn to a close, I ask everyone to unmute themselves, and then remind them, tongue-in-cheek, that it is now time for our closing "meditation." I count "One, two, three!" and then we all, each in our own location and with our camera and microphone on, throw our hands up into the air, extended above our heads as if in a victory pose, and loudly utter the sound "*Wheee!*" We repeat this routine for a total of three such utterings and full arm extensions. We are inevitably laughing together at this point, and camaraderie is in the air. Then

folks wave to each other, smiling, and log off, and I leave last. Again, this mini-ritual might not sound like much in words on a screen, but in actual practice it has much to commend it.

I also take the time to write a personalized class message each week along with the sending of each course's Zoom link, rather than having these sent automatically. These personalized class messages are casual, friendly, and usually humorous and motivational in intent, and remind students of exactly which chapters we will be dialoguing around at our next session. This personalization of our link-sending adds a total of at least three extra days of work to my semester, but it feels important to do it this way to keep our communication fresh and human.

Periodically other separate messages will also be sent to individual classes, suggesting concepts and themes from our prior week's session to perhaps be aware of and reflect upon as they continue on into the rest of their week. This is an attempt to help sustain student motivation and class connection.

What have been the downsides of our synchronous online connection? Roommate and family and pet or other distractions; signal difficulties; absence of physical proximity and touch; absence of in-person mutual eye contact; disruption of a natural dialogue flow and rhythm due to the closing and opening of microphones. Upsides? No moving of class furniture; no bright fluorescent classroom lights; convenience of class access from our residences; and course and instructor evaluations by students that are superior to prior in-classroom years.

End-of-semester global student evaluations for both Course and Instructor across a two-and-a-half-year period were both significantly higher ($p < .01$) in the synchronous Zoom medium than for my classes previously held in physical classrooms on our campus. Sixty percent of these courses (nine of fifteen classes) received perfect 5.0 course and 5.0 instructor scores, and with high rates of response averaging sixty-four percent, and none below fifty percent, per class (Gordon, 2023).

A content analysis of the qualitative open-ended student responses across the most recently completed academic year yielded the following six qualities of the professor that were perceived as especially "helpful" to students: *empathic understanding; caring; positivity; kindness; knowledge; and the facilitation of a safe and comfortable learning atmosphere.*

I do not socialize with my students outside of class or off-campus and am not their social "friend" in that sense; yet I do feel as very much their wise elder "friend" within our class experience, and outside it by electronic connection. I also let my students know that I am thinking about them and our topic between our class sessions, and that each course is a unique and singular phenomenon, never again to be repeated with exactly this cast of characters, and that they, my students, are truly highly meaningful in my life. I choose to be referred to as "dr. g" by my students rather than by my first name alone, or my title and last name.

Our 21st Century Students Need *Caring*

My students are down-to-earth people leading real lives, and not always easy ones. It feels satisfying to "be there" for them. Today as I write these words, for instance, I receive an email from an older female student who is currently in the hospital and needing an unexpected surgery. She writes she will not attend class this week. I write back in a spirit of compassion and supportiveness, and we exchange four or five rounds of emails, leaving me confident she knows I care about her well-being. This is an inspiring student who at one time was addicted to alcohol and drugs and has now been clean for many years and is employed as a certified substance abuse counselor.

Two days ago, I had a male student shedding tears during class, he was so happy to have found his way to the two courses we have together this semester. He has had a rough past, including a failed marriage and an ex-wife who has a restraining order in place against him that stipulates he cannot see his teenage son for another five years (in large part related to dad's past lack of adequate anger-management skills). I let him know that I clearly see his desire to get unstuck from a checkered past and grow as a human being and continue to commend him for his willingness to create a healthier future. This was an attempt to communicate caring and have this student *experience* this caring.

As do most of us, I have other students who are working full time in addition to taking a full college load, and periodically fading under the strain. Others are student-athletes and working both sides

of that equation. Many other students are in romantic, family, friend, or work relationships that are troubled and turbulent. And, again, two-thirds of our students are attempting to cope with anxiety and spells of depression. This is commonplace reality for many of us teaching in an era of speed and noise, division, distortion, danger, and the stresses that so frequently result.

These are real people in our classes and living daily lives of challenge and difficulty. The more we can shine our light of *Warmth*, *Empathy*, and *Genuineness* their direction, as we all together inquire into our course subject matter, the less pain their suffering causes and the more their resilience is stoked (Floyd, 2019). As William Miller (2017, p. 51) has wisely expressed it, "There is in particular an odd belief, never supported by science, that if we can just make people feel bad enough about themselves, then they will change. If anything, the opposite is true: that when we feel unacceptable, we are unable to change. Shame and humiliation are paralyzing." As *Caring* transformative teachers we avoid doing further harm, we bring pause to our students' pain, and arouse their hopes for self-restoration and further unfoldment.

Conclusion

There's so much more to being a transformational teacher than meets the eye. The longer we teach, the more we realize how much there is to the art and craft of meaningfully expanding other human beings' wise perspectives and practices, and how it is not primarily about staying emotionally aloof and conveying bits of information (Frymier & Houser, 2010). It is about people communicating, and ideally communing, with each other at levels of mind, heart, and spirit. What a beautiful and time-honored profession this is, and how very much potential it holds not only for the growth of our students, but for ourselves, as teachers and human beings. As Mayeroff (1990, p. 54) long ago observed, "We are 'in place' in the world through having our lives ordered by inclusive caring."

It is so easy to get distracted by our syllabi, our lesson plans, our content objectives, our technological tools, etc., but the key element in the overall student experience is *Us*: Our *Warmth*, our *Empathy* and compassion, our *Genuineness* as a human being. When we bring the *best* of our own humanity to our classroom teaching, transformations can occur (McKenna & Rooney, 2019). This of course requires ongoing inner work, self-care, self-reflection, emotional and social intelligence, maturity, wisdom, resilience, and our own continuing development as a person and a professional across time.

What a formidable challenge, and grand opportunity, we have chosen by saying "*Yes*" to our call to teach in this lifetime.

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Contemplative Clinical Supervision: Secularized Lectio Divina to Cultivate Multicultural Awareness

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Abstract

Research has shown that when educators present information creatively, it strongly influences the connection to the material. Contemplative practices offer a creative method to incorporate multicultural training into clinical supervision through transformative learning experiences. This study explores the impact of a contemplative learning tool, Lectio Divina, on students' level of multicultural competence in a clinical supervision course (n = 21). A mixed method design was implemented to capture pre and posttest scores using the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) by measuring students' multicultural competence. Qualitative data captured counseling students' experiences during each step of the Lectio Divina intervention to catalog students' insights and to gather a deeper perspective of the contemplative technique. Quantitative analysis revealed an increase in counseling students' multicultural awareness. Themes that emerged from the qualitative data were challenging assumptions and biases, judgement and lack of empathy, challenging and suspending judgement, and the power of empathy. Together, findings demonstrate the value of transformative learning applied to clinical supervision, delivered through the contemplative practice of Lectio Divina to foster counselor introspection and increase multicultural awareness.

Keywords: contemplative practices, multicultural awareness, clinical supervision, Lectio Divina

Transformative Learning in Counselor Education

The theory of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997; 2000) describes the process of a deeply constructive and meaningful way of learning that goes beyond basic knowledge acquisition and holds the process of self-reflection as a key determinant in assessing the validity of one's way of making meaning. Transformative learning involves an iterative process of investigating and revising assumptions and expectations about the world (frames of reference) in response to challenging experiences that disrupt these assumptions and lead to a richer, more complex understanding of the world (Mezirow, 2000). This ability to identify one's own frame of reference and understand how to make meaning is, in essence, a transformative experience (Swanson & Caskey, 2022). Transformative learning is likely to occur when frames of reference are challenged because it is when these frames are threatened that individuals tend to experience unpleasant emotions which then serve as a catalyst in identifying and reconsidering unproductive assumptions about the world (Nogueiras et al., 2019).

In counselor education, transformative learning has been used in various ways. For example, Strear et al. (2019) used transformative learning to promote student collaboration and increase knowledge of accreditation standards. Transformative learning has been implemented in clinical supervision as an instructional tool to educate supervisees about normative development (Watkins et al., 2018).

Transformative learning has also been used to conceptualize and understand the evolution of counseling students' meaning making and how they experience emotions in challenging training environments (Nogueiras et al., 2019).

Within the framework of transformative learning theory is contemplative andragogy. Contemplative practice is an important component of transformative learning as it fosters critical reflection, increases self-awareness, and allows other viewpoints to develop about self and others (Beer et al., 2015). There has been a call in higher education to shift the paradigm from more traditional modes of instruction in which teachers impart knowledge that is passively received by students to more collaborative and transformative instructional methods (Strear et al., 2019). This is especially true for students within counselor education and supervision programs. Watkins and colleagues argue (2018) that developing an identity as a counselor is itself a transformative learning process. By establishing transformative learning environments and implementing creative methods in which counseling students and instructors can actively engage in a dynamic interchange, more profound learning can occur (Strear et al., 2019). With this in mind, the researchers in this study were interested in applying Lectio Divina within clinical supervision to investigate the impact it might have on counseling students' level of multicultural competence and to gather greater insights into their experiences during the instructional process.

Contemplative Andragogy

Contemplative practice denotes activities in which one engages with the aim of calming the mind and body, concentrating deeply, cultivating awareness of the present moment, and maintaining a mindful presence (Center for Contemplative Mind in Society [CMind], 2017). Contemplative andragogy is emerging as an alternative to traditional instruction in counselor education and supervision (Dougherty, 2015). The core values and qualities associated with contemplative practices are compassion, acceptance, skillful listening, honest self-reflection, integrity amid complex situations, open communication, sustainability, and commitment (CMind, 2017). While providing interventions that foster creativity and the learning of course content, contemplative andragogy offers educators a wide range of methods that encourage the development of attention, emotional balance, empathic connection, and altruistic behavior (Zajonc, 2013). Contemplative practices can be structured in nature and still offer flexibility and improvisation throughout the process.

Importantly, contemplative practices in the learning space engage students in a process of self-inquiry, employing creativity and introspection to develop an awareness of the learning process itself (Barbezat & Bush, 2013). By utilizing contemplative practices, transformative learning takes place as one reevaluates expectations about a situation and uses self-reflection and questioning to challenge current assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). While the use of contemplative andragogical strategies in counselor education and supervision is becoming more accepted, empirical evidence to support its effectiveness is still in its infancy. Thus far, the research shows the use of contemplative approaches has helped counseling students to reduce stress (Gutierrez et al., 2016), cultivate therapeutic presence (Campbell & Christopher, 2012) and build empathy (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015). In addition, contemplative practice has predicted counseling self-efficacy (Greason & Cashwell, 2009) and improved students' relational well-being (Dorais et al., 2022). These findings hold promise for wider application of contemplative instructional methods within counselor education and supervision.

Transformative and Contemplative Practices in Multicultural Instruction

Counselors are called upon to enhance the quality of life in society and to safeguard respect for human dignity and diversity (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2014). The Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling Competencies (MCSJCC; Ratts et al., 2016) and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2015) standards clearly articulate the importance of training counselors to proficiently address diversity and inclusivity issues in counseling by infusing culturally relevant content throughout the curriculum. Moreover, increasing multicultural competence is a lifelong intentional self-reflective, action oriented process, involving ever-increasing

self-awareness. Counselors must continue practicing techniques to observe and develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills in order to take action when appropriate, beyond a graduate program (Arredondo et al.,1996; Ratts et al., 2016). To this end, transformative learning provides counselor educators and clinical supervisors a way to address students' problematic assumptions and fixed frames of reference about diverse clientele, and to cause these frames to be more open, reflective, inclusive, and amenable to change (Mezirow, 2000) making it especially pertinent to multicultural training.

Traditional multicultural counseling instructional methods include lectures, article reviews, group discussions, journaling, and interpersonal process recall supervision to promote self- and multicultural awareness (Dougherty, 2015). However, when discussing sensitive topics relating to diversity, such exercises may help some students recognize their resistance to the subject matter, while other students may have trouble or experience discomfort and consciously or unconsciously disengage from the discussion and activity (Brubaker et al., 2010). Because discussions involving issues of diversity often produce physical and emotional discomfort for both students and instructors alike, instructors and students require reliable methods to work through such inquiry for these conversations to be effective (Berila, 2015). Transformative and contemplative practices are particularly well-suited to the clinical supervision of counseling students for their potential to regulate affect, facilitate equanimity, empathy, and creative connection to others, communities, and the world at large (Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Contemplative practices have been applied to multicultural (Hilert & Tirado, 2019; Nelson & Quigley, in press), anti-oppression, and social justice andragogy in higher education (Berila, 2015; Howes & Smith, 2017). Using a transformative learning approach in the multicultural training of school counselors, Pompeo-Fargnoli et al. (2020) found that participants reported an increase in their multicultural competence as described in deeper understanding of their own privilege, an increase in knowledge of students from diverse backgrounds, and a better understanding of worldviews. Contemplative practice has been shown to create a safe environment in which to explore biases, manage potentially distressing thoughts and emotions, and develop greater ability for embracing others through the cultivation of an accepting, nonjudgmental attitude (Heselmeyer 2014). Specifically, the practice of Lectio Divina, a transformative contemplative practice, can provide students a safe space in which to explore reactions to course material in a way that fosters awareness of their reactions and how these reactions affect their worldviews with a clearer understanding of self and others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Wright, 2019) and has been recommended as a way to facilitate deep and meaningful multicultural conversations (Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a medieval monastic contemplative reading practice meaning, *divine reading* in Latin (Gray, 2009; Wright, 2019). Lectio Divina is a type of contemplative practice that can be utilized in a secularized form as a transformative andragogical method. Lectio Divina is the practice of listening to the meaning of a text and transitioning this meaning into a deeper understanding of the text. Traditionally, the practitioner's ultimate goal is to move from an acquaintance with the divine to deeper, more intimate relationship and commitment (Gray, 2009). Alongside traditional instructional practices, modified versions of religious contemplation are common in contemplative andragogy and offer enhanced self-reflection, introspection, and increased empathy and compassion during the learning process (Barbezat & Bush, 2013; Dougherty, 2015; Wright, 2019).

Lectio Divina Applied to Clinical Supervision

Clinical supervision is considered foundational to the counseling profession, indicating its critical role in shaping counseling skills, competence, and ethical standards for counselors (Chamberlain & Smith, 2018). Clinical supervision has been defined as an intervention provided by a senior counselor of the profession to a more novice counselor that has unique interactions that could include consultation, gatekeeping, and education, as well as creating an atmosphere that encourages the exploration of self through awareness and insight (Chamberlain & Smith, 2018). According to the Association of Counselor

Education and Supervision (ACES) Best Practices in Clinical Supervision standards (5. c.i., 2011), supervision is intended to promote contextual sensitivity around multicultural factors and should foster the development of students' multicultural competence. The ACA code of ethics (2014) and the CACREP standards (2015) also address the importance of training multiculturally competent counselors. In addition, the MCSJCCs (2016) guide counselor educators in incorporating these competencies into their instruction and clinical supervision. Counselors high in multicultural competence value minority populations, demonstrate awareness of their biases, acknowledge worldviews without judgment, and obtain the skills for providing multiculturally sensitive counseling interventions (Shannonhouse et al., 2020). Knowledge of the codes and standards provides a scaffolding for counselor educators and clinical supervisors to support students in safeguarding and upholding respect for human dignity and diversity.

However, due to the emotionally charged nature of multicultural instruction (Hilert & Tirado, 2019), clinical supervisors face challenges and may lack the tools needed to engage students in deep and meaningful dialogue surrounding diversity. Bringing contemplative methods into clinical supervision can support traditional counseling training practices by helping students cultivate a deeper understanding of the material and thereby enriching their counseling work with clients through enhanced empathy and compassion (Dougherty, 2015). Transformative learning applied to clinical supervision can be used as a reflective, instructional tool to educate supervisees about their normative development (Watkins et al., 2018). Lectio Divina provides a supportive and structured method in which to encourage students to broaden their views and strengthen their ability to contextualize how their personal worldviews and use of language may be experienced in relation to others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Nelson & Quigley, in press).

Lectio Divina offers clinical supervisors a way of engaging counseling supervisees in embodied multicultural supervision to increase not only their cognitive understanding of their interactions with clients, but insight into how their noncognitive reactions (intuitions, emotions, and bodily sensations) impact their thinking and work with clients. Because Lectio Divina allows time for reflection and the scaffolding of complex reactions to emotionally charged material (Howes & Smith, 2017) it provides the clinical supervisor a richer perspective on the difficulties supervisees may face in their work with clients involving multicultural issues. Lectio Divina can be implemented in supervision to help supervisees recognize their internal thoughts and emotional reactions using texts such as journal articles, poems, vignettes, historical accounts, case reviews, and other material. This contemplative technique supports bringing multicultural awareness into action in the supervision session.

The authors present a four-step secularized Lectio Divina process for supervisees to foster self-reflection without judgment of thoughts and feelings, and to promote productive and positive multicultural discussions within the supervision session. Wright (2019) implemented a secularized version of Lectio Divina in his classes at the University of Minnesota at Rochester, which is the format used in this study. Instead of meditating on a religious passage, students in this study read a multiculturally themed poem. The authors believed that investigating students' experiences in clinical supervision using Lectio Divina to promote multicultural competence might shed light on the quality of students' transformative learning processes.

Purpose of this Study

The aim of this study was to determine the impact of Lectio Divina within counseling supervision. Introducing a contemplative and transformative technique that is aligned with the standards of the profession can enhance counselor training in self-reflection to promote multicultural competence. Continued research on contemplative practices within counselor education is needed to provide evidence of the effectiveness of using nontraditional andragogical approaches in the multicultural training and supervision of counseling students. The researchers anticipated the Lectio Divina intervention would increase counseling trainees' multicultural competence and would also elucidate their transformative learning process as evidenced by the qualitative inquiry.

Research Questions
1. Is there a difference in participant's multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and counseling relationships from pre- to post intervention?
2. Is there a difference in participant's overall multicultural competence from pre- to post intervention?
3. What is the experience of counseling trainees' participation in the Lectio Divina activity in terms of their multicultural understanding?

Methodology

The researchers employed a mixed method quasi-experimental design using a pretest/posttest assessment along with qualitative inquiry. The intervention, Lectio Divina, was implemented in clinical counseling courses to determine if students' multicultural competence increased post-intervention. Data from the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI) was analyzed using a paired samples t-test, a statistical test of the difference between a set of paired samples. A thematic analysis approach was used to derive themes from the discussions and self-reflective prompts to understand the student's transformative learning experience of the secularized Lectio Divina practice.

Participants
Thirty-nine counseling students in clinical mental health and school counseling programs at a Midwestern university participated in the study. Participants were enrolled in either practicum, internship I, or internship II during the 2022-2023 academic year.

Data Collection
Twenty-one participants completed both pretest and posttest survey data. All participants enrolled received an email announcement a few days before or shortly after the course start date. Students received the first e-mail with a link to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved Qualtrics survey during the class session in which the principal investigator conducted the Lectio Divina intervention. The survey began with informed consent and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. During the intervention, qualitative data was collected via discussion and self-reflective prompts and was uploaded in the posttest survey in Qualtrics.

Procedure
The intervention was conducted virtually via Zoom. The learners engaged in the Lectio Divina technique following the framework of Wright's (2019) secularized version. A poem containing multiculturally themed content was selected for use. The introduction to the exercise included an explanation of Lectio Divina and participants were made aware that the goal of discussions and self-reflection was to simply catalog reactions, and not to evaluate their responses, to encourage students to share their true reactions to the poem, including tentative or potentially controversial thoughts and feelings. This nonjudgmental environment fosters openness to understanding reactions, emotions, and thoughts related to the text. The secularized Lectio Divina technique has four steps, as outlined below.

1. In the first step (lectio) the student silently reads the selected poem and notes connections and patterns that come to mind from listening to the text.
2. The second step (meditatio), the facilitator reads aloud the poem and allows time (3 minutes of silence) for the students to reflect on what the text says to them, what main message they get from the poem, why the author makes a point in a particular way, the difficulty of understanding the poem, and their emotional reaction to the poem.
3. In the third step (oratio), the facilitator encourages students to participate in small group discussions about their reactions to the previous step (meditatio), share what they think about the poem, and share an insight they had during their contemplation time.

4. The final step (contemplatio) allows time for contemplation and silence to individually reflect on the overall experience before returning to the whole class discussion. The facilitator then initiates an all-class discussion by asking what takeaways or insights students gained from the poem they just examined.

Risks were minimal, although it is possible participants may have felt some discomfort as they reflected on their experiences during the Lectio Divina exercise. Discomfort may be experienced during contemplative practice as individuals face their true thoughts and feelings on sensitive topics. Dissonance is a common response to transformative learning experiences as new information challenges students' existing beliefs and they begin to assimilate new information (Mezirow, 1997). The researchers felt it was a benefit to the participants to have the ability to reflect on their experiences, which is a common exercise utilized in higher education. After the Lectio Divina activity, learners received the second e-mail with a link to Qualtrics where they could upload their processing notes from the activity. Two weeks after the intervention, the post-intervention survey was sent, which took approximately 10 minutes. All survey data and notes contained no identifiable information and were exported to a password-protected Google drive in a folder to which only the research team had access.

Instruments

The pretest/ posttest surveys contain the Multicultural Counseling Inventory (MCI). The MCI was developed by Sodowsky et al. (1994) to measure multicultural counseling competence containing a 40-item self-report questionnaire using a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very inaccurate*) to 4 (*very accurate*). The scale has a total score and four subscale scores including the following factors: multicultural skills, multicultural awareness, multicultural counseling knowledge, and the multicultural counseling relationship. In a large sample size (n = 2,712), Shannonhouse et al. (2020) found the MCI total score had good internal validity (α = .861).

Variables

The dependent variables in the study are the overall multicultural competence of the counselor measured by the subscales for multicultural counseling skills, multicultural awareness, multicultural counseling knowledge, and multicultural counseling relationship. The independent variable is the Lectio Divina contemplative practice technique.

Data Screening and Analysis

Initial screening of the quantitative data yielded 18 missing responses from pre- and posttest survey data and the qualitative self-reflective responses. Data from the MCI was analyzed using paired samples t-tests, a statistical test of the difference between a set of paired means. Thematic analysis was applied to derive themes from the self-reflective prompts to understand the students' transformative learning experience during the secularized Lectio Divina practice. A software program called *IntellectusQualitative* was used to make analytical conclusions from the data, create codes from the excerpts, and reveal themes from each reflective prompt (Castleberry & Nolen, 2019).

Normality

A Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted to determine whether the differences in each of the multicultural subscales pre and post-intervention (skills, awareness, counseling knowledge, and counseling relationship) could have been produced by a normal distribution (Razali & Wah, 2011). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test for each of the subscales were not significant based on an alpha value of .05 (*skills* = .05, W = 0.96, p = .512.; *awareness* = .05, W = 0.91, p = .064; *knowledge* = .05, W = 0.96, p = .526; relationship = .05, W = 0.95, p = .309). These results suggest the possibility that the differences in the subscales produced by a normal distribution cannot be ruled out, indicating the normality assumption is met for each subscale.

Results

Quantitative Research Questions

To test the research questions in this study, a two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was conducted to examine whether the mean difference of each of the multicultural variables (skills, awareness, knowledge, relationship, and composite mean) were significantly different from zero. To answer the first question for the subscales of skills, awareness, knowledge, and counseling relationship. The results are as follows.

Multicultural Skills

For multicultural skills, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.46$, $p = .654$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. For the multicultural relationship, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = 1.01$, $p = .325$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural skills preintervention ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .34$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.32$, $SD = .32$) was not significantly different from zero.

Multicultural Awareness

For multicultural awareness, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -2.62$, $p = .016$, indicating the null hypothesis could be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural awareness preintervention and the mean of postintervention was significantly different. Figure 1 represents the mean of multicultural awareness preintervention ($M = 2.96$, $SD = .32$) was significantly lower than the mean postintervention ($M = 3.11$, $SD = .42$). Compared to a study done by Sodowsky et al. (1994), who also measured multicultural awareness with the MCI instrument, using a similar demographic of Midwest master's students, assessed pre-course ($M = 3.0$, $SD = .44$) and post-course ($M = 3.4$, $SD = .53$) of a Multicultural Counseling course, Lectio Divina Contemplative Technique increased multicultural awareness by an increase of the mean of .82 compared to Sodowky's increase of .40.
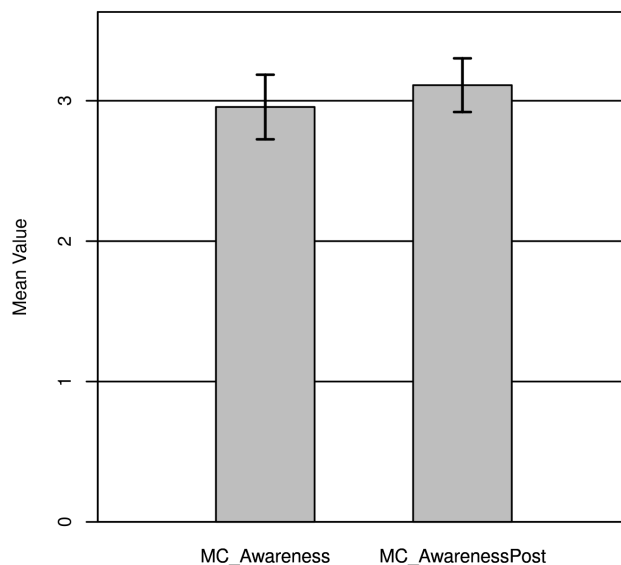

Figure 1: Multicultural Awareness Pre and Post Intervention
Note. The difference in the multicultural awareness means.

Multicultural Knowledge

For multicultural knowledge**,** the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.06$, $p = .951$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural knowledge preintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .40$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .35$) was not significantly different from zero.

Multicultural Relationship

For multicultural relationship, the result of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test was not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = 1.01$, $p = .325$, indicating the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This finding suggests the difference in the mean of multicultural relationship preintervention ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .42$) and the mean of postintervention ($M = 3.10$, $SD = .39$) was not significantly different from zero.

Composite Mean

For the second question regarding overall multicultural competence, the results of the two-tailed paired samples *t*-test were not significant based on an alpha value of .05, $t(20) = -0.89$, $p = .383$, indicating the null hypothesis could not be rejected. These findings suggest the difference in the composite means from preintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .40$) to postintervention ($M = 3.29$, $SD = .35$) was not significantly different from zero.

Thematic Analysis Summary

To address the question of defining the experience of counseling trainees' participation in the Lectio Divina activity in terms of their transformative experience, a thematic analysis of the self-reflective prompts was conducted to determine the themes. Below is a list of the prompts followed by the themes.

Prompt 1: Note connections and patterns that come to mind from reading the text.
Prompt 2: What main message did you get from the poem?
Prompt 3: Note why the author makes a point in a particular way.
Prompt 4: What was your difficulty, if any, understanding the poem?
Prompt 5: What are your emotional reactions to the poem?
Prompt 6: Share your insights and takeaways from the contemplative practice.

Theme 1: Challenging Assumptions and Biases. This theme highlights the importance of recognizing and challenging assumptions and biases, understanding the influence of past trauma on choices, and seeking multiple perspectives for greater understanding. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

> *"The contemplative practice is very useful and allows for greater awareness and curiosity that can lead to more understanding of others and ourselves."*

> *"I think it is a great way to learn and examine situations from different angles. I enjoy thought-provoking exercises and exchange of thoughts with others."*

> *"It is also good to have our views challenged by different opinions."*

Theme 2: Judgement and Lack of Empathy. This theme explores the concept of judgement towards others, reflecting on the different walks of life and the consequences of being cruel or lacking empathy. Students expressed sadness for the people being judged and frustration with the existence of such realities. It highlights the importance of understanding and connecting with others, emphasizing that people often judge without knowing the full context or understanding the hardships people go through. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"My main emotion was sadness because of reading how what people prided themselves with were taken away from them. "

"Working with people in these situations might be the best way to learn empathy."
"The concept of we don't understand fully what others are going through. There is shame, guilt, disconnection and feels like similar things could never happen to us."

Theme 3: Challenging Judgements. This theme captures the students' recognition of the poems' ability to challenge societal judgments through emotional reactions and reflections on the lives of marginalized individuals. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"I reflected upon how far I have come in my own journey."

"I believe the author specifically chose instances that are polarizing politically or issues where people tend to be entrenched in their views. Specifically, I believe they were attempting to challenge the excuses people give for withholding kindness, care, support, compassion, or empathy for others."

"Stern calling out to people to be more compassionate and empathetic. People are quick to judge and not help others."

Theme 4: Suspending Judgement. This theme explores the importance of not judging others without knowing their full story, as people may judge without understanding the challenges and circumstances others face. It highlights the need for empathy, compassion, and kindness towards others, as well as the reminder that everyone experiences hardship and struggles in life. It encourages individuals to suspend judgement, remain curious, open, and understanding of different perspectives and life journeys. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"Stop and think about life from someone else's perspective."

"Life is a journey and no one is permanently in a low or high place."

"You shouldn't judge someone for making a choice about something you have never had to do."

Theme 5: The Power of Empathy. This theme represents the statements expressing the impact of the poem in promoting empathy and understanding the pain of others. It highlights the need for compassion and listening to others' experiences. This theme reflects the importance of recognizing other perspectives, practicing empathy, and striving for understanding in personal and professional relationships. The theme also highlights the impact of privilege, the power of reflection, and the need for grace and humility. Excerpts that support this theme are below.

"We need to learn to listen to others and learn about their experiences."

"We can connect with anyone because we're human."
"We talked about privilege and how it can interfere with having empathy for others that are marginalized."

Implications for Counselor Education and Supervision

The researchers in this study introduced Lectio Divina to counselor education and supervision students with the aim of increasing students' multicultural competence and capturing students' qualitative experiences. Overall, multicultural competence did not show a statistically significant change from preintervention to postintervention. There was no change in students' multicultural knowledge, skills, or the counseling relationship. However, analysis revealed that multicultural awareness did increase from pre- to post-intervention. Qualitative analysis yielded themes of *challenging assumptions and biases, judgement and lack of empathy*, *challenging and suspending judgement,* and *the power of empathy.*

A mixed methods approach allows for broader understanding of research findings. In this study, increased multicultural awareness scores on the MCI are supported by the qualitative analysis. Awareness is at the core of all counseling endeavors and is a cornerstone in multicultural training. Multicultural awareness is foundational for counselors in maintaining a culturally humble attitude towards others. Awareness of one's own cultural values and biases and awareness of clients' worldviews are critical components of multicultural competence (Arredondo et al.,1996; Ratts et al., 2016). Awareness motivates students to acquire knowledge of other groups' worldviews and experiences and to develop the requisite skills to work effectively with them (Yoon et al., 2014). Multicultural awareness is a critical starting point for developing empathy towards diverse groups (Hilert & Tirado, 2019). In fact, if instructors fail to help students become multiculturally aware before teaching knowledge or skills, counseling students may develop a false sense of mastery and risk stereotyping different cultural groups based on cursory information (Yoon et al., 2014).

The Lectio Divina intervention not only resulted in greater awareness scores on the MCI, it seems to have directly affected students' awareness of self and others as evidenced by the theme of *challenging assumptions and biases.* Counseling students reported acquiring an understanding of the importance of recognizing and challenging assumptions and biases by seeking multiple perspectives for greater understanding. The findings in the current study align with Pompeo-Fargnoli et al. (2020) research in which counseling students reported shifts in their assumptions and biases using transformative learning. Additional research using contemplative practice in multicultural training shows that it creates a safe environment in which to explore biases, manage potentially distressing thoughts and emotions, and develop greater ability for embracing others through the cultivation of an accepting, nonjudgmental attitude (Heselmeyer, 2014). Lectio Divina has been recommended as a way to facilitate deep and meaningful multicultural conversations (Nelson & Quigley, in press) as it provides students a safe space in which to explore reactions to course material in a way that fosters awareness of their reactions and how these reactions affect their worldviews with a clearer understanding of self and others (Howes & Smith, 2017; Wright, 2019).

Transformative learning occurs when the learner is changed in important ways. Watkins and colleagues argue (2018) that counselor development is itself a transformative learning process. Counseling students in this study not only gained increased multicultural awareness, but they also went through a growth phase, described by Nogueiras et al. (2019) as a process of stability–destabilization–transition–resettlement. After the Lectio Divina activity, students' initial stability was challenged as they became aware of their biases, which gave way to destabilizing feelings of sadness and frustration regarding the devastating effects of judging others and the consequences of being cruel or lacking empathy. A transition seemed to have occurred as students acknowledged the importance of challenging societal judgments of others, especially the lives of marginalized individuals, and suspending these judgements by remaining curious, open, and understanding of different perspectives and life journeys. A resettlement can be seen in students in this study as they recognized the role of privilege, the power of empathy in personal and professional relationships and the need for grace and humility.

While the Lectio Divina intervention did not result in a statistically significant change in students' overall multicultural competence, the qualitative data sheds light on the transformational learning experiences of the students and may allude to gains in knowledge, skills, and potential improvements to the counseling relationship not captured by the MCI. It is possible that given more targeted prompts

during the all-class discussion, counseling students' may have been able to reflect upon the specific knowledge, skills, and relational nuances that could be applied to their work with clients. For example, to encourage knowledge-building, the clinical supervisor may ask the students to consider how the reading may support their understanding of clients' differing ways of acculturation to the dominant society. To prompt for skill building, instructors may ask students to reflect upon how the reading may help them to recognize and recover from cultural mistakes or misunderstandings when working with clients. Finally, to target the counseling relationship itself, clinical supervisors may prompt students to contemplate on how the text might support their personal conceptualization of client problems free of stereotypes and openness towards their differing physical appearance, color, sexual and gender identity, or socioeconomic status. Targeted prompts to address multicultural knowledge, skills, and the counseling relationship specifically, may support student reflection upon these areas and open a deeper dialogue on their application to support ever-increasing multicultural competence.

Applying Lectio Divina to counseling supervision seems like a natural fit for its ability to foster a state of inner calm, centeredness, and by creating a safe space to address sensitive topics. As a contemplative and transformative practice, Lectio Divina offers counselor educators and supervisors a structured and reliable method of addressing issues of diversity empathically by slowing down the learning process, encouraging embodied reactions, and valuing multiple perspectives. Slowing down requires students to interact with written materials in a way that counters the fast-paced reading typically employed when completing course work (Howes & Smith, 2017). Because counselors interact with written documents regarding clients in the form of case conceptualizations, progress notes, and assessments, contemplation upon what the text means is an important part of clinical supervision. Clinical supervisors can assist counseling trainees to incorporate contemplation into the intake process, in creating a clinical summary of the client's situation and maladaptive patterns, and contemplation can guide and focus treatment interventions. This study provides a framework for counselor educators and clinical supervisors to incorporate a transformative technique into their work with students to support multicultural awareness.

Limitations

Two significant limitations are worth noting. First the sample size was not randomized and was from one university in the Midwest and therefore cannot be generalized to all counselors-in-training. Future studies exploring this topic should have more of a diverse group of students. Second, the students may not have been fully truthful in their self-reflection due to social norms and the possible perceived expectation they should already be multiculturally competent.

Conclusion

Learning is transformative when one reevaluates expectations about a situation and uses self-reflection and questioning to challenge current assumptions (Mälkki, 2010). To support counseling students in fully developing as whole, integrated human beings, counselor educators can enhance the learning experience by engaging supervisees at the intersection of body, mind, emotions, spirit, and society (Berila, 2015) where transformative learning occurs. Applying contemplative andragogy to the multicultural training of counseling students provides several advantages for instructors which may result in better care for the welfare of clients seeking counseling services in an increasingly diverse world (Nelson & Quigley, in press). The current study adds to the growing body of research on the benefits of incorporating contemplative practices in counselor training programs. Findings from this investigation contribute to the understanding of Lectio Divina as a contemplative transformative supervision activity and sheds light on how Lectio Divina may be integrated into other courses in counselor education and supervision programs.

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Can adolescents undergo a transformative learning and teaching process? Extending Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory (A South African Perspective)

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Abstract

Transformative learning engages learners in drawing on relevant experiences, peer dialogue, and self-reflection in order to respond to challenges encountered in their lives. While much literature suggests that transformative learning is for adults only, our findings, together with those from several recent international studies, as well as authors who have contributed to seminal work, indicate that transformative learning and teaching is also applicable to and valuable for adolescents. This paper also suggests that although South African adolescents in a pre-university program—The Targeting Talent Programme—do not meet the pre-conditions for transformation learning set out by Mezirow, they do however meet the preconditions indicated by other seminal theorists; this is as a result of the peculiar context that these adolescents come from. Additionally, although literature reviewed for this paper focuses on the lecturer-student dynamic in transformative teaching and learning, we use findings from an analysis of questionnaire data obtained from young adult mentors and adolescent mentee in the preuniversity program to argue that mentors, and not just lecturers, can usefully facilitate such learning and that such learning is bi-directional. Mentorship is also regarded as a form of intervention support that student programs use to buffer poor student feedback and address retention and attrition rates. The findings show that mentoring indeed does facilitate intervention support and fosters transformative teaching and learning for higher educational success. Literature also reveals the need for various higher education institutions to put in place a mechanism which optimizes on the support of mentors to uphold students. Given the evidence from the Targeting Talent Programme and the value of transformative teaching and learning for both the psycho-social and academic development of adolescents and young adults, we recommend that higher education institutions consider including this approach in support programs offered at pre-university and undergraduate levels.

Keywords: Transformative Teaching; Transformative Learning; Adolescents; Mentoring, The Targeting Talent Programme; Higher Education.

Introduction

The excitement of acceptance to study at a South African university is short-lived for many students, as they face overwhelming challenges at the beginning of their studies that result in many dropping out in their first year. A report compiled by Letseka and Maile (2008) for the Human Sciences Research Council revealed that in 2005, 36,000 of the 120,000 students who enrolled in higher education in 2000 dropped out in their first year of study. At some institutions, the dropout rates are as high as 80% within a specific cohort of students. The Council on Higher Education revealed that by 2019, 40% of a cohort of first-year students who enrolled for a bachelor's degree in 2014 across various South African

institutions had not completed their degrees. Those who had enrolled for a diploma program had a dropout rate of 45% (CHE, 2021). Many factors may affect dropout rates or the extended time that it takes students to graduate. Some of the factors such as a student's age, gender, demographic classification (race'), and financial status may be easier to measure than other more complex factors such as a student's motivation for studying, the extent of academic integration, or the type of living conditions at the university where they are studying (Murray, 2014).

According to Collier (2017), mentorship programs promote student success. Kathy Kram, one of the primary theorists on mentoring and mentorship describes mentoring as:

> a helping relationship in which two individuals of similar age and/or experience come together, either informally or through formal mentoring schemes, in the pursuit of fulfilling some combination of functions that are career-related (e.g., information sharing, career strategizing) and psychosocial (e.g., confirmation, emotional support, personal feedback, friendship). (Kram (1983) as cited in Terrion & Leonard, 2007, p.150)

The benefits associated with mentoring may differ according to the program and its objectives with mentoring benefiting mentees, mentors, and organizations in various ways. Within the educational context, one of the benefits often indicated is the improvement of academic performance (Ehrich et al., 2011). Leidenfrost et al. (2014) provides evidence of the positive effect of mentoring on academic performance in a study which investigated the impact of mentoring on mentee academic performance at the University of Vienna. Their findings showed that students who were in a mentorship program performed better academically than students who were not. In South Africa, Masehela and Mabika (2017) conducted a study on the impact of a newly introduced mentoring program on the academic performance of high achievers at the University of Venda. Their findings indicated improvement in academic performance from 80% to 92% as a result of these students' participation in the mentoring program.

According to Ehrich et al. (2011), mentees benefit from the support and encouragement that they receive which in turn enables them to develop competencies, skills, and knowledge necessary to improve their academic performance. Some of these mentee benefits are also evident within a pre-university access program called the Targeting Talent Programme (TTP) hosted at a South African university and facilitated by the Student Equity and Talent Management Unit (SETMU). The program aims to facilitate access to, and success in, higher education and utilizes mentors to implement some components of the program. Data collected by TTP researchers indicate that the 2021 cohort improved by 20% in their Mathematics, Science and Life Science examination results from grade 10 to 11 in years 2019-2020. In grade 12 (2021), they maintained the 20% increase achieved in grade 11 (Student Equity and Talent Management Unit, 2021). Such improvements in knowledge and skills place TTP learners in a better academic position for acceptance into Higher Education Institutions. This improved academic performance can be attributed to the combination of curriculum supplementation and enrichment with psychosocial support and in some cases academic support that mentors provide to high school learners— particularly when mentors have specialised knowledge in a subject that learners find challenging. TTP mentors also offer generic career advice, studying and learning tips, and motivate learners to reach their optimal potential.

Mentoring can help in reducing absenteeism and school dropout rates (Bridges, 2013). Dropping out is not a sudden decision that students/learners make but rather the result of a prolonged period of disengagement and lack of motivation. Participation in a mentoring program can help to minimise precipitating factors and to prevent dropping out (Bridges, 2013). The above-mentioned benefits can only occur through transformative learning and teaching drawing on relevant experiences, peer dialogue, and self-reflection to respond to challenges encountered in their lives. This paper argues that although much literature suggests that transformative learning is only applicable to adults, our findings, together with those from several recent international studies, as well as authors who have contributed to seminal work, indicate that transformative learning and teaching is also applicable to, and valuable for, adolescents. Thus, while adolescents are able to undergo the transformative process in their reflection and dialogue,

their experiences and the experiences of others facilitates and catalyses the transformative process. Mentorship is thus one of the ways in which transformative learning occurs as mentors share their life experiences with their mentees, reflect on their learning, and engage in dialogue which ultimately results in a transformed perspective and change in behaviour.

Very few higher education institutions, particularly in South Africa, house mentoring programs and those mentoring programs pertain mainly to academic support, and first-year adaptations to a new community, home, university space, and careers. Mentors in these university programs also help first year students with social cohesion and integration. There is very little mentoring that addresses psycho-social challenges that students may face. These psycho-social challenges are perceived to be the factors that negatively affect academic performance to the point where students drop out of their studies (Strumpher, 2018). The TTP, which has been offered at a South African university for 16 years includes a mentoring component which is located within a transformative teaching and learning framework. This mentoring component attempts to address the psychosocial challenges of concern to Strumpher. The field of mentorship within educational contexts has rapidly expanded and is similar to that of transformative theory. However, literature on mentorship with a transformative agenda is very sparse and the reason for that is because the transformative learning theory is in most cases applied to an adult sample. There are a few articles found that relate to its application on an adolescent sample.

In this article we review literature in the fields of mentorship and of transformative teaching and learning and then use selections from this literature to describe and evaluate the several components of the TTP and its contributions towards the transformative learning theory within a South African context.

Literature Review Methodology

While there are separate bodies of work on both mentorship and transformative learning, there appears to be very little scholarship in which the two fields are integrated. The authors conducted a literature search on various search engines such as Google scholar, Google Books, SAGE, Science Direct, Research Gate, PubMed Central, EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ERIC, ProQuest Central, and PsycINFO. Thereafter a tool called "Connected Papers" was utilized. This tool allows for searches to be made and the results yielded to build a graph of all papers that are connected to the topic searched.

Figure 1 below illustrates the method and graph used in the process of research for this paper:
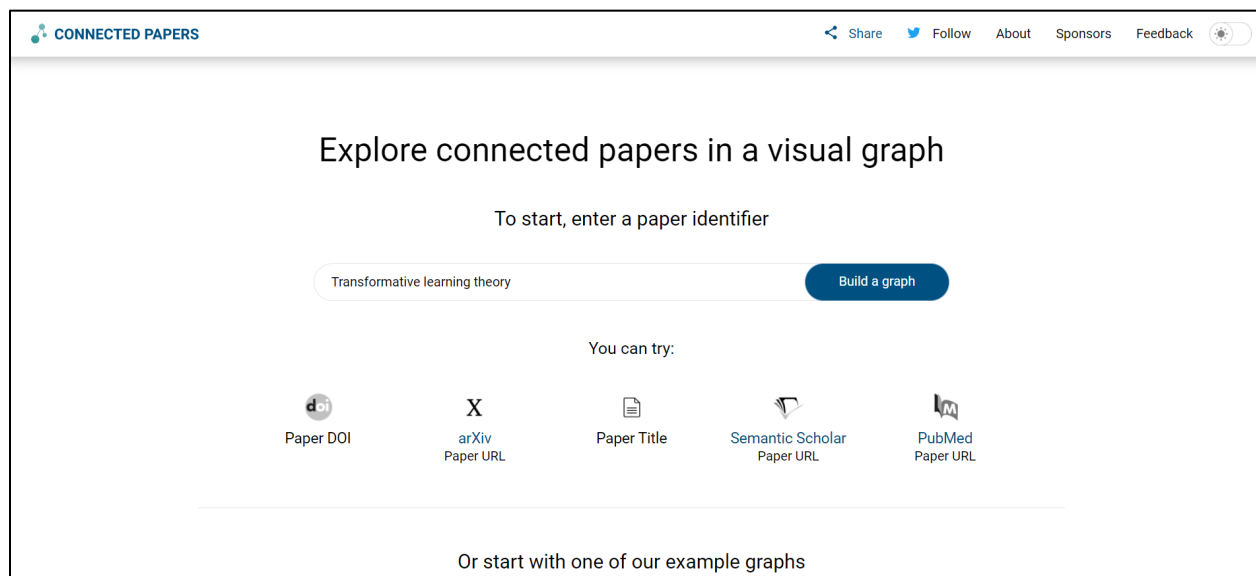

Figure 1: "Connected papers" home screen to start building a graph

These are the steps that were used to search for journal articles.

Step 1: Search for a journal article by different dimensions e.g., paper DOI, paper URL, paper title, semantic scholar, PubMed, or start with the engine's example graphs (See Figure 1, above).

Step 2: Review of graphed results (See Figure 2)
1. Papers are arranged according to their similarity (this is not a citation tree).
2. Node size is the number of citations.
3. Node colour is the publishing year.
4. Similar papers have strong connecting lines and cluster together.
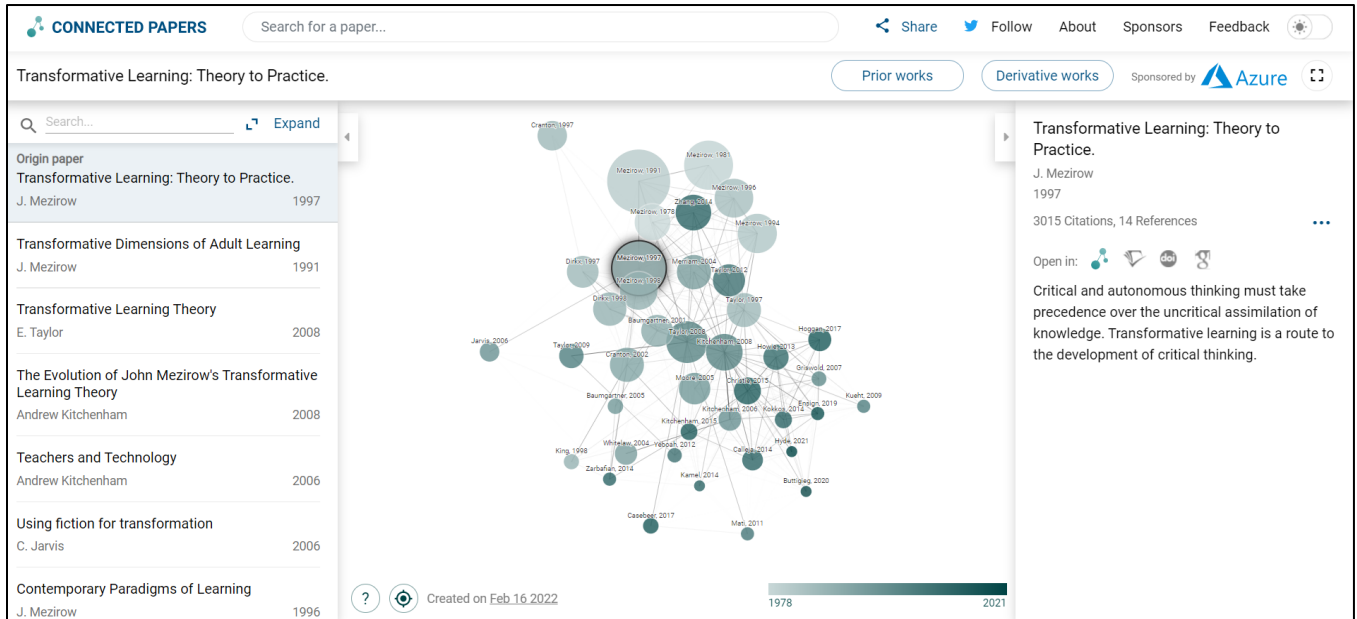
Figure 2: Connected papers graph constructed based on papers connected to the article of interest

Step 3: Review of article for literature review

An article of interest can be clicked on (see figure 3) and opened in various web options and can thereafter be downloaded for storage.

Figure 3: Article by Mezirow (1991) selected to explore for the literature review

Each article of interest was read carefully and then articles were grouped into folders according to topic. When writing the literature review on specific topics, the articles in the folder were integrated as they were compared with one another. Themes identified in the review were then used to reflect on the TTP in general and to analyse questionnaire data from both mentors and mentees.

Research Methodology

The Student Equity and Talent Management Unit is responsible for planning, facilitating, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the Targeting Talent Programme. The learners and mentors are required to complete various evaluation forms post each TTP session as one of the methods to measure the effectiveness of TTP sessions. This research made use of data collected retrospectively in several June-July Residential Academic Enrichment Curriculum sessions within the 2018-2022 duration of program implementation.

The methodology utilized is a mixed methods approach which includes the integration of both quantitative and qualitative data to help understand the intervention, whether it was successfully implemented, and what its impact was.

Sample

The sample used in this research was learners and mentors who were selected according to specific criteria to participate in the Targeting Talent Programme.

Learners

The learners came from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-resourced communities, within grades 10-12 aged 15-18 years. The majority of these learners were female (70%), with only 30% of learners having been male. These learners were selected from across South African schools, with diverse backgrounds, cultures, races, languages, ethnicities, and religions. Nine hundred and twenty-nine (929) learners participated in the program for the period 2018-2022.

Mentors

The mentors were students at the University of the Witwatersrand, who were within their second year of study or beyond. Most of these mentors were Targeting Talent Programme alumni, which means that they had participated in the program and have returned to give back in service to the program. This also means that most came from disadvantaged backgrounds and under-resourced communities, similar to the learners, which made them desirable candidates to provide mentorship to learners.

Data Analysis Methodology

The data were collected using a mixed methods approach, however, for this research only qualitative data was extracted for analysis. The method of data analysis was Braun and Clarke's method of thematic analysis. The six phases of thematic analysis were utilized to uncover themes in the qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006):

1. Familiarisation with the data: immersing in the data sources and looking through all the data.
2. Coding: colour coding all data content that were similar.
3. Searching for themes: developing categories that seem appropriate and broad enough to encapsulate all similar data content.
4. Reviewing themes: looking at all themes and understanding where it is best suited for the category.
5. Defining and naming themes: Distinguishing themes and giving meaning to each theme.
6. Writing up: weaving together a narrative that integrates themes and data content to evidence to the reader the correlation between themes and with literature.

Ethical considerations

This article makes use of data collected under the ethics application conducted by the Student Equity and Talent Management Unit. The ethics approval was granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-medical) at the University of the Witwatersrand. The protocol number for authorizing the use of the data collected is H16/11/35.

Literature review

Mentorship

The concept of mentoring has its origins in Greek mythology, in Homer's poem "*The Odyssey*." Odysseus was a Greek man who had a helper named Mentor whom Odysseus entrusted with his son, Telemachus. Mentor assumed the role of a tutor, protector, guide, and advisor to Telemachus when Odysseus left to fight in the Trojan War (Gordon, 2000). Many theories have since been developed and linked to the concept of mentorship.

According to Burlew (1991), if a mentor program is to be successful, one of the first questions that needs to be answered is "*what exactly is a mentor?*" (p. 213). Wai-Packard (2009) suggests that a mentor is an individual who is more experienced than the person whom they mentor (i.e., the mentee). The mentor's experience forms the basis of the relationship that develops between mentor and mentee. The relationship between them is usually but is not limited to face-to-face interactions and is cultivated for a specific period. The mentor is often older than their mentee and thus is likely to have the greater maturity that comes with life experience (Merriam, 1983), which can be used to facilitate and support the mentee's academic, professional, and personal development (Donaldson et al., 2000) in a cross-age-mentoring relationship (Geddes, 2016). Kasprisin et al. (2003) speak to the idea of the dynamic nature of mentorships in that the interactions can be short term, electronic, and either formal or informal as long as a relationship is fostered and academic, professional, and personal development occurs. Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, mentoring has mostly been via virtual platforms rather than face-to-face, an approach which has also been adopted by the TTP.

As stated above, the primary definition of a mentor comes from Greek mythology, in which mentorship is aligned with being a male guide, with this definition reinforced through hegemonic history and tradition (Wai-Packard, 2009). However, Davis (2001) argues that mentors can be female and may be of similar age to a mentee, using as an example a peer group of women who meet to talk about science, communities etc. indicating that mentoring can also occur within a group setting. Mentorship should not be considered as confined by gender (for example, male mentor-male mentee or female mentor-female mentee). Mentorship can be implemented across genders. These differences in definition of the concept of 'mentor' suggest that it is an evolving and unstable construct (Haggard et al., 2011).

Table 1 below provides an overview of mentoring definitions offered by a range of authors and shows how mentor/mentoring definitions have varied across time. Most definitions of mentoring do not encapsulate the concept of mentorship holistically. In our view a more persuasive definition is the one provided by Bronfenbrenner, as it 'captures' the mentorship component of the TTP by outlining what a mentor is and what their role should be. Hamilton and Hamilton (2004) quote Bronfenbrenner on his definition of a mentor as:

> an older, more experienced person who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person by guiding the latter in acquiring mastery of progressively more complex skills and tasks in which the mentor is already proficient. The guidance is accomplished through demonstration, instruction, challenge, and encouragement on a more or less regular basis over an extended period of time. In the course of this process, the mentor and the young person develop a special bond of mutual commitment. In addition, the young person's relationship to the mentor takes on an emotional character of respect, loyalty, and identification (p. 396).

It is important to define the roles of a mentor within a specific context as these roles may vary according to context. For example, mentors may be expected to play a role in facilitating transformative learning which is the focus of the next section of this literature review.

Table 1: Defining mentoring (Pillay & Psych, 2011, p. 27)

Definition(s)	Reference(s)
A form of professional socialisation whereby a more experienced (usually older) individual acts as a guide, role model, teacher and patron of a less experienced (often younger) mentee.	Moore & Amey (1988), as cited by Jacobi (1991) in Luna & Prieto, 2009: 214
A deliberate pairing of a less experienced person with a more skilled or experienced person who provides advice, support, and encouragement.	Murray, 1991, in Dewart, Drees, Hixenbaugh, & Thorn, 2006: 1
Sage, educator, person of ideas, protector, director, advisor, person of authority, educational leader, wise, experienced, trusted advisor and counsellor.	Erasmus *et al.*, 2008: 208
A nurturing process, in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter's professional and/or personal development.	Brooks & Sikes, 1997: 28, in Gwam & Vawda, 2005: 3
A mentor is a person whose hindsight can become your foresight.	Grey Owl in McCluskey *et al.*, 2004: 85
Mentoring was not only 'sponsorship', but was an important developmental process in adulthood, also described as an 'intense' and 'complex relationship' where the mentor plays the role of 'peer and parent', and takes on roles such as teacher, advisor, sponsor and friend.	Levinson *et al.* in *Seasons of Man's Life* (1978), in Ehrich & Hansford, 1999: 92-93
It implies a more experienced other, i.e. a father/mother figure, who provides counsel, support and guidance to a mentee's professional/personal life.	Ehrich & Hansford, 1999: 92-93

Transformative Learning

The concept of transformative learning was introduced by Jack Mezirow in the field of adult education in 1978 in an article entitled 'Perspective Transformation' which was published in an American journal *Adult Education Quarterly* (Mezirow, 2009). The development of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning "was influenced by Freire's 'conscientization', Kuhn's 'paradigms', the concept of 'consciousness raising' in the women's movement, the writings and practice of psychiatrist Roger Gould, philosophers Jurgen Habermas, Harvey Siegal and Herbert Fingerette" (p. 90) and his own observations of the transformative experience of his wife as a student (Mezirow, 2009). One of the most comprehensive definitions of transformative learning comes from O'Sullivan (2003):

> Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self- locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class and gender; our body awarenesses, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy (p. 203).

Transformative learning is defined by Mezirow (2003) as "the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives)—sets of assumption and expectation—to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (p. 58). The frames of references described in the definition by Mezirow above derive from our cultural and language orientations which help give meaning to our experiences. They selectively shape and delimit our perception, cognition, and feelings by predisposing our intentions, beliefs, expectations, and purposes (Mezirow, 2009).

The aim of transformative learning is to help individuals to change currently held assumptions on which they act when necessary (Christie et al., 2015). Transformative learning involves disruption of our current "ingrained and well-rehearsed" (Christie et al., 2015. p. 11) belief systems about ourselves, societal views, and epistemological beliefs. It is achieved when an individual is now able to perceive things from a new point of view (Christie et al., 2015). According to Campbell and Brysiewicz (2017), transformative learning results when existing frames of reference are altered in response to unexpected, emotional-inducing events, which are defined as disorienting dilemmas (disorienting dilemmas may be positive or negative events, sudden or episodic). Reflection on disorienting dilemmas can result in dramatic transformations in frames of reference or transformation may be latent and occur over time (Campbell & Brysiewicz, 2017). There are 10 phases of transformative learning that students may experience as indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: The ten phases of transformational learning (Kitchenham, 2008, p.105; Mezirow, 2009, p.94)

Phase #	Phases
Phase 1	A disorienting dilemma
Phase 2	A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
Phase 3	A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
Phase 4	Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
Phase 5	Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
Phase 6	Planning of a course of action
Phase 7	Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
Phase 8	Provisional trying of new roles
Phase 9	Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
Phase 10	A reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's perspective

Schnepfleitner and Ferreira (2021) propose adding "context" as a fourth core element of transformative learning in addition to the three originally proposed by Mezirow: i) critical reflection, ii) dialogue, iii) individual experience, and iv) the context. Assuming critical reflection has occurred, the

next step in transformative learning is for a person to participate in reflective discourse by evaluating alternative perspectives, withholding premature judgement, thinking dialectically (Merriam, 2004), and knowing where they stand on an issue to find their voice (Mezirow, 2000). The course of action taken by an individual on a transformative learning path will be based on the results of critical reflection and rational discourse. According to Kitchenham (2008), transformative learning involves two important processes: first being "critically reflective" – where a critical assessment of our sources, nature, and consequences of our habit of mind is made and secondly, participating fully and freely in a dialectical discourse to assess a best reflective judgement. Transformative teaching and learning enable us to challenge, question, and reassess long-standing viewpoints and understandings and replace them with new ones (Cranton & Taylor, 2013).

The key message to be taken from this account of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning is the need to help students actively participate and engage with concepts presented within the context of their own lives so that both independently and with others they can respond critically to new knowledge (Schnepfleitner & Ferreira, 2021).

Mezirow's initial work was based on pursued higher education of adult women who had been away from an academic environment for a considerable time. They observed that these women could not apply their old understandings to new scenarios. New perceptions were required as scenarios and situations had changed. Although the authors of this paper agree with the fundamentals of Mezirow's initial work and theory, we disagree with the application of transformative learning solely within adult education. We agree with Meerts-Brandsma and Sibthorp (2021), Larson (2017), and Williams (2013) that adolescents are able to engage in transformative learning also. In Mezirow's (2000) view, while adolescents can experience transformative learning, it is limited by their cognitive ability and experiences to engage in the required mental transformation. According to Mezirow (2000), their developmental stage limits their ability to question their own assumptions and that held by others. Although this might be true for some adolescents, many are ready to engage in transformative learning. Kegan (2000) also alluded to how this might be possible for adolescents on condition that they have proceeded from some form of transformation such as evolving their perceptions from their socialized learning towards a more abstract way of thinking. He indicates that this is possible as developmentally, adolescents increase their cognitive level of abstraction. For example, Meerts-Brandsma and Sibthorp (2021) found that a cohort of learners aged 12-15 years demonstrated transformative learning after engaging in educational activities designed within a curriculum tailored to provide transformative learning opportunities. Larson (2017) documented the learning transformations of two 19-year-old adolescent girls who engaged in activities that encouraged self-reflection, critical thinking, identity formation, rational discussions, and action upon reflection. These learners went through many of the stages described by seminal theorists and reflected adult-like cognitive capacities to engage in transformative learning. Williams (2013) took a transformative learning approach within a high school classroom setting by introducing an environmental education curriculum which encouraged high school learners to consider introspectively, ways in which they could protect and sustain their environments. These adolescents drew on their experiences in the world and used that as a basis from which they engage and steer discussions in their groups. These different experiences allowed for adolescents to reflect, and this resulted in a changed perspective. These studies indicate that transformative teaching and learning is appropriate for working with adolescents and young adults and moreover highlights the salience of the phenomenological position in the facilitation of transformative learning and teaching. This is echoed in the work done by Husserl (Taylor, 1994) where phenomenological reduction is used to bracket the essence of an individual's experience. Zafran (2020) highlights that the objectives of the Transformative Learning Theory are facilitated through significant experiences as this provides the learner with a wider world view and thus encourages them to interrogate their own position in the world, perspectives of the world, beliefs, value systems and behaviours and thus allows for them to alter or adjust their frames of lens and ultimately their actions.

Results and Discussion

Transformative teaching and learning in a pre-university access program in South Africa

Transformative teaching and learning entails creating a dynamic relationship between students and teachers where knowledge is shared to promote student learning and development (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). According to Landolt (2012) and Masehela et al. (2014), mentoring is a less formal communication process happening over a sustained period, between a person who is considered more experienced and knowledgeable (mentor) and someone who is less experienced and less knowledgeable (mentee). Mentors may be senior students who are academically successful and who provide guidance and support to students who are at risk of academic exclusion or to those who are new to university. A mentor and a mentee are expected to work collaboratively and learn from one another as both mentees and mentors gain knowledge and develop some skills during their interactions (Ntombela & Mngomezulu, 2018). In South Africa, where many students from diverse backgrounds leave their homes to adapt to a new student life where they learn new routines, form new relationships, and experience anxieties that come with this change in their lives, mentorships provide much needed psychosocial support for students to cope with anxieties experienced in their new unfamiliar environment (Swart, Coughlan, & Joannou, 2019).

The advent of a democratic South Africa has prompted the government to devise strategies for addressing the racial, social, and economic injustices that resulted from the apartheid and colonial past. The disparities in wealth, educational access and attainment, health status and access to opportunities are still predominantly based on race and gender and education is seen as one of the ways to create more equal opportunities. However, students coming to university from previously disadvantaged backgrounds and having experienced schooling that was under-resourced in many respects, may not be adequately prepared for higher learning (Ntombela & Mngomezulu, 2018; Underhill & McDonald, 2010). Mentoring programs offer an important opportunity for engaged teaching and learning as well as for access to the epistemological discourse of the academy (Frade, 2017). In the next section, one such program is discussed.

The Targeting Talent Programme at the University of the Witwatersrand

The Targeting Talent Programme, introduced briefly in the first section of this article, seeks to identify learners with academic potential from a broad range of under-resourced schools. The Program aims to increase the academic, social, and psychological preparation of learners with academic potential, from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, for admission to South African higher education institutions (SETMU Annual Report, 2020). High school learners from Grades 10 and 11 are selected from various schools across South Africa and participate in TTP until the end of Grade 12. Across the two to three years of their participation they engage in Mathematics and Science Supplementation sessions in March and October, and an Academic Enrichment Program in June-July. The Mathematics and Science sessions are currently hosted on a University Learning Management System called CANVAS ULWAZI. In these sessions, Maths and Science lecturers facilitate sessions which provide learners with opportunities to learn new content, clarify misconceptions, develop improved conceptual understanding, and practice their application of content. Discussion sessions are facilitated synchronously online, in which learners discuss any challenges experienced with asynchronous content.

For the Enrichment program, learners reside at the university for two weeks in order to be immersed in campus processes and culture. Learners receive exposure to university lecture venues, lecturers, residency, university facilities such as the library, science and computer labs, and are taught first year university subjects beyond the school curriculum.

These sessions are interspersed with psycho-social activities which teach learners skills that enable good citizenship, career decision making, studying, and learning. They also receive guidance in completing university applications and discuss a range of issues important to adolescents. All the above require the contributions of mentors for TTP to be implemented successfully.

The mentoring component of the TTP

Mentors support the program in conducting its aim and objectives, particularly those pertaining to mentees' personal, social, and to some extent their academic development. The TTP objectives of the mentor component within the TTP sessions include:

- Providing a big brother/sister role to learners.
- Providing the role of a guide by accompanying learners to the various venues, updating them on vital program information and acting as the mediators between the program implementation team and learners.
- Providing a role of mentorship, motivation, and support to the learners.
- Providing important information from the grassroots level to program coordinators with the aim of improving each contact session.

Secondary objectives of the mentor component include:

- Developing leadership, communication, professionalism, problem solving, conflict management, time management, ability to manage diversity, teamwork, and interpersonal skills in mentors.

Who are the mentors?

Mentors are students who are enrolled at the university for any year ranging from second year undergraduate to postgraduate studies. The majority are TTP alumni who aim to give back to the program through mentoring. They are able to relate to the high school learners because they come from similar backgrounds, speak similar languages, and understand the psycho-social challenges faced by the mentees. All mentors go through a rigorous selection process.

How are they trained?

Selected mentors are hosted at mentor training sessions before they start working with high school learners. Mentors are inducted by staff who understand the program and its requirements. During training, mentors learn about mentee demographics, managing interactions with them and the challenges that mentees encounter. Mentors are also trained on how to embrace diversity within the cohort of TTP learners and how to facilitate the transformation of learners' perceptions with reference to a range of socio-cultural topics including diversity.

Mentors work through a training manual which contains activities to support their development of knowledge and skills. They also have opportunities to put into practice what they have learned so that they are prepared to facilitate transformative learning.

Transformative teaching and learning in action at TTP

Transformative teaching and learning aim to be learner focused, with the teaching catering to learners' needs. The teaching is aimed at helping learners understand, engage, and problem solve through critical interaction with the content and their teacher. Lecturers develop a rapport with learners which encourages this type of learning. This approach is not only less hierarchical but also bi-directionally mutual as teachers become learners too (Kumi-Yeboah, 2012).

Transformative learning theories and empirical studies informed by these theories focus on adult/young adult learners. For example, Kumi-Yeboah and James (2014) quotes Cranton (1994) who states that "the underlying theme of transformative learning is that the adult learner will have the ability to reflect, refine, and build new connections through rational discourse as they engage in critical reflection, and discussion related to the course content" (p. 30). As indicated previously, scholars such as Meerts-Brandsma and Sibthorp (2021), Larson (2017), and Williams (2013) have shown that adolescents are also able to engage in transformative learning. According to Kumi-Yeboah (2012), there are four factors that enhance transformative learning: Critical Thinking, Personal Self-Reflection, Classroom Discussions, and Dialogues and Mentoring. The Targeting Talent Programme gives attention to each of these four factors mentioned above in its process of facilitating access to higher education. Now while this research agrees

with Meerts-Brandsma and Sibthorp (2021), Larson (2017), and William's (2013) work, it also acknowledges the contextual differences that are apparent within this research. In this manner, this research aims to provide a South African perspective in extending the theory originally proposed by Mezirow. Cranton (1994) argues that transformative learning occurs when adult learners change their frame of reference. However, as mentioned above, we argue that adolescents are likely to also undergo a range of experiences that require changes to their frame of reference. Unlike these authors, this research takes place in the Southern hemisphere, a part of the world known for its extreme socio-economic conditions and under-resourced surroundings. Learners who come from here are targeted to help develop their talent and further cultivate a skillset that will better prepare them for accessing higher education.

These learners have typically experienced more stressful and disadvantageous circumstances. For example, many learners who have participated in the TTP have experienced the death of a close relative (e.g., mother, father, or both) and have either been raised by a guardian or have had to take on some sort of guardianship role within their homes. Such misfortunes experienced by TTP learners are exemplary of what has been referred to by Mezirow (2000) as "disorienting dilemma" which forms an important part of the transformative learning. These learners who are selected to participate in the program undergo some transformative teaching through the program and interactions with their mentors. This is achieved mainly through constant dialogue with their lecturers, mentors, programmatic staff, and their peers in the program, which encourage reflection through well planned curriculum and activities. These learners commence the program with their own realities and experiences of the world that were mainly influenced by poor access to facilities and resources, service delivery and infrastructure, rife with psycho-social issues which plague their communities such as gangsterism, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, child-headed households, increase high school dropout rates, and crime. Some of these learners must cope with this adverse environment while also caring for younger relatives in their homes. These learners are at the centre of various inequalities, and this unfortunately influences the way that they perceive the world.

Their transformed perspectives and behaviours are what allows for them to rise above their challenges and successfully transform the perspectives of those they encounter. From this it can be noted that these adolescents do not have a limited experience to draw from and limited cognitive ability to engage in transformative learning and teaching, as initially indicated by Mezirow. On the contrary, these learners have shown that in spite their negative experiences, their willingness to rise above their challenges has encouraged a development in their cognitive capacities. These cognitive abilities lay the foundation for transformative learning and teaching.

These adolescents attend underserviced schools, with limited resources and through the assistance of the program, most of them manage to change their frames of reference so that they become optimistic about their futures while developing problem solving, help seeking behaviours, new methods of engagement, critical thinking skills and extending their academic knowledge. According to Mezirow (2000) there are preconditions to transformative learning: "*maturity, education, safety, health, economic security, and emotional intelligence*" (p. 15). As indicated above, these learners do not meet most of the six preconditions, as opposed to the sample seen in the Meerts-Brandsma and Sipthorp article where US learners are able to afford to attend an enrichment school. This shows that although the end result is transformative learning, the contextual factors are different. It shows that these South African learners, despite their inability to meet the pre-conditions for transformative learning, are still able to undergo the transformative process. Within the program, through opportunities to become critically self-reflective, learners reframe their previous experiences of teaching and learning at school and in their homes and communities. To give one example, some of the enrichment sessions within the TTP focus on critical diversity. Learners are taught to reflect and become aware of their own assumptions and prejudicial biases to understand how these may influence their behaviour in particular social contexts. They learn to question and become self-reflective of their value systems and beliefs, particularly in cases where they have exhibited prejudicial, discriminatory, or racist behaviour and ultimately reflect on the effects they may have had on the 'victim' and learn to regulate the behaviour. Learners develop new ways of relating to others which they can use in their communities, homes, and other contexts. Other preconditions mentioned by Larson (2017) are critical discourse (Mezirow, 2000), developmental consciousness

(Kegan, 2000), cognitive development (Merriam, 2004), and life experiences (Brookfield, 2000) are however, met by learners in the TTP and might be the precursors that allow for the transformative learning to take place. It is important to note that in this paper, transformative learning was measured through self-reflection. Learners and mentors were required to complete evaluation forms which consisted of both open and closed ended questions. The open-ended questions were analysed for this research.

Although this gives the researchers a rich, in-depth understanding of participants' reflections, this self-report method is not without flaws. One of the limitations associated with self-reflective reports is the social desirability bias which is described by Larson (2019) as participants responding in a deceptive manner based on that which is socially desirable to the reader. Another limitation is that of subjectivity as participants respond based on how they interpret the question. In addition, there are several factors that influence their understanding and response to such questions (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Although there are limitations to the method of assessment, research indicates that is one of the most utilized methods in effectively accessing participants personality, consciousness, and psyche on a large scale.

Evidence of transformative learning is apparent in the statements below made by TTP learners.

Awareness of held assumptions and prejudicial biases: "As individuals we tend to assume things without knowing the full story to things and diversity has taught me not to assume but do understand and perceive the world around me at much broader by finding out more of people and their lifestyles."
Self-reflective and regulative: "In life nothing is good or bad when you have made a mistake correct it before it becomes late because time waits for no man."
Critical thinking: "We need to think critically about diversity in order for us to fully understand how to go about dealing with its issues."
"Do not only look at the surface world but sink deep into it, diversity is not only about race, gender, sex, etc. but any difference we have."

Learners also applied their transformative learnings to different contexts and subjects and to thinking about the citizens they are within society and how they interact with others in the world, with changed perspectives evident in each of the quotations below:

> "To be considerate of other people without the same privileges as myself and to find a way to use the privileges to help others."
> "I realised that the person I thought I was, was not really me. I found the real "Peter" in me and now I can describe myself without any doubt."
> "Agency helped me realize that I didn't let go of some of the things that happened in the past so now I've literally let them go and I feel like a new person."
> "The gratitude I have for TTP cannot be put into words. I believe I have found myself and I have gone (sic) from a shy little girl to a confident and strong person. I acquired (sic) so many (sic) skills from this program and using these has helped me grow inside out."
> "I always reflect on days and see how I can apply that to my life and how my day benefited me."
> "It has made me think of a lot of things I would like to change about myself."
> "My overall perspective on life has changed and I believe I am ready to tackle my future."
> "It has developed my confidence and made me believe that everyone deserves respect and dignity, it has groomed me to be a leader, someone that prioritises helping the community first and helping other people."

Transformative learning is a primary focus of the TTP with many of its sessions devoted to discussions and dialogues which aim to give learners a voice with which to express their views and challenge the opinions and ideas of others. Mentors assist learners to extend their knowledge by sharing their phenomenology insight through their experiences and stories so that learners can reflect on previous perceptions, misconceptions, or limitations to their knowledge. Below are some of the quotes from mentors who not only facilitate transformative learning through their own phenomenological experiences

but also through encouraging the sharing of the experiences amongst peers. Here TTP learners reflect on the role of mentors in fostering their transformative learning:

> "It was so easy to speak to people and other mentors from other groups because we were the spotlights of this session and they made sure that we understood the courses we want to do next year."
>
> "Before I came to TTP I was an introvert, but as soon as I dropped my one week everything started to change especially because we had good mentors who actually made TTP our second-best place to be at."
>
> "I have learnt how to use different techniques to study and how to deal with academic stress by learning from people in my group and hearing a few stories from the mentors."
>
> "The mentors were a great help in helping me pinpoint what I want to do when I get to university. Literally all of my mentors since grade 10 have given me guidance and advice on how to identify my passion and also to never do a course I'm not passionate about, because at times everything will seem like it's falling apart, and your passion is all you have left to preserver through with determination to attain what you love. So, the mentors that (sic) SETMU had (sic) picked are a great, untainted reflection of varsity life and motivate me."
>
> "The mentors are the best part of TTP (in my opinion) because they have gone through what you have and are able to give you advice on what to do and what not to do."
>
> "The extra care given to us by our mentors have made me realise that I am worth it and I should start practising that on myself."

The program equips mentors to carry out TTP's transformative agenda and in the process, mentors undergo a transformative learning experience as well. Mentoring relationships are beneficial to both mentor and mentee. Connolly's (2017) study found that not only did mentees improve their academic performance through a mentorship program but so did the senior students who were mentors. In another study, mentoring was found to increase leadership efficacy (Lester et al., 2011). The mentors in Connolly's study perceived an improvement in their leadership skills, which included role modelling, time management, confidence, and problem solving. They attributed this improvement to the challenges they experienced in the mentoring process. Within the TTP, mentors state that they have been able to implement the transformative strategies taught to them even after graduating from their tertiary studies. TTP mentor evaluations reveal that mentors' personal development has been enhanced through the acquisition of knowledge and skills such as awareness, communication, interpersonal skills, self-reflection and regulations, communication, and teamwork, altruism (making a difference and giving back), and leadership which can be seen in the following statements made by TTP mentors.

Acquisition of knowledge and skills: "I decided to be a TTP mentor again because learning never stops. From each contact session that I have attended I always go back home with new skills acquired and enhancing on the skills that I already have."
"From the previous contact session, I gained knowledge on… emotional awareness and intelligence as well as learning to sell myself and the brand I represent which was through the personal branding exercise."
"The last contact session taught me the importance of mental health. Although I had been exposed to mental disability and how to handle it in theory after the previous session and having been exposed to it directly made me reflect on whether I fully understand and are able with mental health issues."
"I learned various interpersonal skills such as assertion problem-solving and interpretation of certain kinds of body language."
"I learned good communication skills and by that, I mean 'how to really listen before you ask' kind of communication."

Altruism: "I also wanted to channel the learners in the right direction and offer guidance where (sic) I can."
"TTP has grown onto me in such a way that I can't imagine myself missing a contact session for various reason such as giving back, making a difference and personal growth."
Self-Reflection and regulation: "It helped me in getting to reflect on my own skills and experiences while also getting to question and refine my ways of thinking and approach to matters."
Teamwork: "I have learned teamwork and how to compromise, for the sake of the group's success (sic)."
"I have learnt to trust the people I work with to do their task to a satisfactory level without my interference. This is in a professional workplace setting as well as an academic task setting."
Leadership: "I learnt how to be a situational leader when I am working with a group of individuals."
In addition to the self-reported evidence of mentors' personal development there is also evidence in their reflections on the benefits of participating in the mentoring programs that they believe they have acquired knowledge and skills that will be valuable in the workplace (e.g., communication skills and teamwork skills).

Conclusion

A review of theoretical and empirical literature with a focus on transformative teaching and learning through mentorship was conducted. The research identified that a vast body of work exists on both transformative learning and mentorship, respectively. However, there is sparse literature where these two constructs are integrated. In that regard, this research aimed to integrate the bodies of work through evidencing the transformative learning undergone by adolescents in the Targeting Talent Programme and particularly facilitated through the role of mentorship. This research argued that in South Africa, where many adolescents have had a range of challenging adult experiences while still teenagers, they have the life experience to engage in transformative learning and thus transformative teaching/mentoring should not be considered as appropriate only for adults. This can also be seen in the work of Meerts-Brandsma and Sibthorp (2021), Larson (2017), and Williams (2013) however, it is important to acknowledge the contextual differences that the research offers a perspective on. The research done by the above-mentioned researchers is conducted on adolescents (aged 12-19) of mixed American descent, particularly white, within resourced schools within middle to high class socio-economic level. This research was conducted on disadvantaged adolescents from under-resourced communities and schools from a low socio-economic condition. This research thus aimed to provide a South African perspective as an extension of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Despite the contextual differences, it can be noted that the output in the above studies as well as that highlighted in this research is that adolescents can indeed undergo a transformative learning and teaching even though these adolescents do not meet the preconditions set out by Mezirow. Moreover, the research argued that the elements of the Transformative Learning Theory were used to reflect on the design and implementation of the pre-university Targeting Talent Programme and to examine the responses of mentors (senior university students) experiences with their mentees (high school learners) to what TTP offered them. The research acknowledges the salience of the phenomenological insight in that the transformative learning and teaching is purely facilitated through mentors sharing their life experiences which encourages dialogue and reflections to ultimately transform perceptions and behaviours as well. We argue that TTP does provide transformative learning opportunities, some of which are due to the key role of mentors in the program. Mentors themselves also experience transformative learning opportunities as a result of them facilitating this process and develop in their personal capacities as mentors but ultimately as human beings. As an addition to the elements identified in the literature reviewed, we argue that senior students, after being trained as mentors, can play an important role as facilitators of transformative learning for adolescents. Given the value of transformative teaching and learning for both the psycho-social and academic development of adolescents and young adults, we recommend that higher education institutions consider including this approach in support programs offered at pre-university and undergraduate levels. We also recommend the training and use of senior students as mentors in such programs.

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Transformative Experiences: A Phenomenological Study of Nursing Students in a Study Abroad Course

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Abstract

Reflective daily journaling was utilized to enhance students' intrapersonal growth and development. This phenomenological study utilized students' daily journals from university students enrolled in a study abroad nursing course to identify transformative experiences. All journals were coded by an undergraduate researcher and two faculty researchers producing a kappa coefficient of 0.98. The major themes that emerged were the overall impact of common experiences and discoveries, the number of overall participants that reported a common experience or discovery, and the top three themes for each of the daily journal questions. This study demonstrates that reflective daily journaling utilized in a study abroad course can facilitate the achievement of a set of course objectives for student success in post-secondary education. The findings of this study were utilized by faculty to improve future study abroad course offerings which would help impact personal and professional goals for future nurses.

Keywords: study abroad, nursing students, phenomenology, healthcare, daily journals

Introduction

Students at universities and colleges participate in study abroad programs for a variety of reasons, including personal growth, expanding one's global viewpoint, and learning new skills. Study abroad courses are increasingly becoming integrated into many nursing programs to help nursing students develop the core values established by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2019) such as leadership, diversity, and inclusion. Employers respect these experiences and they actively seek graduates with international experience and qualifications (Green et al., 2019; Molony et al., 2011) further demonstrating the importance of study abroad courses and the impact that they can have on a student's future success (Maharaja, 2018). Nursing students and universities can utilize study abroad experiences to maximize the potential development of desirable characteristics. As nursing schools and colleges throughout the United States continue to recognize the impact study abroad courses have on students' future success, college retention rates, and the health industry, the utilization of evidence-based curriculum outlines for these courses will be essential. This study aimed to explore and capture the common discoveries and experiences of undergraduate students who attended a study abroad program.

In terms of student success after completing a study abroad program, students who participated in study abroad programs had higher overall graduation rates and the experience did not postpone their graduation (Haupt et al., 2018; Johnson & Stage, 2018; Malmgren & Galvin, 2008; Potts, 2016). Thus, the literature suggests that students who participate in study abroad experiences tend to graduate at a

higher rate, which is mutually beneficial to students and colleges or universities, as they have a vested interest in the overall success of their students. As students participate in study abroad experiences, the likelihood that the student's institution will benefit from the students' experience increases. Advocating for students to participate in study abroad experiences can benefit colleges as these experiences can "be a successful tool for advancing retention by creating a more positive feeling of institutional action" (Di Maggio, 2019, p. 339). Alumni who study abroad are over 60% more likely to provide financial assistance to their college than alumni who did not study abroad, therefore study abroad experiences can help colleges generate future funding (Mulvaney, 2017). The relationship between study abroad experiences/outcomes, retention rates, and funding may prove to be of interest to many institutions. The need for colleges across the United States to improve retention and fundraising continues to rise as state and federal funding relies more heavily on documentation of outcomes (Bell et al., 2018; Bifulco et al., 2019).

Study abroad experiences have the potential to positively affect not only students and colleges but the healthcare industry as well. These opportunities allow students to immerse themselves in social environments and clinical situations that are considerably different from their daily lives, which can aid in the development of reflective practice and clinical reasoning, two qualities that are highly appreciated in the health community (Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012). The bridge between theory and practice can also be created as students apply what they learn during their study abroad experiences (Ruddock & Turner, 2007). This process allowed students the opportunity to determine areas of study that need further development prior to entering the healthcare profession. The research literature emphasizes the importance of incorporating reflective journaling into study abroad courses. Recognizing the importance of reflective journaling, faculty frequently employs this activity to promote students' enhancement of their developing professional skills and intrapersonal development. Reflective journaling enables students to process and analyze their experiences in an "organized and meaningful manner" (Elverson & Klawiter, 2018, p. 5). Additionally, the reflective journaling process allows students to explore the real-time impact of the study abroad experiences while considering the future impact, both professionally and personally.

Although a number of studies attempted to determine the outcomes of study abroad experiences for students, colleges, and various industries, only a handful of studies explored best practices for implementing these experiences. In the literature describing how to structure a study abroad course, very few studies describe details about the implementation of the recommended action, such as reflective journaling. Studies that described how their recommended actions were carried out at times fail to explain the effects of these actions on the students who participated in the course. This study provides an example of both recommended actions and the ways in which those actions affected the student participants.

Methods

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to identify the common discoveries and experiences of undergraduate nursing students who attended a study abroad program in Great Britain. According to Creswell (2015), phenomenological studies require between 3 to 10 participants. Given this standard, nine participants (n = 9) consented to the study and were enrolled in the Healthcare in Great Britain course. The study was conducted following the abroad portion of the *NURS 4902: Healthcare in Great Britain* course. Data was collected in the form of students' daily journals completed during the abroad portion of the course. The question posed by researchers was: "What are the common discoveries and experiences of undergraduate nursing students who attended a study abroad program?" Schmidt and Brown's (2016) three major themes of "Remembering/Understanding [What?], Analyzing/Applying [So what?], and Evaluating/Creating [What now?]" (p. 101) served as the guiding framework for the daily journal questions.

Each student's daily journals included answers to the following questions:
1. What are three words to describe today's experiences?
2. Would you please describe at least three key impressions and observations you made today?
3. What was the most significant or surprising information you learned today?

4. What challenge(s) did you face today? How did you cope with or overcome the challenge(s)?
5. What was the most interesting thing you learned about yourself today?

The current study was approved by the Texas Woman's University's Institutional Review Board with expedited review as the risk of participating in this study was minimal. The risks involved with this study included fatigue, loss of anonymity, loss of confidentiality, and possible psychological effects. Despite the fact that gender was not a factor in excluding anyone, the study's participants were entirely female between 20 to 35 years old. Electronic consent was obtained through the course Canvas site. To protect the privacy of the participants, the daily journals were de-identified by the faculty advisor before coding by the primary undergraduate researcher and the research team members which included the faculty advisor and another faculty researcher. While steps were taken to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, confidentiality could not be guaranteed as the internet and Microsoft Word were used throughout this study. To avoid any psychological effects of the study, participants were encouraged to share only to the extent to which they were comfortable. Each participant determined the extent and level of detail they used in answering each question in the daily journal.

Once the participants' daily journals were compiled and de-identified, researchers used NVivo 12.0 to complete the inductive coding of the daily journals. Inductive coding or inductive analysis "consists of reading through textual data, identifying themes in the data, coding those themes, and then interpreting the structure and content of themes" (Guest et al., 2013, p. 13). As researchers completed the inductive coding process, they coded common themes, topics, and emotions. While coding the daily journals from the course, Cohen's kappa coefficient was run once at the completion of 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% of the data coding process to ensure accurate results and to illustrate the high-level agreement between researchers. The range for Cohen's kappa coefficient at each of these completion points was between 0.92 to 0.99, illustrating nearly perfect agreement.

When completing the inductive coding of the dataset, the daily journals were further coded under a specific category (or node) to determine the common experiences and discoveries of the participants. The main categories (or nodes) under common discoveries included: *Healthcare Evolution Over Time*, *Self-Discoveries*, *Health*, *UK School System*, *Mental Health Care*, *UK Culture*, *UK Healthcare*, and *UK Nursing School*. These nodes were further separated into subcategories, or child nodes, which consisted of a variety of topics relating directly to the node. For example, the node *Self Discoveries* was divided into 12 child nodes that included *Personal Growth Traveling*, *Learning Style*, *Living in Another Country*, and other components that may contribute to a participant's ability to identify self-discoveries.

Nodes under common experiences of the participants included *Travel*, *Attractions*, and *Challenges*. These nodes were again divided into child nodes to address the specific components of that node. For example, under the node, *Travel*, some of the child nodes included: *Within London*, *Bus Ride to Stonehenge*, *Navigating*, *Abroad*, and various other child nodes. The child nodes under both the common experiences and common discoveries categories were further divided as needed to provide additional details and clarity. Figure 1 below provides a visual illustration of the case, node, and child node breakdown.
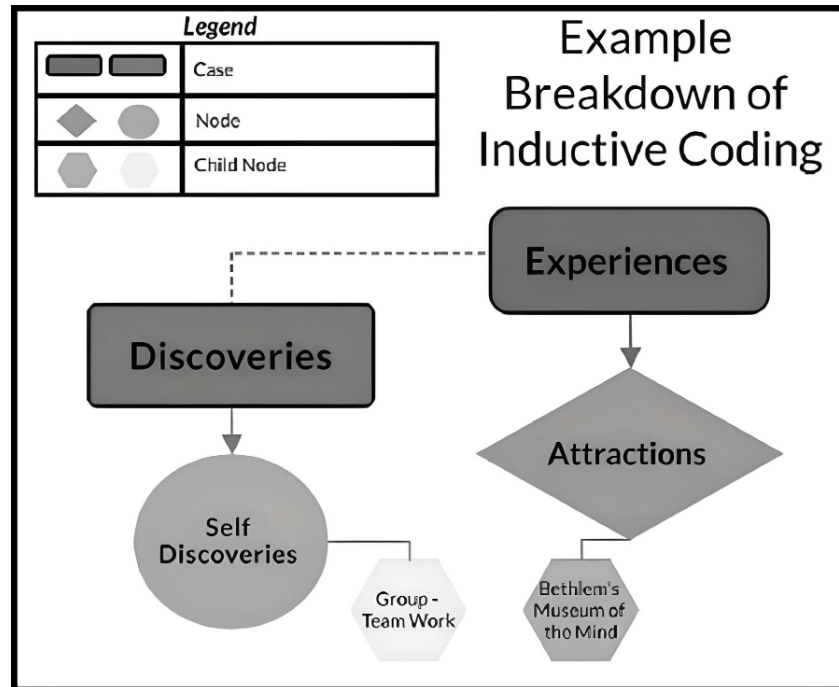
Figure 1: Example Breakdown of Inductive Coding

The completed inductive coding was reevaluated to determine the most frequently used significant words written by participants for each of the daily journal questions. Results from this process identify the themes of common discoveries and experiences for each of the individual daily journal questions. Significant words that were either synonyms or similar in relation to the subject matter, were included in the same category of data results. For example, the *Nursing* category included instances in which participants journaled discoveries or experiences related to *UK Healthcare*, *UK Nursing School*, *UK vs U.S. Nursing*, *Royal College of Nursing*, and several other topics that related to a common subject.

Findings

Three major findings emerged from the study. The first set of results relates to the overall research question, showing the percentage of codes in relation to each of the cases (or common experiences and discoveries; see Figure 2). The percentage of each node represented within its case quantifies the overall impact of each experience or discovery. For example, the coded attractions constitute 61.7% of the codes under experiences. Therefore, a majority of the reported experiences were related to attractions.
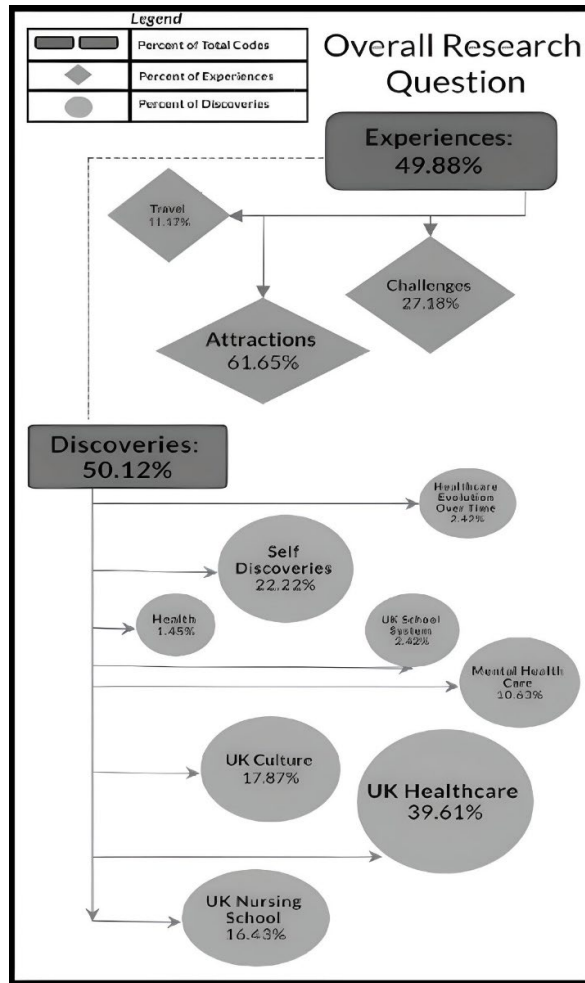
Figure 2: Overall Research Question Percentage Breakdown

While these results are a reasonable overall representation of the percentage to which each node was reported, the number of participants compared to the total number of participants should also be considered. The number of participants that coded that particular node was significant, due to concern that if one participant spoke of the same node ten times it would be coded ten times, thus potentially skewing the results.

Figure 3 shows the overall research question participant breakdown reported each node within each case (experiences or discoveries) for the overall research question. The findings are divided into cases and further into nodes. The nodes reported what the experiences or discoveries were related to, as well as the number of participants who reported an experience or discovery related to that node.
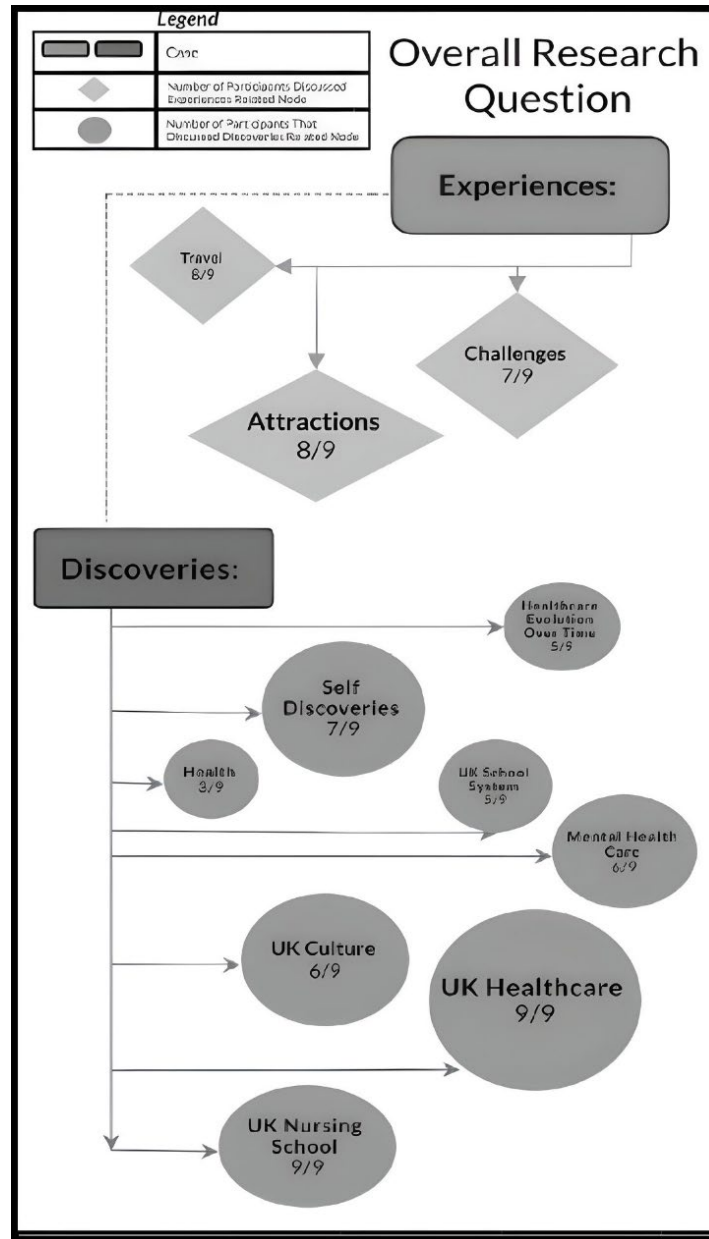
Figure 3: Overall Research Question Participant Breakdown

The three most common themes identified from the coded daily journal responses were analyzed to determine the number of participants that cumulatively reported these themes. Figure 4 illustrates the number of participants (of nine total) reporting each of the top three themes for each of the individual daily journal questions.
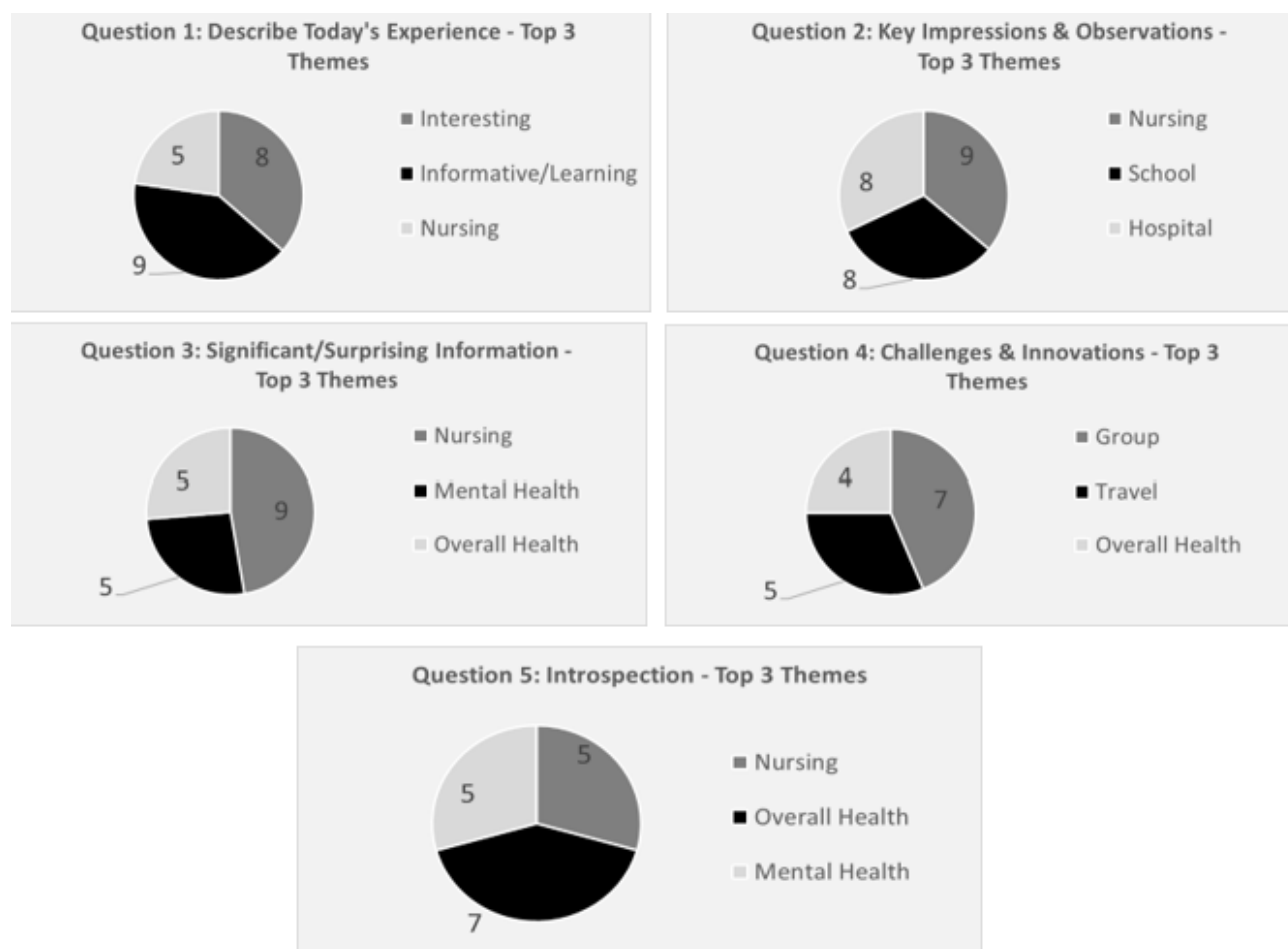
Question 1: Describe Today's Experience - Top 3 Themes

5   8
9

- Interesting
- Informative/Learning
- Nursing

Question 2: Key Impressions & Observations - Top 3 Themes

9
8
8

- Nursing
- School
- Hospital

Question 3: Significant/Surprising Information - Top 3 Themes

5   9
5

- Nursing
- Mental Health
- Overall Health

Question 4: Challenges & Innovations - Top 3 Themes

4   7
5

- Group
- Travel
- Overall Health

Question 5: Introspection - Top 3 Themes

5
5
7

- Nursing
- Overall Health
- Mental Health

Figure 4: Individual Daily Questions: Most Common Themes

The data from which these results originate was obtained by using reflective journaling. From the results, we were also able to document the completed course objectives through specific examples provided by students' daily journal submissions. One submission that documented the completion of course objective nine for *NURS 4902: Healthcare in Great Britain*, "Analyze cultural, ethical and legal issues that affect health care in Great Britain", is outlined in the quote below by one participant.

> Great Britain's hospital culture feels very different. There's still a sense of camaraderie, but it feels more formal than back in the US. They are still friendly to each other and seem to get along, but the feeling of teamwork seemed more professional and goal-based, as opposed to a more individual interest in each other's lives. Their patient loads are also much larger, though this may be attributed to being in London as opposed to another location.

During the coding process, the researchers noted a number of unexpected common discoveries and experiences described by participants. These discoveries and experiences included individual experiences journaled multiple times, unexpected discoveries or experiences, and descriptions of the differences between the UK and the US. In relation to *Individual Experiences*, two participants described individual experiences about which they continued to journal throughout the completion of the abroad portion of the course. One of the students was able to go to *Bath Abbey* and the other went to the (food) *Stalls of Tooting Broadway*. These two separate, but personally impactful, experiences enabled the individuals to make connections and discoveries that related to their experiences that they might not have

been able to otherwise. The two quotes below illustrate the effect an experience can have on one participant that was not experienced by the entire population of students.

When I walked into Bath Abbey today, I began to cry. I cannot explain why, I was just taken aback by the history and beauty of the abbey! I suppose I would say I was overwhelmed but in a good way. It was just so beautiful and ancient!

The most significant thing that I learned today was the history of Bath Abbey and how the bells work. I chose to take the tour by myself in my free time...I learned that I am comfortable doing what I want to and do not succumb to peer pressure. For example, just because no one else was interested in doing the tour with me, didn't stop me from going. I could have gone with the rest of the group out of insecurity, but I chose to do what I wanted to do for myself.

Forty-three unexpected descriptions of experiences and discoveries emerged from the data. These descriptions were unexpected due to the extent to which they described the subject matter including informative experiences, mental health, group challenges, *Travel, Walking*, *Time/Scheduling*, *Crowds*, the *Old Operating Theater*, *UK School System*, *UK Nursing School, NHS*, *HPV Vaccination*, *Healthcare Evolution Over Time*, *Architecture*, *Attire*, and *Smoking*. (The italicized words noted previously are actual nodes from the research). Journaled differences between the UK and the US related to various components of the culture, healthcare system, school system, and society in the UK overall. These reported differences included the degree to which *Walking* is a means of travel, the attitude towards *Time/Scheduling*, *Healthcare Evolution Over Time, Mental Health Care,* the *Attire*, the *Walking* pace, the attitude in relation to *Smoking*, the structure of the *School System*, and the structure or overall requirements of *Nursing School* in the UK versus the US.

Factors related to the participants' understanding and observations of the UK that could have affected the study relate to the time of year and season in London, differences in the structure of the healthcare system and educational system in the US and UK, and the overall difference in approach to healthcare. The participants were in London during the month of May, so they experienced milder weather and climate at the time. Weather in London may have contributed to the number of reported experiences and discoveries related to individual physical experiences and challenges.

Due to the overall difference between the structure of the healthcare system and the school system in the US versus the UK, there were a number of key elements that were repeatedly reported. These elements included: the cost of nursing education being lower in the UK, the duration of nursing school being shorter in the UK, and that nursing pay is lower in the UK than in the US. One element that many participants journaled in their responses was that the UK nursing students select a specialty at the beginning of their nursing program rather than specializing upon graduation from their program. Another significant difference noted by the participants was that UK care appeared less proactive than in the US, hospital rooms are not private in the UK, and there are different approaches to encouraging individuals to receive vaccines and annual checkups.

The results of the study identify common experiences and discoveries as journaled daily by students who participated in *NURS 4902: Healthcare in Great Britain*. This evidence further establishes the achievement of course objectives through the course activities and various individual components. Additionally, this study highlights itinerary components abroad that support course objectives. Following the completion of the inductive coding, analysis process, and review, results were conveyed to the course faculty to provide supportive documentation of the course's ability to achieve the desired student learning outcomes.

Discussion

This study explored the specific elements that contribute to the transformative nature and personal impact of studying abroad. This is important to the success of students in postsecondary education as these findings support the benefits of studying abroad to students' future success that can further positively affect colleges and universities (Bifulco et al., 2019; Di Maggio, 2019; Green et al., 2019; Maharaja, 2018). Nursing students who took part in the short-term study abroad program were

provided the opportunity to engage in self-reflection after their participation. All participants who took part in the study (n = 9) reflected on their own personal development of cultural awareness and acknowledged the distinctions that will have an impact on their success as future nurses. The participants did this by viewing the world from the perspective of a local, acknowledging the truths of history, and viewing studying abroad as an experience that can change their lives. Students were able to realize the larger position that nurses play in a new country due to the fact that they arrived from a situation of not knowing what to expect. These findings are similar to those of other research that has demonstrated that nursing students who participate in short-term study abroad programs reap the benefits of improved cultural understanding (Elverson & Klawiter, 2018; Kohlbry, 2016; Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012; Ruddock & Turner, 2007; Schmidt & Brown, 2016).

The students articulated the awareness that the challenges faced by the UK are also challenges faced by many countries around the world as they related their experiences of participating in teaching sessions and sharing their observations of interacting with members of the local community. The majority of the students described how they had been affected by a defining moment in their study abroad experience that shifted their perspective on world access and the success of being a student nursing and future nurse. These students recognized that the experience would inform how they provide health care as future nurses.

Historically, students' self-assurance, independence, professional knowledge, and abilities have all improved after studying abroad (Bifulco et al., 2019; Green et al., 2019; Maharaja, 2018; Ruddock & Turner, 2007). One possible outcome is a shift in perspective toward people of diverse backgrounds. The issue is that undergraduate students seldom have the opportunity to study abroad since nursing school is so rigorous with two years of required courses and little room for electives, and because many schools do not provide such study abroad programs. Prior research indicates that a growing number of nurses are pursuing careers with an international or multicultural focus, thanks in large part to the chances available from study abroad programs (Bifulco et al., 2019; Halcomb & Bird, 2020; Haupt et al., 2018; Schmidt & Brown, 2016).   According to research conducted by Foronda et al. (2016) as well as Elverson and Klawiter (2018), the characteristics of self-awareness, supportive interactions, self-reflection, and critique are important to students as they learn and grow. During their time spent studying abroad, the participants in this study showed a number of these characteristics by engaging in activities such as questioning, sharing, and instructing various groups of individuals. The results are consistent with the findings of other studies that highlight the life-changing effects of international travel on nursing students and practicing nurses (Kohlbry, 2016; Prater et al., 2016). Students who participate in study abroad programs can benefit from experiential and transformative learning, as demonstrated by our findings, which show that a study based on cultural attunement can help achieve these goals.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include the small sample size consisting of one university. Due to the limited number of participants and only female students participating in this study, study results may not be generalizable to other populations. Participants' prior travel experience may have affected their encounters with unexpected events, challenges, and feelings. While the level of previous travel experience may have contributed to the discoveries and experiences reported, the degree to which this factor affected the overall results is unclear. Finally, the data for this study was obtained from the inaugural course of *NURS 4902: Healthcare in Great Britain* at the university.

Future Research

Faculty integrated findings from this study to make improvements in the course, with potential application to other future education/study abroad courses. Due to the number of variables associated with a study abroad course, participants, and qualitative research, researchers need to be intentional when considering their future research questions and the questions they seek to address. Future research in this area may be focused on the re-evaluation of this study's conclusions via replications with a larger or more diverse population, analysis of the final course reports from the participants of this study's related course,

or a longitudinal study to determine the impact of the common discoveries and experience on participants' future, both professionally and personally.

Additionally, the participants' final course reports could be analyzed and compared to this study to determine which form of documentation provides a more conclusive overview of student experiences. This proposed study could determine any nuances that could be lost in only using daily journals or final course reports. Of note, the course associated with the current study will continue to have future cohorts of students. Therefore, the potential exists for a comparative study of these results in a future cohort. The possible complications, implications, and intricacies of each of these potential research projects would need to be carefully considered before commencing.

Conclusion

The transformative nature of studying abroad has been previously noted (Mulvaney, 2017). This study addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the specific elements and personal impact of study abroad courses. This study analyzed students' daily journals to identify the common discoveries and experiences of undergraduate nursing students who attended a faculty-led study abroad program. Through reflective journaling, participants were able to enhance their personal development and explore the real-time and future impact of studying abroad. Through this study, we were able to show that a set of course objectives in the form of experiences and discoveries can be facilitated through reflective journaling across a group of individuals. Discoveries such as these have greater and wider implications as reflective journaling could be incorporated into other courses to document the completion of course objectives.

As course instructors consider whether to implement reflective journaling into their courses one important factor that will take time to address is the questions incorporated in the journals. These questions could be created with a framework, such as Schmidt and Brown's (2016), in mind to ensure students in the course can go through a process that facilitates individual growth and desired outcomes effectively. With the potential of applying reflective journaling as a form of documenting outcomes in mind, further research needs to be conducted to further evaluate the application of this research study's findings in other populations, in different environments, or within populations of another discipline.

Declarations

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Who Benefits and Who is Excluded?
Transformative Learning, Equity, and Generative Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

In our essay, we discuss equity implications surrounding the usage of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. Specifically, we explore how the use of such technologies by students in higher education such as, but not limited to, multi-language learners, students from marginalized linguistic communities, students with disabilities, and low-income students has the potential to facilitate transformative learning. We describe how such tools, when accessible to learners, can help address barriers that prevent students from fully engaging in their learning. Additionally, we explain how the usage of generative AI has the potential to alter the lens through which students view their learning, countering assumptions and broadening what can be considered an "appropriate" use of assistive technologies to support learning for diverse students. We also address various limitations of generative AI with regards to equity such as the requirement to pay to access some of the applications, as well as linguistic and other biases within the outputs produced, reflective of the data used to train the tools. Throughout this piece, we share insights from a study of undergraduate students' perspectives and usage of generative AI and potential future directions for the technologies. This essay aims to increase awareness of the opportunities and challenges around who benefits and who is excluded when generative AI is used within colleges and universities.

Introduction

The mission of many colleges and universities is to educate a diverse student body. Essential to accomplishing these goals is creating transformative learning experiences that are both equitable for and inclusive of all students. The increased availability of generative artificial intelligence (AI) directly implicates such equity work. The emergence of more sophisticated tools has the potential to create greater disparities between those who can access them and those who cannot, as well as reinforce societal biases that exist which can lead to marginalized groups being increasingly targeted. Such barriers can impede progress toward a more just and equitable academy.

The widespread integration of generative AI within higher education settings is a paradigm shift that continues to lead to transformative learning, especially at the institutional, instructor, and student

levels (Mezirow, 1994). Institutions are forced to reflect on their values and existing practices to determine how to create significant, equitable learning experiences for their students, while simultaneously defending the value of higher education amidst uncertainty and change. Instructors are rethinking how to best teach students in ways that achieve desired learning outcomes. Educators must now decide how to create equitable generative AI course policies and how to design assessments to support learning. Their assumptions about products produced by a learner (e.g., an essay, etc.) as the sole output that demonstrates learning and skill development are challenged when students can essentially use large language models (LLMs) to create entire assignments. The necessity to apply new criteria for what constitutes academic dishonesty is at the forefront.

Students are challenged by knowing when and how to use these technologies. They also face issues of access and how to navigate usage of tools and their own learning and skill development. Students from diverse backgrounds such as multi-language learners and students with disabilities may encounter experiences interacting with LLMs that impact them in ways that are inequitable.

Generally, generative AI has the potential to transform learning, described by Mezirow (2008) as

> The process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change. Such frames are better because they are more likely to generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action (p. 92).

In this essay, we argue that the influence of generative AI in higher education necessitates frame of reference shifts on part of both instructors and students with regard to equitable learning. This aligns with the learning paradigm where "We now see that our mission is not instruction but rather that of producing learning with every student by whatever means work best" (Barr & Tagg, 1995, p. 13). We posit that such means can involve generative AI to enhance equity, but that there are cautions. Subsequent sections explore the influences of generative AI on language learning, minoritized discourses, neurodivergence and disability, in addition to challenges such as bias and access. Throughout this essay we explore who benefits and who is excluded through generative AI.

Students' Perspectives Study

In this piece we interweave the findings of an undergraduate student survey study conducted with the research goals of better understanding if and how learners utilize generative AI technologies and their viewpoints on the advantages and disadvantages. This investigation, approved by the Institutional Review Board, involved surveying a sample of 1,000 students from a private liberal arts college, with 250 students randomly selected from each of four class years. Participants were emailed via an anonymous survey using Qualtrics software and sent two reminder messages if they had not yet completed the study. Students were given the option of entering a raffle for prizes if they completed the survey. Based on the estimate in Qualtrics software, the total time for completion of the survey was approximately 7 minutes.

One hundred fifty-four students completed the survey in its entirety. Including those who either fully or partially completed the survey, the response rate was 18%. Of respondents who completed demographic questions, 93% indicated that English was their primary language, 22% described themselves as neurodivergent or a student with a specific learning disability, 19% indicated that they were the first in their family to attend college in the United States, 16% were Pell-eligible, and 53% were receiving aid in other financial amounts (n = 152 responses). We include quotes from study respondents in this essay to support our claims and to provide contextual information regarding how generative AI can lead to transformative learning.

How Generative AI Can Transform Language Learning
Transformative Learning for Multi-Language Learners

In the field of second language learning, educators have been seeking innovative ways to enhance students' learning experiences. By combining cutting-edge technologies with existing pedagogical expertise and educational theory, generative AI tools have the potential to offer unprecedented opportunities for second language learning. However, various equity issues may arise due to language learners' unique language backgrounds, such as language bias and constrained linguistic expressions. In this section, we explore how generative AI tools can transform or hinder the learning of multi-language students and provide recommendations to instructors by applying Mezirow's (1994) Theory of Transformative Learning.

The advent of digital tools and resources has revolutionized language education, providing educators with innovative methods to enhance the learning experiences of multi-language learners. For example, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), and the integration of corpora (a collection of naturally occurring languages) using computers have emerged as some of the prominent areas of study in the field of language education. These approaches offer learners access to authentic language resources and interactive activities, ultimately promoting autonomous learning and individualized progress over time (e.g., Deignan & Potter, 2004; Liu & Yu, 2022; Roussel, 2011).

Recent advancements in generative AI tools have further amplified these benefits owing to their exceptional natural language processing capabilities and vast knowledge base. Many language educators started to implement AI tools in their teaching (e.g., *Making English Fun*). Table 1 summarizes how generative AI tools like ChatGPT can be applied to almost all aspects of English language learning and teaching including grammar, vocabulary, writing, reading, pronunciation, conversation, culture, and translation.

Table 1: Sample Language Learning Activities Using ChatGPT

Language Areas	Learning Activities
Grammar	Correct English sentences or provide explanations on English grammar rules.
Vocabulary	Define or provide examples of English words and phrases; generate sentences or paragraphs that include specific vocabulary words; distinguish academic and non-academic words.
Writing	Provide writing prompts; give feedback on essays; provide suggestions or corrections.
Reading	Generate English text on various topics, such as news articles, stories, or essays; create comprehension questions
Pronunciation	Pronounce words or sentences; provide feedback on pronunciation; dictate speech
Conversation	Real-life interactions; initiate conversations with ChatGPT by asking questions, discussing topics, or engaging in role-play exercises

Language Areas	Learning Activities
Culture	Ask about English-speaking countries' culture, customs, and traditions; learn about English idioms, expressions, and social norms to gain a deeper understanding of English language and culture
Translation	Translate words, sentences, or paragraphs into different languages.

Students in our study also seemingly saw the advantages of these tools in supporting their learning. Nine out of ten students who reported that their primary language was not English indicated that they used generative AI tools. A few respondents noted the utility of these technologies in supporting language learning as indicated below:

> *It [generative AI] can also be very helpful for students who haven't had as many English classes or [for] whom English isn't their first language.*

> *AI can definitely be used as an asset, but it should not be submitted for anything word for word; rather, it's better for getting ideas. I also used it to help me understand Spanish word choice since it's often hard for the average speaker to explain why they use one word/phrasing as opposed to another to convey specific points.*

The comments of these respondents highlight a broadened understanding of how languages can be learned by leveraging generative AI.

However, the use of generative AI tools by multi-language learners also raises several equity concerns. Many of these tools have been developed primarily by English-speaking countries, resulting in potential accuracy issues when processing text in languages with limited training data. Secondly, students who are not proficient in the language used by generative AI tools may encounter difficulties in comprehending and accurately evaluating the generated text. Lastly, multi-language learners might be targeted more for academic dishonesty. A study highlighted the presence of bias in AI detectors against multi-language learners with limited linguistic expressions (Liang et al., 2023). In this case, the AI detectors were more prone to categorizing writings from multi-language learners as AI-generated, while accurately identifying native writing samples. Such are barriers to equitable, transformative learning.

As Egan (1999) wrote, "The best of technology does not by itself create a productive learning environment" (p. 281). Mezirow's (1994) transformative learning theory is defined as "an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning" (p. 222). This learning theory emphasizes that through self-awareness, self-directed learning, and critical theory, students can grasp the underlying meaning structures and engage in a process of reevaluating their assumptions. At the same time, self-awareness strategy and self-directed learning have also proven to be effective in second language learning (e.g., Vohs & Baumeister, 2004; Roussel, 2011). Therefore, when designing language learning activities, it is crucial to invite students to critically reflect on the content, process, and premise of their interaction with AI tools as recommended by Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The following are some questions that instructors can use to ask students to reflect on their language learning experiences using AI tools:

- **Content:** What do you like or dislike about the output produced by this AI tool? What specific language skills or knowledge are you gaining from this AI tool? Can you identify any cultural biases present in the AI-generated content? Can you guess how the AI output content was generated?

- **Process:** What strategies have you used to get the expected output from the AI tool? Are there any difficulties or challenges you have encountered in using the AI tool, and how have you addressed them?
- **Premise:** What assumptions or expectations did you have about using AI tools for language learning, and have they been met or challenged? How do you think future advancements in AI technology might change the way we integrate AI into language learning?

Transformative Learning for Speakers from Minoritized Discourses

In addition to multi-language learners, the usage of generative AI can impact speakers from minoritized discourses. For decades, those interested in the politics of language in higher education have been grappling with a core problem: Standard Edited English (SEE) is ostensibly the currency of the writing economy of American higher education and the professional world. SEE enables groups to communicate across space and time in a way that facilitates economic exchange, legal systems, and public safety. It has also facilitated global empires, and it has been deployed in the service of linguistic imperialism, linguistic discrimination, and linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020; Canagarajah, 2006; Smitherman, 1977). It is what James Paul Gee (1989) would call a "dominant discourse," and its American iteration has largely emerged from the language practices of the upper-middle and wealthy classes. As Gee argues, the extent to which one's home discourse aligns with the dominant discourse of higher education is the extent to which a student has linguistic privilege. This situation has created a conundrum for students whose linguistic practices and home discourses do not align well with the academy (and a conundrum for the instructors who teach them). They can learn (and sometimes struggle to learn) the standard conventions of written English, a discourse of power, prestige, and cultural capital, or they can work to code mesh and integrate their home discourse(s) into academic debate, which allows them to draw on a new reservoir of meaning-making practices that have largely been excluded from SEE (for an example of this see Young, 2010).

With their ability to transform even the most garbled of sentences into SEE, language models offer a solution to this issue, but that solution is unsatisfactory. LLMs have numerous faults as text generators (early models create somewhat generic prose and the models operate with no ground truth), but they excel at re-writing and copyediting prose. Those concerned with the politics of language in higher education now face a core question similar to that facing multilingual writers: Do students who come to higher education with fluency in minoritized discourses deploy language models to help them write in SEE and avoid the pernicious effects of linguistic racism? Or do we collectively continue to make the case that SEE is only one kind of English and a kind that tends to limit the full written expression of many kinds of people, which might allow for the adoption of a fuller spectrum of language practices in the academy? And, if we prohibit students from using LLMs for linguistics tasks such as copyediting, to what extent are we foreclosing on the opportunity for groups of students to avoid the penalties of linguistic racism that have long been a part of many assessment systems?

The benefit to LLMs is that we now have what promises to be a decent technological solution for writers who struggle to shape their writing into the kind of SEE that is acceptable in the academy. Linguistic discrimination is deeply enmeshed in systems of white supremacy and our systems of writing assessment, for that matter (Inoue, 2015). From a pragmatic perspective, writers who would have otherwise faced judgment for writing with non-standard language practices have access to a tool that will provide high-quality and effective copy editing that will potentially enable them to circumvent (at least partially) problematic assessment systems.

The benefit, however, is also the challenge. When we talk about having students rewrite their sentences and paragraphs using a language model, we're effectively talking about a new form of linguistic colonization. Bender et al. (2012) have argued in a now-famous paper that the worldviews of many LLMs reflect the voices most strongly represented in data on which the language model was trained; or, as they put it: "the voices of people most likely to hew to a hegemonic viewpoint are also more likely to be retained" (613). We can add to this that the linguistic dialects and linguistic constructions of those most well-represented in the data are more likely to be retained and output by the LLM. Asking LLMs to

copyedit a student text equates to taking voice from a marginalized discourse, which should be represented in academic discourse, and homogenizing it into a dominant discourse via automation. In other words, clicking a button to use a machine to change one's writing to SEE could be seen as capitulating to a racist linguistic system and perpetuating a relatively limited linguistic domain.

In teaching AI literacy for the purposes of transformative learning, it is important to be keenly aware of the language practices that LLMs facilitate. Linguistic imperialism is not limited to the output of LLMs. It also includes the input, or the data on which a language model has been trained. We are entering an era of "model proliferation," where we will see most major technology companies release their own language models along with a variety of open-source versions. All these models will be trained on different datasets. The data used for training has become a closely guarded trade secret, and for many language models, academics and users do not have access to training data, which renders it impossible to assess its bias and the extent to which certain kinds of voices dominate the training data. Consequently, although many models can produce SEE, the models struggle when asked to produce convincing versions of other kinds of dialects and world Englishes (see Owusu-Ansah, 2023). Antonio Byrd (2023) has argued that the refusal of companies to share their training data means that such LLMs may not be ethical tools to work with as writers. He suggests that instructors adopt open-source tools that allow users to inspect the data used to train the models.

When it comes to the output of LLMs, which tends to happen in SEE unless the machines are prompted otherwise, students need to acquire a critical awareness of how SEE has been developed and its history of being deployed via linguistic violence against marginalized populations. There is a voluminous literature on critical language awareness, a linguistic movement that has advocated the position that instructors need to help students learn about dominant and marginalized discourses, although April Baker-Bell's (2021) research makes clear that many students who speak marginalized discourses are already well aware of the status of their discourse. Instructors who work with LLMs and AI literacy need to make clear to students that its outputs do not represent some sort of neutral dialect but rather the dialects of those who have had the opportunity to contribute the most data to the training set. Therefore, instructors can facilitate transformative learning experiences for students by having them critically examine the outputs produced by generative AI when marginalized discourses are used and have them explore and consider issues surrounding training the tools with SEE.

Opportunities for Neurodivergent Students & Students with Disabilities

Generative AI tools have the potential to support the learning of neurodivergent students and students with disabilities, but also have their limitations (McMurtrie, 2023). Neurodiversity is "a biological truism that refers to the limitless variability of human nervous systems on the planet, in which no two can ever be exactly alike due to the influence of environmental factors" (Singer, n.d.). The term describes the many ways that individuals encode and process information. Neurodiversity brings to the forefront how people with conditions such as ADHD, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, and bipolar disorder, are not different but rather exist within the continuum of all humans that vary in how we process information. Such challenges the concept of normality. Individuals with disabilities, whether they be mental, physical, sensory, or learning, exist within the diversity of people in our world, and within college and university courses. When considering how to create more equitable, transformative learning environments for such learners, generative AI models present distinct possibilities.

Transformative Learning for Neurodivergent Students and Learners with Disabilities

Neurodivergent students and learners with disabilities might already use assistive technologies that reduce barriers that they confront to their learning. These might involve obtaining or creating recordings of class sessions and converting text-to-speech, using a screen reader, obtaining notes, or having a notetaker. LLMs can expand students' approaches for learning in a variety of ways such as through organizing course notes in ways that they may never have been able to do previously to allow them to better grasp the material, querying their notes to increase their understanding, and generating initial ideas and topics when they need added support to guide them in the next steps of their work. Such

can lead to transformative learning for these students and their instructors as they work through the disorienting dilemma of how to use such tools to support equitable learning (Mezirow, 1994).

Issues might arise if instructors prohibit their students from using LLMs in their courses. Such restrictions may pose a barrier for neurodivergent students and students with disabilities who might benefit from the tools to support their learning. Additionally, restricted access due to the necessity to pay for various AI tools can also limit their availability to such learners; a tool might exist that can serve the needs of students but be cost prohibitive. Further, students might be stigmatized for their usage of these tools or increasingly targeted for academic dishonesty if they use them regularly.

Instructors can take a variety of steps to support neurodivergent students and learners with disabilities in their usage of generative AI models for learning. A preliminary step is to learn which assistive technologies students use in their courses and how they support learning, to gain a general awareness. Additional individual conversations with students who have accommodations can focus on how and whether generative artificial intelligence tools can support learning. Many colleges and universities also have accessibility offices. Their staff can be valuable resources for instructors deliberating upon how to incorporate generative AI for students with accommodations. Lastly, when instructors adopt policies that are equity-minded around generative AI, they can lower barriers to support diverse students in achieving learning outcomes. While much of this essay focuses on the transformative learning of students, considering generative AI an assistive technology for neurodivergent learners presents a shifted viewpoint by instructors.

Cautions of Biased Output

LLMs, despite their promise, have additional limitations that can hinder transformative learning. The outputs of LLMs reflect the datasets from which they draw information. Therefore, they are subject to reproducing and reinforcing bias. Biased output can be psychologically damaging for members of marginalized groups who are more likely to experience threats to their identities in their everyday experiences. Such output biases may go undetected, with individuals not recognizing their presence, leading to reinforcement and reproduction. Students benefit from learning how to critically engage with the outputs produced to verify their accuracy, and whether they take a singular stance and fail to acknowledge alternative viewpoints when present, or seemingly incorporate extreme views. As learners develop critical analysis skills, they may challenge any assumptions they hold of outputs generated by AI as being free of bias and learn how to use the technology in ways that benefit them, skills they can take with them post-graduation.

The Thorny Issue of Student Access

Another concern with LLMs is student access which can pose a barrier to the types of transformative learning that we described in this essay. The pandemic provided a reminder that we still live with a deep digital divide. Although access to the internet has grown extensively in the last two decades with smartphones, remote schooling conditions called attention to the discrepancy of connectivity and devices between the digital haves and have nots. Remote working conditions threw into sharp relief the number of students who still lack access to broadband let alone devices and peripherals and home environments that would enable them to work productively and with ergonomic integrity on screens (Auxier & Anderson, 2020; Correia, 2020; Francis & Weller, 2022). We will likely soon see a slew of educational applications and learning technologies powered by large language models. Just a few months after the release of ChatGPT, Khan Academy began a pilot to integrate GPT-4 into its learning platform (Kahn, 2023). Although Kahn Academy announced its program with the aim of providing "equal access" to AI learning tools, current generations of LLMs tend to take enormous amounts of computational resources to run, and it remains to be seen whether chatbot tutors, for example, threaten to exacerbate inequalities or help remedy them. There are several unknown variables when it comes to language models like ChatGPT that will heavily influence access to them. Some of those are socio-political (as discussed), but here we'd like to discuss important economic variables that include the computational resources that

the models need to operate and the systems of monetization that have yet to be worked out that will provide access to them.

Many of the most popular computing applications of the last decade ostensibly appeared to be free for the user. If someone secured a smartphone and data connection, they could access productivity applications such as email, cloud-based word processing software, and a suite of social media applications. However, these "free" programs have required vast digital infrastructures and server farms to run, and we paid for this infrastructure—and produced profits for the companies—through the data we created by using them. We surrendered our privacy. Social media applications were not the products we were using. Our data profiles were the products, and social media companies sold them to advertisers, a process Shoshanna Zuboff (2019) has documented at length in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. Social media companies thus tried to maximize their applications for engagement, as the more eyeball time on their app, the more data they received about our preferences, and the more valuable the applications tended to be for advertisers.

The first LLMs released to consumers do not function on a similar economy, however. The companies that run them can collect data on users, including the inputs used to prompt the models, but as of yet, the limited hints we have from large technology companies suggest that data exhaust does not appear to be a particularly efficient way for companies to profit from them. For example, Sam Altan, CEO of OpenAI as of this writing, stated in a 2023 congressional hearing that OpenAI has not been designing its chatbots to maximize user engagement in the way that social media companies do, largely because OpenAI does not have the computational infrastructure to support heavy use. This could certainly change. Snapchat, for example, has integrated a chatbot for users to interact with, and with other companies looking to infuse chatbots into our most intimate spheres, it may eventually be the case that users divulge interests and dimensions of their personality that they would not have otherwise through social media usage. It is possible we subsidize our own chatbot use by surrendering more of our privacy.

For the time being, however, language models remain expensive to develop and run, which could limit use as well as the development of open-source models (Heaven, 2023). And the most popular emerging model does not run by selling consumer data but rather by subscription. As of this writing, users who register for an OpenAI account can use the free model of ChatGPT (based on a GPT-3.5 family of models), or they can pay a monthly fee for a more powerful version (based on the GPT-4 model). Google and Microsoft have begun releasing models that are free to use (through Bing chat and through the Google Cloud productivity suite), but they have deep pocketbooks to do so, and long-term free access to robust models is not guaranteed unless engineers continue to find ways to reduce the cost of the inferences the machines make. And so rather than using social media as an analogy for access, which is all about "free use" via the exploitation of user data, we might think about gaming as an analogy for how access to language models might play out. Currently, a smartphone and WiFi connection will allow one to play any number of free mobile games that run on advertisements. However, access to the most powerful games with the best graphics still requires subscription costs, dedicated hardware (gaming consoles or powerful computers with graphics cards), and a good deal of bandwidth. This has produced a sharper divide in access to gaming than in social media.

AI engineers are hard at work trying to improve the performance of models so that they use fewer computational resources. They have been fine-tuning LLMs and using reinforcement learning from human feedback to sharpen LLM functioning, but the amount of processing power needed to run most language models remains high compared to many consumer-facing applications. If engineers cannot produce powerful models that use fewer resources, we may see a situation where students who can afford to pay have access to the most powerful models and students who cannot pay have access to stripped-down slower models with degraded performance. When it comes to education, we need to account for the language models that will be fine-tuned for specific domains and specific educational purposes. We can use a generic language model like ChatGPT for free as an all-purpose tutor (as long as we are careful about its issues with hallucinations). But we will likely soon see specialized models (likely at a cost) trained to help students with specific disciplines and competencies that perform much better in that domain than a generic all-purpose model.

Access to LLMs is also an international concern. According to Martindale (2023), ChatGPT has been banned in several countries, including Russia, China, North Korea, Cuba, Iran, and Italy. China's ban, in particular, stems from concerns related to its impact on values, mainstream views, and national security issues (Fan, 2023). Italy initially banned ChatGPT due to concerns regarding the collection and storage of personal data and the potential exposure of misinformation to young people. However, the ban was later lifted after OpenAI released a new form that allows European Union (EU) users to request the removal of personal data and developed a new tool to verify users' ages during signup (Robertson, 2023). However, the story does not end there. Currently, Canada and some EU countries have opened or are considering opening investigations into ChatGPT's practices in their respective countries. Furthermore, educational institutions such as New York City Public Schools, the Los Angeles Unified School District, Sciences Po in Paris, France, and RV University in Bengaluru, India, have also banned Chat GPT. The rationale behind these bans revolves around the belief that such AI tools lack the ability to foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are considered crucial for academic and lifelong success (Castillo, 2023).

Transformative Learning for Students from Low Income Backgrounds

Currently, it is incredibly difficult to enumerate the benefits and challenges of student access to generative AI tools. We are in the midst of an AI arms race with billions of dollars being invested and exorbitant claims being made about the potential for AI to revolutionize everything from the economy to higher education. The landscape of AI has many unresolved factors that could shape the trajectory and general usefulness of LLMs for students, including security and privacy, legality, the development of plugins and complementary technologies, and model accuracy (Laquintano et al., 2023).

There is already evidence that students find language models useful for completing their coursework. In our study, students who identified as Pell-eligible, meaning that they qualified for Pell grants due to their expected family contribution, described a variety of benefits:

> *Some of us come to college not knowing how to write academic papers, and chat GPT taught me how. Now I can write an academic paper on my own. It's a good guide to teach certain writing skills!*

> *It provides a quick response at any time of the day. If I am studying at 6pm at night, my professor is not having office hours then, so if I am very confused, I will sometimes ask AI for help. It is usually a last resort if I am in a time crunch and cannot find the information in the textbook.*

> *The AI gives more in depth information on how to answer the question. Some of the processes I haven't been taught in class how to use and so the AI acts as another source for my learning.*

> *[L]imits barriers to learning/education with same availability of free resources*

> *AI makes learning a lot easier. It breaks down complex text into easily understandable sentences. It also helps you plan for the future and activities.*

Whether or not students' usage enhances or disrupts their learning is an open question. In the best-case scenario, we could potentially see the emergence of accessible and highly personalized AI systems that can assess, guide, and provide feedback on student learning with highly qualified human instructors remaining in the loop. In other scenarios, the tools might remain mediocre and short circuit student learning by acting as personalized cheating assistants that grease the path for those who can afford access to higher education.

Higher education will likely face significant challenges over the next few years as it helps students learn to use AI to augment their learning and not displace it. The generative AI gold rush will

likely soon produce a marketing explosion of tools created specifically for students in higher education, and institutions will be in the position of having to assess the quality of those tools and determine what kinds of learning can be offloaded to machines and what kinds of learning require human feedback. Institutions will have to think carefully and in discipline-specific ways about access to these tools and how and why to invest institutional resources in new educational applications. On the one hand, we need to be cautious and deliberate about the efficacy of the tools in which we invest. On the other hand, if we make no institutional investments, we will potentially create a situation where students with higher socioeconomic status (SES) can subscribe to more powerful tools while students with lower SES do what they can with less powerful "free" applications.

Student access is a primary consideration as we create institutional policies related to generative AI. We've already seen some schools move to prohibit access to LLMs by blocking them on computer networks. Several later reversed their policies. Such policies can prove untenable over time, but they do have the immediate effect of granting access to LLMs only to students who can secure access in other ways with their own devices and data connections. In some respects, we've already been through a version of this problem. With the explosion of student textbook costs, we have already seen in the last decades inequitable access to learning resources, as low-income students struggle through classes by renting textbooks or by borrowing them from the library in ways that are constrained by space and time. High income students can buy textbooks, create marginalia, and have complete access to them all semester. Institutions must be certain that whatever policies put in place related to generative AI do not replicate the same mistakes we have made when it comes to other student learning resources.

Concluding Remarks

As an educational developer who oversees a center for teaching and learning and studies inclusive pedagogy; a director of an academic learning center for multi-language learners; and an English professor and scholar who studies generative AI and directs a college writing program, we are invested in supporting a diversity of learners as generative AI evolves. The widespread integration of AI presents many opportunities for transformative learning. As we argue in this essay, these tools hold much promise in fostering equitable learning, but they also have their potential pitfalls. Higher education will learn much in the coming years as instructors and institutions at large continue to critically examine their teaching practices to support a diversity of learners.

Acknowledgments

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